



## Getting to a Balanced and Responsible Budget

In February, the Governor proposed a \$32.3 billion budget for 2017-18, an increase of \$800 million over this year. To fund his new spending, the Governor proposed a host of new taxes on natural gas producers, insurance premiums, corporations and businesses that purchase certain currently sales tax-exempt goods and services. These increased taxes would undoubtedly trickle down to consumers and even cost some Pennsylvanians their jobs.

Beyond the new taxes, the Governor's budget relied upon hundreds of millions of dollars in one-time revenues and undefined gambling expansion. These are the sorts of ill-conceived, short-sighted schemes certain to worsen the Commonwealth's fiscal condition in future years.

The Governor would have us, essentially, use the Farm Show Complex as collateral for a \$200 million loan, the proceeds of which would all be spent in the upcoming year while taxpayers remained on the hook for the next 29 years. Using long-term loans to balance your budget is a path to financial disaster.

Regrettably, what I and many others consider the

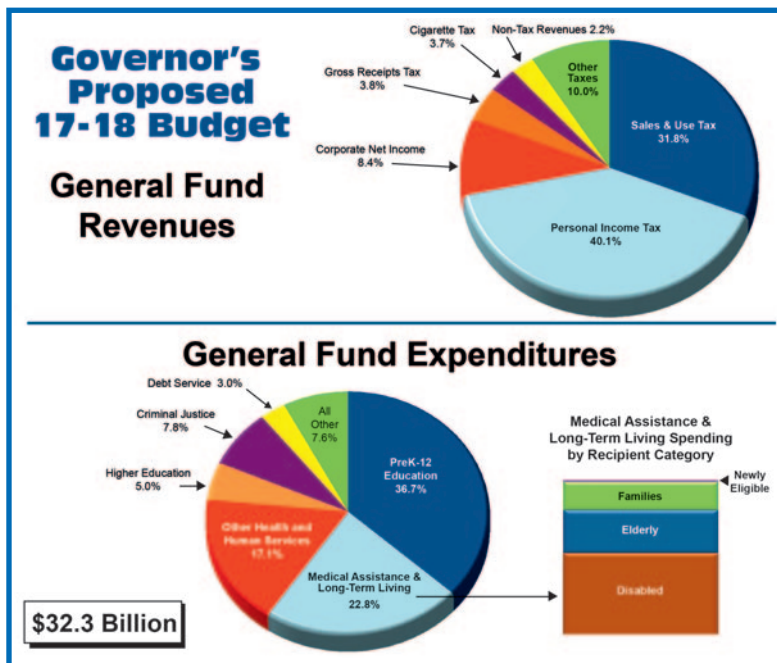
single biggest issue facing the state, the out-of-control public pension system and its more than \$74 billion in unfunded liabilities, wasn't even addressed in the Governor's budget. However, he actually proposed an early retirement incentive for state employees that would make the problem even worse. Instead, the Senate passed its own pension reform plan, Senate Bill 1, that would give future state employees the choice of a 401k-style plan or a combination of a 401k and reduced pension benefits with new features like portability and self-directed investing. To be clear, this bill does not adversely impact current employees or retirees. It

does limit taxpayer risk and help ensure the state is able to honor its obligations to public employees. It's a step in the right direction, but more work remains to protect taxpayers and pay down the state's pension debts.

While ignoring the pension problem, the Governor's budget did suggest the consolidation of multiple agencies – Health, Human Services, Aging and Drug and Alcohol Programs – into a single department to generate \$90 million in savings. While I believe that implementing efficiencies within the bureaucracy of state government is necessary, many questions about the accuracy of the estimated sav-

ings to be realized and ongoing program effectiveness remain to be answered by the administration even after several legislative hearings on this subject.

During these remaining weeks before the June 30 budget deadline, I will continue advocating among my colleagues in the Senate for eliminating wasteful spending, further reforming the pension system, and holding government officials accountable for their performance. Taxpayers deserve no less.



## Making Tax Hikes More Difficult, Preventing Costly Regulations, Banning Public Pensions for Lawbreakers

My priorities upon arriving in the Senate have been to reduce the size and cost of government, and increase accountability. To accomplish those goals, I introduced the following legislation this year:

**Senate Bill 489**, the Tax Limitation Amendment, makes it more difficult for the General Assembly to raise taxes. A proposed amendment to the state Constitution, it would require a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly to increase taxes. Pennsylvanians shoulder the fifteenth-highest state and local tax burden in the country. This amendment is required to protect taxpayers from the tax and spend culture that pervades state government. It is currently in the Senate State Government Committee.

**Senate Bill 561** prohibits a state regula-

tion with a cost to the Commonwealth, local governments and the private sector exceeding \$1 million from being imposed without approval of the General Assembly and Governor. The current regulatory process is set up to make it difficult for the General Assembly to protect employers and other citizens from burdensome regulations. It is a priority of mine to restore the constitutional balance and ensure that the people, through their elected representatives, have the final say on legislative intent for economically significant regulations. This bill passed the Senate Rules and Executive Nominations Committee and is now awaiting passage by the full Senate.

