



State Senator **JIM BREWSTER**

Serving the 45th Senatorial District

Reports WINTER 2015



Dear Friend,

I am honored to continue serving as your state Senator. As a result of reapportionment, the communities in the 45th district have been somewhat reconfigured. Therefore, some of you are familiar constituents and old friends while others are future friends new to my staff and me. While the geography of the district has been adjusted, my priorities have not been altered. Providing quality service to you and standing up for the needs of our district remains my top priority.

I am proud of our work together so far. For example, we worked to pass a meaningful transportation financing plan. While this law may have been controversial, I am convinced that it was necessary.

Now more than a year later, we have already seen many benefits of investing in our public transportation infrastructure. From more jobs for Pennsylvanians, to investment in the Port Authority, to safer roads and bridges, this new law has turned out to be a success. You may have even noticed a bridge or road being upgraded in your neighborhood – and there are more benefits yet to come.

My top legislative priorities remain job creation, economic development, quality education and tax relief for all taxpayers. I also believe in fiscal austerity and leading by example on legislative expenses. That's why I do not take per diem payments or lease a state vehicle because legislators must be fiscally responsible and accountable.

My staff and I are working hard to learn more about issues important to us all. We want to hear your thoughts and concerns while bringing services to the communities that I represent. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us with questions or concerns. My offices are available to help you, and you can also visit my online office at www.senatorbrewster.com.

I would like to thank you for your encouragement and support, and I look forward to working to make our region an even better place to work, do business and raise families.

NEW Satellite Offices

Permanent Monthly Satellite Office Hours

Human Services Center Corporation
419 Penn Avenue • Turtle Creek
First Wednesday of Each Month • 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Vandergrift Municipal Building
109 Grant Avenue • Vandergrift
Every Wednesday and Thursday • 8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Allegheny Township Municipal Building
136 Community Building Road • Leechburg
Every Monday and Tuesday • 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.



Photo courtesy of the Valley Mirror

▲ Sen. Brewster attends the ribbon cutting for the new Urgent Care in Braddock with local, county, federal and fellow state officials.



▲ Sen. Brewster hosted an informational table at the Forward Township Community Days at Sunny Gallatin Park.



▲ Sen. Brewster speaks with seniors at Court Time Sports Center in Elizabeth.

Protect American Jobs

This three-piece legislation package aims to deal with the dumping of foreign-made steel that is used in shale drilling in Pennsylvania.

1. Requires any safety device used in gas wells – including casings – are made with steel manufactured in the United States.

2. Requires the pipelines used to transport natural gas use U.S. manufactured steel.

3. Requires the Department of Environmental Protection to create an online, publicly accessible database that shows the country of origin for steel products used by well operators. This measure does not impose any new reporting requirements on the industry, simply requires the database to be publicly accessible.

▼ *Sen. Brewster visits gas drilling sites in southwestern PA.*



Senator Brewster Supports Veteran Programs

Veteran designation on PA Driver's Licenses or ID cards is made available to persons producing valid honorable military discharge papers. This designation will allow veterans easier access to benefits and services, however, further documentation will still be required for veterans to obtain VA benefits. To learn more about this program and others visit Senator Brewster's website at: www.senatorbrewster.com/military

Officer Frank Miller Jr. Memorial Ramp Dedication

Sen. Brewster hosted the "Officer Frank Miller Jr. Memorial Ramp" dedication ceremony in McKeesport on October 20, 2014.

"The naming of this roadway will serve as a reminder of Officer Miller's sacrifice," Sen. Brewster said. "Frank Miller was a young, dedicated public servant who lost his life while on duty protecting the citizens of McKeesport."

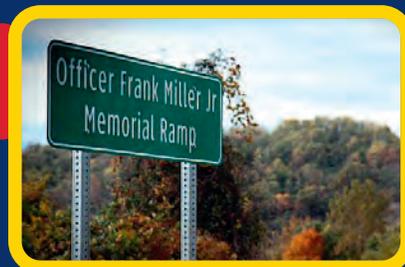
Miller was killed while on duty in McKeesport in 1993.

Sen. Brewster prime-sponsored the legislation (SB1225) naming the ramp for Officer Miller. His bill was signed into law in June as Act 68. The ramp is located on the McKeesport side of the McKeesport-Duquesne Bridge to State Route 148.



Sen. Brewster said local police need more resources and funding to better protect citizens. He mentioned pending legislation (SB318) he sponsored that would increase salaries for part-time police officers as a "good first step."

