

**SENATOR JOE SCARNATI**



# Legislative UPDATE

**REFORMING PENNSYLVANIA'S STATE GOVERNMENT**

**OCTOBER 2006 • 25TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT**



*Dear Friend,*

*On the day of the 2006 Primary Election, Commonwealth voters sent a clear and simple message to Harrisburg: "We want reform in state government."*

*I couldn't agree more. Reforming the way we do business in Harrisburg is long overdue. The people of Pennsylvania deserve a state government that operates efficiently, transparently and in a financially conservative manner.*

*As the recently appointed Chairman of the Senate Republican Policy Committee, I intend to lead the movement towards reform for better government. The purpose of state government is to serve the people's best interests, not our own.*

*The road to reform will be lengthy and difficult, but I will not let the issue rest until real reform happens.*

*If you have any questions regarding this mailer or other state government issues, please feel free to contact one of my offices.*

*Sincerely,*

*Joe Scarnati*

## **Scarnati Pushes Senate Reforms To Reduce Taxpayer-Funded Perks, Change Lobbyist Rules**

I am pleased to report that I led the charge for crucial reforms which the Senate has already enacted to reduce taxpayer-funded perks.

Senators will no longer be able to lease cars from private dealerships for up to \$600 a month. This measure will prevent members from leasing expensive luxury vehicles at taxpayer expense. While I have never leased a vehicle - nor do I support leasing of vehicles to members - I strongly believe this is a step in the right direction.

Also, Senators and Senate staffers are now required to pay a portion of their salary for health care benefits. Previously, these benefits were provided free of charge. This measure puts Senate employees in-line with private sector employees.

In addition to reducing taxpayer-funded perks, I am working with my colleagues to make state government more transparent regarding the money spent by lobbyists.

That's why I am encouraging

members in the Senate and in the House to support legislation that fully discloses all lobbyist activity to the public.

Currently, the Senate has a rule in place that requires lobbyists to register and report their spending as it relates to lobbying the Senate. However, the House currently has no such rule. I intend to lead the charge on passing legislation to correct this problem, ensuring public access to all lobbyist activity.

## Scarnati Seeks Job Creation Through Workforce Development Initiatives

I recently called for a hearing of the Senate Republican Policy Committee to focus on workforce development initiatives intended to provide the 25th District with additional jobs paying competitive salaries.

I, along with my colleagues Senator Jake Corman (R-Centre) and Senator John Gordner (R-Columbia), heard testimony from several area business leaders who wish to promote job expansion and create more meaningful employment opportunities for workers in our area.

Currently, programs such as Job Ready PA help local workforces by leveraging \$2 billion in the Commonwealth's workforce and education systems to ensure that workers have the skills they need to compete in the global economy, increasing options for students to receive post-

secondary education and boosting the skills of high school graduates.

I intend to keep searching for new options to provide educational resources and training programs to benefit both employers and workers.

Essentially, the 25th District faces an uphill battle in workforce development because it is not located in a prime region of the state like some districts with significant urban and suburban development. However, by setting realistic goals, I intend to do everything I can to ensure additional family-sustaining jobs in this part of Pennsylvania.

*Senator Corman (left) and Senator Gordner (center) listen as Senator Scarnati (right) discusses possible workforce development initiatives with local business leaders at a recent Policy Committee hearing.*



## Legislation Reforms State Spending Limits

I am leading a movement to make state government more fiscally conservative and accountable. I am rallying support from my colleagues to pass legislation intended to keep state spending below the rate of inflation. This measure would prevent the kind of excessive spending that occurred in this year's state budget - which I did *not* support.

Senate Bill 4, known as the Taxpayer Fairness Act (TFA), would restrict the growth in state spending by evaluating the average percentage changes in personal income and the average rate of inflation over the past three years compared to the change in state population for those years.

The TFA would also set aside 50 percent of any surplus into the state's Rainy Day fund. The other 50 percent would go into the new Taxpayer Fairness Fund and be returned to taxpayers via a method to be determined by the General Assembly.

## Scarnati Holds Policy Hearing To Discuss Reducing Legislature

Reforming Pennsylvania's state government has become one of my top priorities. As Chairman of the Senate Republican Policy Committee, I have the advantage of playing a first-hand role in reforming the way we do business in Harrisburg.

Recently, the Policy Committee hosted a hearing at the University of Pittsburgh to discuss reducing the size of the Legislature. The hearing is the first step in a complicated process which will require a constitutional amendment. To enact any change, the Senate and the House would both have to approve identical bills in two consecutive two-year sessions, followed by approval in a public referendum.

I held this hearing to listen to the pros and cons of this issue so we as a Legislature can make more informed decisions. As an official elected by the people, I promise to keep the reform process moving forward and at the forefront of the Senate.



*Senator Scarnati (right) and Senator Don White (R-Indiana, left) listen to testimony from several interest groups - including the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, the League of Women Voters and the Commonwealth Foundation for Public Policy Alternatives - at the Senate Republican Policy Committee hearing held at the University of Pittsburgh.*

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