**Senate Bill 611** ensures that public employees who commit job-related felonies are stripped of their taxpayer-

funded pension. Current law requires a public employee to forfeit his or her pension only for certain crimes listed in the act. In practice, this law allows public employees charged with a forfeiture crime to plead guilty to a different, non-forfeiture crime in order to keep their pension. At a time when public pensions are wreaking havoc on state and school district budgets, it's especially egregious that taxpayers are continuing to fund the pensions of public employees who commit felonies on the job. This bill passed the Senate Finance Committee with bipartisan support and is now awaiting passage by the full Senate.

**Senate Bill 695** clarifies the statute of limitations on crimes related to public employment and provides sufficient time for investigations to be conducted after someone has left public office. The legislation is part of a bipartisan package of bills recommended in a recent report by the Attorney General on the financial transactions of the Harrisburg incinerator. Public officials need to be held to a high standard and face accountability when they violate the public trust.

### Sign Up for Email Updates/Tele-Town Halls

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Senator DiSanto speaks at an education rally at the Capitol.



## Senator DiSanto Appointed to Six Key Senate Committees



For the 2017-18 legislative session, I am serving as Vice Chairman of the **Senate Finance Committee**, which considers tax-related legislation. In addition, I am a member of the **Education, Agriculture & Rural Affairs, Labor & Industry, Urban Affairs & Housing,** and **Intergovernmental Operations** standing committees. I have also been appointed to the Majority Policy Committee that develops initiatives for the Republican Caucus.

Committees are where bills are vetted for the first time and public hearings are held on major topics. I am eager to use my position on these committees to tackle the major issues facing the 15th District and our Commonwealth. These committee assignments will allow me to weigh in early on pro-taxpayer and government reform legislation important to my constituents.

## Combatting Blight

On May 23 I hosted, in conjunction with the Senate Majority Policy and Urban Affairs and Housing committees, a roundtable discussion with city and county officials, local developers and industry experts to find solutions to combat blight and abandonment in Pennsylvania. The meeting was held at Harrisburg Area Community College's Midtown Campus in Harrisburg.

Presenters provided many success stories in addressing blight as well as opportunities for potentially changing state law to help prevent or eliminate blight. Some ideas discussed include having properties with a condemnation order sold at a tax sale be subject to a performance bond requirement, guaranteeing that insurance proceeds from fire-damaged properties are used to address the blighted conditions, reducing the time it takes to foreclose on vacant and abandoned properties, and using plywood-alternatives for boarding up vacant and abandoned properties to maintain area property values and stabilize neighborhoods.

I look forward to giving further consideration to these and other ideas discussed at my blight roundtable, and working with my legislative colleagues, local officials, residents and other interested stakeholders in addressing blight in our communities throughout the 15th District.

The blight roundtable was recorded and is available for viewing at my website, [www.senatordisanto.com](http://www.senatordisanto.com). Click on the News tab, followed by Audio/Video.



*Senator DiSanto chairs a May 15 Education Subcommittee on Support Services and Transportation hearing on pupil transportation services.*

## Leading by Example

I believe the size and scope of state government needs to be reduced in order to get our fiscal house in order, stop the constant pressure for tax increases and create an environment in which businesses and job creators can provide opportunities for future generations of Pennsylvanians.

I've started this "fiscal diet" by identifying cost savings and efficiencies within my own Senate office. Personally, I'm not accepting a state pension or seeking reimbursement for my routine travel within the district.

I've also significantly reduced the size of the district office staff and leases. I currently have five employees between my Capitol and one permanent district office to assist me with providing constituent service, responding to inquiries and reviewing, drafting and tracking legislation. My predecessor had ten employees and leases for three offices in addition to the Capitol.

I'm leading by example and have the smallest staff of any state senator. I've halved the size of my office, while not limiting access to me or my staff, in order to put taxpayers first. I have partnered with several municipalities to provide mobile office access at their facilities throughout the district multiple times per month. I'd like our state government overall to reduce spending by 10 percent. Imagine the savings to taxpayers if we all committed to doing more with less.



STATE SENATOR  
**John M. DiSanto**

Senate Box 203015  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3015

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## Join One of Senator DiSanto's Citizen Advisory Committees

In order to share information and have a dialogue with my constituents interested in specific topics, I am establishing several citizen advisory committees: **Agriculture, Small Business, Sportsmen and Women, and Veterans**. These committees will meet a few times each year and discuss some of the key proposals and pending legislation regarding these issues. If you are interested in serving on any of these committees, please visit my website at [senatordisanto.com](http://senatordisanto.com).



*Senator DiSanto meets with staff of the Northern Dauphin Human Services Center, site of an outreach office.*

## Senator DiSanto's 15th District Legislative Offices

Senate Box 203015, 352 Main Capitol Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120-3015  
(717) 787-6801 • FAX (717) 783-3722

P.O. Box 236, 7 West Main Street, New Bloomfield, PA 17068  
(717) 582-2454 • FAX (717) 582-2487

Find my Community Outreach Offices at  
[senatordisanto.com](http://senatordisanto.com)

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