◀ *Rev. Earlene Coleman gives opening prayer at the beginning of dedication ceremony.*



Senator Brewster Continues to Support The Military

Lawmakers Learn About Housing Needs of Vets at McKeesport Roundtable

Sen. Brewster co-hosted a roundtable discussion along with Senate Democratic Appropriations Chair Vincent J. Hughes (D-Philadelphia/Montgomery) regarding SB1135, which established veteran preference in housing.

Local veterans, representatives of veteran groups, housing authorities, the Allegheny County executive's office, and officials from the regional Housing and Urban Development and the NAACP McKeesport Unit outlined both challenges faced by veterans and programs that provide assistance. The mayors of McKeesport and Duquesne along with Brian Hudson, executive director and chief executive officer of the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency, provided insight about the housing needs of veterans. Following the roundtable



discussion, Sen. Brewster led lawmakers and officials on a tour of an adjacent handicapped-accessible housing unit that would be available for veterans.

Sen. Brewster, a co-sponsor of the bill, along with other Democratic and Republican senators, were pleased when it was announced that the House Urban Affairs Committee passed what is now known as Act 188 into law on October 27, 2014.

"I am happy to see that this legislation passed and veterans can get the housing assistance they need," Sen. Brewster said.

Senator Brewster Continues To Support 2nd Amendment



New Hunting Heritage Plate Now Available!

“A new license plate honoring hunting as a sport in Pennsylvania was long overdue. I am excited that Pennsylvania hunters, sportsmen and sportswomen are now able to apply for a license plate that highlights our deep-rooted heritage.”

– Sen. Jim Brewster

Hunters and outdoor-sports enthusiasts will soon be able to obtain a license plate for their vehicles honoring Pennsylvania’s hunting heritage. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) will process applications for the Hunting Heritage plate. The application is available through the Game Commission website as well as through Senator Brewster's website at: <http://www.senatorbrewster.com/huntingplate>.

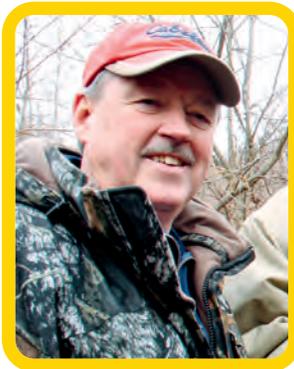
Sen. Brewster said that he initially introduced the measure following a discussion he had with Ron Maurer, a resident of Elizabeth Township, who asked him about the potential for hunters to have their own license plate.

The lawmaker’s bill was initially introduced as Senate Bill 773. The measure was eventually incorporated into Senate Bill 1187 and was signed into law on July 2, 2014 as Act 109.

According to Sen. Brewster, the new law calls for the proceeds from the fee that is charged for the plate to go to food banks and nonprofit organizations that promote hunting, youth hunting and the enhancement of game species.

Sen. Brewster credited lawmakers from both sides of the aisle in helping smooth the passage of the legislation. He thanked Sen. Richard Alloway (R-Franklin) and former Sen. Richard Kasunic (D-Fayette), who were last session’s Republican and Democratic chairs of the Senate’s Game and Fisheries committee, along with Sen. David Argall (R-Schuylkill) for helping push the measure for a vote.

He also said that the plate would never have been created without the support of the Pennsylvania Game Commission President Robert W. Schlemmer, whose granddaughter helped PennDOT and the Game Commission with the design of the plate.



Brewster to Serve as Democratic Chair of Three Senate Committees

Sen. Brewster has been selected to serve as Democratic chair of three standing committees of the Pennsylvania Senate for the 2015-16 session.

“I am honored to be chosen as chair of the Senate Law and Justice and Game and Fisheries committees and vice-chair of the Pennsylvania Legislative Budget and Finance committee,” Sen. Brewster said. “Each of these committees handle tough issues with difficult subject matters that impact the citizens of Pennsylvania on a daily basis.”

Sen. Brewster said that in addition to his positions on the Law and Justice, Game and Fisheries and Pennsylvania Legislative Budget and Finance committees he will also serve as a member of the Banking and Insurance, Transportation and Policy committees.

“The committee chairmanships and assignments I received place me in a good position to craft policies to help our region,” Sen. Brewster said. “I look forward to working with both Democratic and Republican members and the new administration on new laws and solutions that improve lives for each and every citizen of the state.”



