

READY TO SERVE YOU

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

It remains my honor to represent you in Harrisburg and to serve you here at home.

My staff and I are here to help. I maintain two district offices, in Hazleton and Mahanoy City. Simply stop by or give us a call for assistance with any state-related issue or concern.

We send these mailings every few months to keep you up to date on news from the state Capitol and here in the 116th Legislative District. I hope you find them to be interesting and informative.

Another great way for us to stay connected is registering to receive my Friday email updates at www.RepWatro.com, under the "Resources" tab.

Thank you,

Dan G. Watro

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ HONORING OUR LOCAL VETERANS ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



Coffee and donuts event for veterans at Hazleton Area Cyber Academy.



Veterans event at the Hazleton Elks.



Eighth annual Veterans Day Ceremony and Reception at Hazleton Area High School.



I am proud to work alongside these fellow veterans in the House of Representatives.

As an Army veteran, the Veterans Day holiday has a lot of personal meaning for me. We thank all the organizations and individuals who took the time to recognize the service and sacrifice of our local veterans.



MY BILL TO HELP VETERANS BECOME EMTS SIGNED INTO LAW

I am pleased to announce that my first bill has been signed into law by Gov. Josh Shapiro. My family and I joined the governor for the ceremonial bill signing in November, along with first responders and veterans from our district.

Act 13 of 2023 streamlines the professional licensing process for veterans seeking a civilian emergency medical services career in Pennsylvania. The new law ensures that a service member's military education and training are considered when applying for credentials related to emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics.

As a freshman lawmaker and Army veteran, I am thrilled and proud that my first bill to become law is going to help my fellow veterans pursue their dream of serving our communities as medical first responders.

A LIFELINE FOR EMS COMPANIES

Emergency medical services (EMS) companies across Pennsylvania will see a significant and much-needed boost in reimbursement rates under legislation I supported in the House that has now been signed into law. Many EMS companies in our area are struggling financially and this increase will help maintain their life-saving services to local communities.

Act 15 of 2023 ties the state's Medicaid reimbursement rates to federal Medicare rates, and pays whichever amount is higher for services such as basic life support and advanced life support ambulance trips.

The new law also ensures EMS agencies are reimbursed by Medicaid for 100% of the miles they travel with a patient on board receiving care or transport, finally removing the current exemption for the first 20 miles traveled.

The increased reimbursement rates take effect Jan. 1.



ADDRESSING PA'S NURSING SHORTAGE

Working to address the critical shortage of nurses and ensure access to health care, Pennsylvania recently took the first step to implement the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) by allowing nurses with multistate licenses issued by 40 other states and territories to practice in the Commonwealth.

The change provides a much-needed expansion in the pool of recruits for hospitals and other health care facilities, and helps alleviate burdens on overworked nursing staffs, making conditions safer for both patients and health care workers.

A recent survey by The Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP) showed vacancy rates of 30% for RNs providing direct care, which is a 10-point increase since 2019. A separate HAP report showed that Pennsylvania could have a shortfall of more than 20,000 RNs by 2026.

This change is an important step toward reversing that trend.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

DANE WATRO

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HEATING ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE THIS WINTER

Residents who struggle with their home heating bills can apply for assistance from the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). LIHEAP is a federally funded program that helps individuals and families pay their heating bills through home heating energy assistance grants. It also provides crisis grants to help in the event of an emergency or if a resident is in danger of losing his or her heat due to broken equipment, lack of fuel or termination of utility service.

The income eligibility guidelines for LIHEAP are set at 150% of the federal poverty income level.

Residents may apply for LIHEAP online at www.compass.state.pa.us, by phone at 1-866-550-4355 or by contacting the County Assistance Office in their county of residence. Learn more at www.dhs.pa.gov or contact one of my offices for information.

PROPERTY TAX AND RENT REBATE PROGRAM EXPANDED

A new law, which I supported, makes more older residents and people with disabilities in Pennsylvania eligible for property tax or rent relief through a state rebate program.

Act 7 of 2023 increases income limits for the Property Tax and Rent Rebate Program for homeowners and renters to \$45,000. The new law also raises the maximum amount each homeowner or renter can receive from \$650 to \$1,000.

This was the first increase in the program since 2007 and it makes an additional 175,000 individuals statewide eligible for the rebates, including 6,000 in Luzerne County and 3,200 in Schuylkill County.

The expansion takes effect next year when residents apply for assistance based on rent and property taxes paid in 2023. Those claims will be paid in 2024.

There is still time to apply for the current year's program, which is based on rent and property taxes paid in 2022. Apply online at mypath.pa.gov or contact one of my offices for free assistance. Remember, you shouldn't have to pay someone to help you with the form.

Information is also at www.revenue.pa.gov.

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