

State Representative
JOHN A. SCHLEGEL
 101st LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Dear Neighbor,

In just a few weeks, the halls of the state Capitol will be abuzz once more as state lawmakers return to finish out the 2024-25 Legislative Session. I have several bills, now pending, which I hope will be considered before this term ends. Some of these are outlined in this newsletter.

As your state representative, it is important for me to keep you informed about my work, both at the state Capitol and here in our legislative district. I hope you will attend my Town Hall Meeting on Sept. 5 at Cedar Haven Healthcare Center. These meetings are great opportunities to let me know what is on your mind and get your state-related questions answered.

I also communicate regularly via newsletters, and through my weekly Capitol Report email, which highlights legislative activity including key bills, floor and committee action, as well as events and activities in the 101st District. If you do not receive my email updates, please visit www.RepSchlegel.com and sign up.

As always, thank you for the privilege of serving you!

Sincerely,



Rep. John Schlegel

Exploring Barriers to Career and Technical Education

As a member of the House Education Committee, I am focused on the many legislative proposals to address the educational needs of our children. Our children may have special needs or come from wealthy or poor school districts, urban or rural. Despite the diversity of their circumstances, their strengths and weaknesses, advantages or disadvantages, lawmakers are attempting to address their needs in a fair and equitable manner.

In Lebanon County and across the Commonwealth, we have many students who are interested in career and technical education (CTE). In fact, demand for these programs often exceeds the number of slots available in our career and technical schools and programs. Such is the case at Lebanon County Career and Technology Center (LCCTC), where about 150 students were unable to attend last year.

Pennsylvania has more than 80 career and technical centers and additional high school-based programs that focus on vocational training in high-demand job fields. Rising interest in CTE over the past decade has led to enrollments of more than 68,000 students. Yet, thousands more continue to be turned away. Workforce development is essential to our economy. Therefore, we simply must do everything we can to ensure all students have access to these programs. That is why I supported House Resolution 481, which calls on the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to conduct a study to determine why students are encountering non-academic barriers when attempting to get into CTE programs and how to remove them. I believe the findings of this study will lead to change that will mean a brighter future for the young people of Pennsylvania.

Standardized Testing Reforms

As a career educator and administrator, I have long advocated for changes to standardized testing in schools, a sentiment shared by many of my Republican House colleagues. That is why we were pleased to learn the Shapiro administration recently established standardized testing reforms that incorporated many of our ideas to reduce and modernize standardized

testing in schools. They include a transition to electronic testing to provide real-time results and benchmark assessments to measure student success throughout the school year. I am happy the plan will focus on helping teachers assess students on an ongoing basis. This will help drive instruction and improve student achievement.

Legislation Update

House Bill 2507 – Would enable county governments in Pennsylvania to offer their employees the same types of pension plans as those available to state and municipal employees. Currently, county employees are limited to a defined benefit pension plan, but I am sponsoring House Bill 2507 to provide counties with the option to offer employees a defined contribution plan instead. Unlike defined benefit plans that can place a significant financial burden on counties due to guaranteed payouts based on predetermined formulas, defined contribution plans are like the 401k-style plans offered in the private sector that provide employees with individual retirement accounts funded with contributions by both the employer and employee. They also provide employees with flexibility and portability of their retirement savings, which can be particularly attractive to younger workers and those who want greater control over their retirement investments. The bill is in the House Local Government Committee.

House Bill 2506 – Child custody is a very emotional issue with children at the center. I am sponsoring the Equality in Child Custody bill to create a rebuttable presumption that equal parenting time is in the best interest of children in custody matters. While courts are not permitted to give preferential treatment to either parent in child custody cases, mothers are typically awarded a much greater share of custodial responsibilities. Increasingly, evidence establishes that, like mothers, fathers are key to the social and behavioral development of children

and greatly influence their emotional and developmental well-being. Equal custody would ensure both parents remain active participants in a child's life. A rebuttable presumption of equal custody reflects changing societal norms by recognizing gender equality in parenting roles. This would help to establish a fair and balanced playing field and would mitigate feelings of inequality and bias. Under my bill, the courts would still be required to weigh whether a parent is fit to raise the child and whether equal custody does, in fact, serve in the child's best interest. House Bill 2506 is in the House Children and Youth Committee of which I am a member.

House Resolution 349 – In the spring, the House passed, my legislation designating April 2024 as Retinal Blindness Awareness Month in Pennsylvania. I sponsored the resolution in honor of Gracy Smith, a 20-year-old college student from Lebanon County who was diagnosed at the age of 5 with Retinitis Pigmentosa, a progressive and incurable form of retinal blindness. Gracy is working through the Curing Retinal Blindness Foundation to find a cure. I also co-sponsored **House Resolution 251**, designating May 2024 as ALSP Awareness Month in Pennsylvania. ALSP is a rare, genetic disease with no cure, which has claimed the lives of several of Heidi Edwards' family members. A resident of North Lebanon Township, Heidi established Sisters' Hope Foundation to support afflicted families and raise awareness for a cure. For more information, visit sistershopefoundation.org/.

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**OFFICE
LOCATIONS**

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PO Box 202101
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2101
Phone: 717-783-1815

DISTRICT OFFICE

2272 Lebanon Valley Mall
Lebanon, PA 17042
Phone: 717-838-3823

Town Hall Meeting

On Thursday, Sept. 5, from 6-8 p.m., I will host a Town Hall Meeting at Cedar Haven Healthcare Center, 590 S. Fifth Ave., Lebanon. I look forward to seeing you, providing a brief update on pending legislation and answering your state-related questions. Please come, enjoy some light refreshments and tell me what's on your mind. RSVPs are requested but not required. Call **717-838-3823**.

**Application Deadline Extended for
2023 Property Tax/Rent Rebate**

The deadline for senior citizens and Pennsylvanians with disabilities to apply for rebates on rent and property taxes paid in 2023 has been extended to Dec. 31. Income limits increased this year to \$45,000 for both homeowners and renters. Remember to exclude 50% of Social Security when determining your income. The law I supported to expand the program also increased the maximum rebate to \$1,000. The program is open to residents age 65 years and older; widows and widowers 50 years and older; and people with disabilities 18 years and older. Apply online at mypath.pa.gov, or contact my office at **717-838-3823** for assistance.

SERVING THE 101ST LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



Welcoming new U.S. citizens



Bennett Automotive Group expands



Mancino's Pizza celebrates 45 years



Social studies lesson with Ebenezer Elementary students



WEPA groundbreaking ceremony for adult health care training program