Sen. Brewster’s Annual First Responders Picnic

Sen. Brewster held his Annual First Responders Picnic at Renziehausen Park in McKeesport. Hundreds of emergency service individuals and families enjoyed the demonstrations, festivities and speakers. Sen. Brewster plans to continue this tradition in the Allegheny County portion of the district as well as the Westmoreland County portion this summer.



Property Tax Relief

Sen. Brewster continues to bring focus to the need for property tax relief for all taxpayers in Pennsylvania. “We need to move quickly to enact a comprehensive reform that meets the needs of all property taxpayers,” Sen. Brewster said. “The bottom line is that we need to act soon to address the hardship experienced by seniors and other property taxpayers resulting from high property tax bills. Doing nothing is not an option.”

Senator Brewster's Legislative Briefing

While introducing the legislation below, Senator Brewster has also co-sponsored over 440 bi-partisan bills. It isn't about a political party, it is about a better Pennsylvania.

SB234 – Small Business First Fund (PA Works)

This legislation is part of the "PA Works" strategy by the Senate Democratic Caucus to create jobs and spark economic development.

The Small Business First Fund will provide loan funds to assist in the start-up and expansion of small businesses. For each \$25,000 loaned, one full-time equivalent job must be created. Also, this legislation would increase the maximum loan amounts and repayment periods, while decreasing the maximum interest rates, to make the program more attractive.

SB314 – Prohibit Certain Income from Taxation

This legislation would amend the Tax Reform Code of 1971 to prohibit certain income from taxation relating to estates and trusts.

Currently, the IRS exempts the first \$3,050, but Pennsylvania taxes everything.

SB318 – Part-time Police Fund

This fund will make grants available for the purpose of hiring and retaining part-time police officers in a municipality. Grants shall not exceed \$5,000 per police officer position and shall be used to supplement the part-time police salary paid by the municipality up to a maximum of \$15 per hour of pay not to exceed 85 percent of a full-time base salary for a police officer in the municipality.

SB483 – Body Camera Usage by Police

This legislation will allow police officers who are wearing body cameras to continue to do so when inside homes or other buildings. Officers will be allowed to use their

body cameras to record interactions if they enter a residence with a reasonable belief that a crime is being committed, in pursuit of someone they believe to have committed a crime, or if they notify and receive consent from residents. Officers currently have to check to see if cameras are off before entering residence, even if they are entering in emergency situations.

SB435 – Direct Payments (for emergency service claims)

This legislation would require insurers that approve claims for emergency services to directly reimburse organizations that provide such services.

Entities included in the definition of emergency service organizations include ambulance services, emergency and medical services, and river rescue services.

SB320 – Teacher Certification for Charter Schools

This legislation would require all newly-hired teacher or professional staff of a charter school be required to hold appropriate state certification.

Teachers who currently are employed by a charter school, but don't have a teaching certification, are not required to have a certification to teach at the charter school.

Currently, charter schools must have at least seventy-five percent of professional teacher staff certified.

SB395 – Extraction for Education

This legislation would impose a 5 percent severance tax on production of natural gas at the well head itself within the Commonwealth to support education. 100 percent of the funds will be used to help schools, taxpayers and children. This funding will supplement General Fund

revenues for basic education based on the new funding formula that is being crafted by a bi-partisan commission. It will also retain funds that are currently generated from impact fees for use by local and state government.

SB482 – County Demo & Property Rehab Fund

This legislation will help deal with blight and abandoned properties.

This funding mechanism will provide counties with a funding source to fight blight and deal with abandoned properties. A fee will be added, not to exceed 10 percent, on the final sale price of a property sold at a judicial sale.

The funds would be used solely for demolition and property rehab purposes for that specific county where the fees are administered.

This added fee is optional; each county must authorize its implementation.

SB355 – Student Performance Measurement Advisory Commission

This legislation would create a Student Performance Measurement Advisory Commission.

The Commission will make findings and recommendations to improve the measure of performance in the Commonwealth to more fairly and accurately measure the academic performance of students, schools, school districts and educators.

The 11-member Commission will review the following for their strengths and weaknesses: The PA System of School Assessment, The PA Alternate System of Assessment, The Keystone Exams, The PA Accountability System (including the PA Performance Index), and the PA Value Added Assessment System.

New Transportation Law Means Safer Roads, Job Creation and Increase of Business for Region

When Act 89, The Transportation Law, was being considered, supportive lawmakers knew that it was critical legislation that would not only do good but also prevent catastrophic harm.

