

**Malady & Wooten, LLP**

Legislative Report

August 23, 2013

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**Pennsylvania Golf Course Owners Association**

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

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**Session Schedule:**

**2013 HOUSE SESSION SCHEDULE**

September 23, 24, 25, 30

October 1, 2, 15, 16, 17 (NV), 21, 22, 23

November 12, 13, 18, 19, 20

December 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18 (NV)

**2013 SENATE SESSION SCHEDULE**

September 23, 24, 25, 30

October 1, 2, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23

November 12, 13, 18, 19, 20

December 3, 4, 9, 10, 11

## PENNSYLVANIA BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS

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### DELAWARE RIVER BASIN COMMISSION

#### Notices

[Public hearing and business meeting](#)

### SENATE URBAN AFFAIRS & HOUSING COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN TEAM UP ON SCHOOL TAX REFORM

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**Harrisburg, Aug. 20, 2013** – The chairmen of the Senate Urban Affairs & Housing Committee are working to build bipartisan support for a bill that would eliminate school property taxes.

Senator David G. Argall (R-Schuylkill) and Senator Jim Brewster (D-Allegheny) chair the committee with oversight of issues impacting housing across the state.

“We heard plenty of individuals testify about the need for local tax reform during our hearings on the future of cities,” Brewster said. “Building a bipartisan coalition of legislators proves this is not a Democrat or Republican issue; this is a taxpayer’s issue.”

Brewster sees school tax elimination as a solution for homeowners who struggle to make ends meet and an opportunity to improve urban communities.

“We have been making tremendous strides toward building legislative support from every corner of the state, including the southwest,” Argall said. Argall introduced [similar legislation last session](#) that gained 13 co-sponsors out of the 50-member Senate.

This year, Argall points to the addition of 9 Senate co-sponsors; bringing the total co-sponsors to 22, including 10 Democrats. Argall credits the grassroots activists, along with Democrat and Republican elected officials working in a bipartisan manner.

[Senate Bill 76](#) and its House companion, [House Bill 76](#), were developed by the Pennsylvania Coalition of Taxpayers Association, a statewide grassroots taxpayer organization with over 80 chapters.

Argall and Brewster will soon release with the House Urban Affairs Committee a committee report detailing the findings from their hearings on the future of cities, large and small. The joint committee report will highlight suggestions offered by testifiers at the three hearings in Pittsburgh, York and Reading held at the beginning of summer. Some suggested school tax reform as an option to fix budget woes cities are currently facing.

### COSPONSOR MEMOS

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Rep. Brownlee

- [Co-Sponsorship -- Constitutional amendment authorizing two classes of properties within the Commonwealth](#)

Rep. Davis

- [Legislation Allowing Municipalities to More Broadly Define Hotels in Their Zoning Ordinances](#)

## **BILL REPORT**

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**\*ATTACHED TO THE REPORT\***

## **STATE NEWS**

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### **PA JOBLESS RATE REMAINS AT 7.5 PERCENT IN JULY**

Pennsylvania's unemployment rate hovered at a four-year low of 7.5 percent in July, but job creation remained sluggish, signaling a halting recovery from the depths of the Great Recession. Private-sector employers added 4,000 jobs last month over June, said a report from the state Department of Labor & Industry, but those gains were offset by a loss of 5,700 government jobs.

### **PA JOINS MULTI-STATE INITIATIVE TO PREVENT VOTER FRAUD**

Pennsylvania is joining a multi-state consortium that aims to preserve the integrity of every vote by preventing voters from voting in an election in more than one state. Secretary of the Commonwealth Carol Aichele announced this new effort at a statewide conference of county election officials in Philadelphia. Pennsylvania joins with 23 other states participating in this first-of-its-kind Interstate Voter Registration Crosscheck Program operated by Kansas at no cost to participating states.

### **SANDS LEAD STATE IN TABLE GAMES REVENUE**

Gamblers lost nearly \$60 million on the tables of Pennsylvania's 12 casinos in July, and for the 19th consecutive month, they left the most at Sands Casino Resort Bethlehem. Gamblers playing games such as blackjack, craps and roulette lost nearly \$13 million at the Bethlehem casino owned by Las Vegas Sands, while Parx Casino in Bensalem Township, Bucks County, brought in \$11.1 million, according to numbers released by the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board.

## **IN THE NEWS**

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### **Achievable School Property Tax Reform**

Over the years property tax reform proposals have ranged from senior freezes to elimination, and opinions have ranged from keeping the status quo to complete elimination. After three decades and much hardship, this issue needs to be resolved.

This is why I developed House Bill 1189 or the Optional Property Tax Elimination Act (OPTTEA), which bypasses the setbacks to every single property tax reform concept which has come before the General Assembly and builds on the legislation I authored last session.

OPTTEA is a simple concept. It allows school districts to swap out their property taxes for an Elimination Tax consisting of an Earned Income Tax, Business Privilege Tax, and/or a Mercantile Tax. The latter two taxes are gross receipts taxes and work similarly to a sales tax. It mandates every dollar raised through the elimination tax be used directly to eliminate or reduce property taxes. This allows local communities to develop their tax base in a manner which best reflects their individual economy and provide a stable revenue source for school districts.

OPTTEA does not bring more dollars to Harrisburg. Let's face it. Where there is a pool of money for politicians to dip into for other purposes, there will be dipping. It has happened in the past and it will continue to happen. Just look at the Social Security Trust Fund, the Commonwealth's tobacco settlement money, or even gaming revenue. Bigger government is never the answer, and in the long term, a statewide solution will open the door to grow the welfare rolls at the expense of education funding and taxpayers. When this happens, we will be back to square one – property taxes for education funding, higher state taxes and bigger government.

After three decades of failed attempts, this plan is achievable and flexible enough to work in all the Commonwealth's school districts. I look forward to working with my colleagues this fall in resolving this issue with legislation which can actually pass and provide the relief homeowners have been craving for.

- 08-22-2013 **Senate committee builds support to end school property taxes**  
HARRISBURG The chairmen of the Senate Urban Affairs & Housing Committee are working to build bipartisan support for a bill that would eliminate school property taxes. Sen. David G. Argall (R-Schuylkill) and Senator Jim Brewster (D-Allegheny) chair the committee with oversight of issues impacting housing across the... - [Lehighon Times News](#)
- 08-21-2013 **A more sensible stormwater runoff plan**  
Recently we raised a stink about a new mandate, part of the Chesapeake Bay environmental effort, that would have cost many Lancaster County homeowners a bundle and discouraged simple household improvements. We said we hoped the state would tweak its rules to spare average... - [Lancaster Intelligencer Journal](#)
- 08-19-2013 **The pros and cons of school start dates; early or late return to class?**  
Whatever start date a school district chooses, be it early or late, it's sure to have supporters and detractors. But two school systems in Lancaster County at either end of that spectrum — Lancaster Mennonite and Warwick — say their start dates work just fine, and they explained why.... - [Lancaster Sunday News](#)
- 08-19-2013 **Taking aim at Pennsylvania property taxes: Will legislators finally embrace reform?**  
Frank DiBernardino is one of many residents across the state who support a proposed bill that would eliminate school district property taxes in Pennsylvania. DiBernardino, 66, the owner of a consulting firm and member of the Delaware County Taxpayers Coalition, said he believes the piece of legislation would... - [Norristown Times Herald](#)
- 08-19-2013 **Tackling Pa. property tax reform one more time**  
No one needs to convince property owners in the Pottstown tri-county area that Pennsylvania has a tax problem. They've been railing about it for years. They're not alone. And the din across southeastern and central Pennsylvania is getting louder. Most vocal in the citizens' outcry are the taxpayer groups that for... - [Pottstown Mercury](#)

## WEEK IN REVIEW

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- 08-23-2013 **U.S. jobless claims dip, but Pa., N.J. still struggle**  
For the first time since the start of the recession in late 2007, the number of people filing initial claims for unemployment insurance in the month fell to 330,500 a week on average, the U.S. Labor Department reported Thursday. The news buoyed Wall Street, but the national story isn't what's... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 08-23-2013 **Pa. putting weight limits on 1,000 bridges**  
HARRISBURG - The cash-strapped Pennsylvania Department of Transportation is placing weight restrictions on 1,000 bridges across the state, including 134 in the Southeast, in an effort to prolong their use. "The bridges are not unsafe," Transportation Secretary Barry Schoch said at a news... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 08-22-2013 **Urgency sought for funding Pennsylvania roads and transit**  
Pittsburgh business, civic and government leaders and a bipartisan group of state senators sought Wednesday to turn up the heat on state House members to pass a funding bill for roads, bridges, transit and other transportation modes. Speaking at separate legislative hearings, they warned of economic harm,... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 08-22-2013 **Pa. justices give courts wide role in open records**  
HARRISBURG — The Pennsylvania Supreme Court has endorsed wide authority for state courts to determine whether government records should be released publicly, a decision the chief justice

warned would make requests more costly and add delays... - *AP*

- 08-21-2013 **Pennsylvania gets federal OK to ignore No Child Left Behind law**  
The Education Department approved Pennsylvania's request to ignore parts of the federal No Child Left Behind law on Tuesday, giving state administrators little time to plan an announcement to teachers, students and parents before school begins this week and next.... - *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*
- 08-21-2013 **Pennsylvania's interstate highways offer smoother ride than those in many states, federal study says**  
Amid all the chatter about the need for more highway funding in Pennsylvania comes a federal study indicating the state's interstates are smoother than you might think. They're the nation's 15th smoothest (or 35th worst, depending on how you look at it), a new Federal Highway Administration study shows.... - *Allentown Morning Call*
- 08-20-2013 **25 Sandusky victims likely to settle claims this week, Penn State attorney says**  
STATE COLLEGE — Twenty-five men who say former Penn State University assistant coach Jerry Sandusky sexually abused them will finalize settlement agreements with the university this week, a negotiator said Monday. Michael Rozen, a New York-based attorney Penn State retained to mediate the... - *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*
- 08-20-2013 **Pa. interstates are nation's 8th busiest**  
Pennsylvania's interstates are the eighth busiest in the nation but don't come close to the number of cars on California's highways, a federal study released Monday shows. The Federal Highway Administration compared 2011 data collected from all 50 states and found that people traveled 84.7 billion miles on California's... - *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*
- 08-19-2013 **Pennsylvania senators are able to find common ground on tax reform**  
Convinced the economy is the most important domestic issue facing the country, Sen. Bob Casey sought to move to the powerful Senate Finance Committee that is developing a proposal to reform America's tax code. Finance committee work puts the Scranton Democrat and his Republican... - *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*
- 08-19-2013 **Jack Wagner weighs possible 2014 bid for Pa. gov**  
HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) - Former Pennsylvania Auditor General Jack Wagner said Monday he is seriously weighing whether to enter the already crowded 2014 Democratic race for governor... - *AP*