This past August marked seven years since the collapse of the I-35W bridge in Minneapolis. A gusset plate holding the bridge together failed, bringing the bridge down. This was a horrifying day for so many people, including the 62 children riding a school bus dangerously close to a flaming semi-truck.

Sadly, there were 13 people unnecessarily killed and 145 others injured. It took up to three weeks to recover all of the victims from the collapse. This tragic event plays through my mind and how this could be a bridge in our area.

“For those who would argue that this is just another tax on taxpayers of Pennsylvania, I would highlight that since this bill has been implemented, the price of gasoline has dropped more than a dollar and bridge and road repairs have increased. I'm confident that we have saved lives and this is what is most important to me.”

– Sen. Jim Brewster

Roads, bridges, mass transit and other pieces of our critical transportation infrastructure were decaying and in disrepair.

A new investment plan and financing structure was needed that would provide a means to redesign our transportation network to handle future economic advances. Doing nothing, or using temporary patches that continue to gloss over the gaping problem, were non-starters. Significant action was necessary and a permanent solution was needed.

The way Act 89 was crafted by lawmakers has it generating \$2.3 billion annually while creating more than 60,000 jobs in the comprehensive rehabilitation of our transportation infrastructure. The plan increases funding for mass transit, infuses hundreds of millions into highway and bridge reconstruction, allocates more than a 60 percent increase in state funding to local governments to build and maintain roads, aids the upgrade and sequencing of traffic lights and increases funding for dirt and gravel roads.

Not addressing transportation financing was not a realistic option. Local developers want state-of-the-art transportation networks to speed products to market. Commuters want smooth roads, strong bridges and an efficient mass transit system.

The funding is generated largely through an uncapping of the oil franchise tax in three phases over five years. While some of the new tax may be passed on to the consumer, the steep reduction in gas prices due to world-wide economic forces has lessened the cost borne by consumers. Ironically, the price of gasoline has dropped dramatically since Act 89 was passed. We are saving more than a dollar per gallon compared to last summer.

As a result of Act 89, our roads are safer, our families are safer and Pennsylvania is poised to take a giant step economically.

45th Senatorial District

Pennsylvania has more structurally deficient bridges than any other state; nearly 4,500 out of 25,000 are state-owned bridges. There are also 9,200 miles of PA roads that are in poor condition and 31,000 buses carry 1.5 million children to school on our roads and bridges daily.

There are approximately 43 upgrade projects that will be going on in our district alone. This is great news but there is still work to be done.

Allegheny County

- 1,174 bridges
- 223 structurally deficient (19.0%)
- 11,946,037 bridge average annual daily traffic
- 1,737,772 average daily traffic on structurally deficient bridges

Westmoreland County

- 734 bridges
- 167 structurally deficient (22.7%)
- 3,194,148 bridge average annual daily traffic
- 595,653 average daily traffic on structurally deficient bridges

Data courtesy of: PennDOT



Photo courtesy of The Daily News
▲ Sen. Brewster joins federal, county, local and fellow state leaders at the official ribbon cutting of the Mansfield Bridge in Dravosburg.



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Save the Dates

**SENIOR IDENTITY
THEFT SEMINARS**
with the
**Pennsylvania
Attorney General's Office**

Brentwood:
**Monday • March 9th
2 p.m.**
Brentwood Public Library
Community Room
3501 Brownsville Rd. • Pittsburgh

•••••
New Kensington:
**Thursday • April 23rd
10:30 a.m.**
Alle-Kiski Valley Center
for Active Adults
1039 3rd Ave. • New Kensington

SPRING SENIOR EXPO
**Thursday • May 14th
10:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.**
West Leechburg Fire Hall
1116 Gosser St. • West Leechburg



▲ Sen. Brewster held a senior expo in New Kensington where seniors were able to take advantage of a wide variety of screenings and information.

For additional information, contact Sen. Brewster's McKeesport District Office at (412) 664-5200

Go Paperless

If you would like to opt-out of receiving hard copy newsletters, visit www.SenatorBrewster.com/OptOut to sign up to receive them via email.

2015 Satellite Office Hours:

Be sure to check your local municipal building for days and hours that our office will be in YOUR community.

Tax Forms

Tax forms for the 2014 tax year are available at all three of Sen. Brewster's district offices.
State: www.revenue.pa.gov
Federal: www.irs.gov



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