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## Tuttle Point Awaits a Reopening and Resurgence

**F**or the past decade, I have worked to reopen the Tuttle Point Campground at Pymatuning State Park, a favorite outdoor destination for camping and other family activities that was closed by the state in 2009.

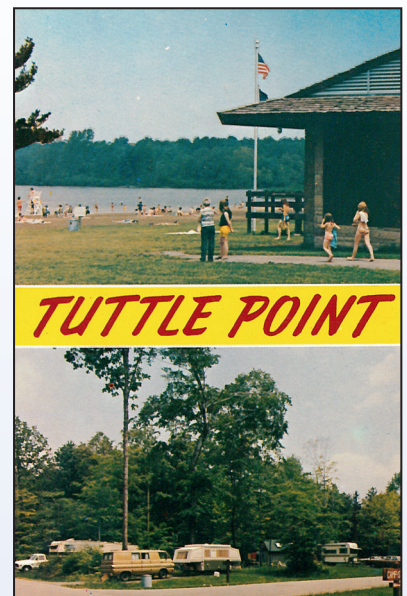
A reopening will not only help our local businesses – it will expand tourism in the area and reopen the gates to another beloved recreational spot for local families. It is expected to reopen in 2023.

We outlined plans for the campground's revival last fall at a public meeting at the North Shenango Township Community Center, where I was joined by officials from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Pennsylvania Department of General Services and KCI Technologies.

The new Tuttle Point Campground will reopen with approximately 100 full-service modern camping sites, approximately 12 tent-pad sites with electric and water by the lake, along with a handicap-accessible boat launch, fishing pier, paving, beach rest-rooms and other amenities.

Tuttle Point initially was slated for an upgrade in 2020 with a planned reopening for the 2021 camping season, but the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the project until now.

I am so grateful for the partnership with Park Manager Dan Bickel and other staff at Pymatuning State Park, DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn, North and South Shenango Joint Municipal Authority and township supervisors.



## General Assembly Approves Landmark Legislation to Expand Internet Access

**A** legislative initiative I supported to improve access to high-speed internet in underserved communities by creating the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority (PBDA) is expected to be a game-changer for farmers, families, business owners, teachers, students, doctors, patients and virtually anyone impeded by slow or no internet service.

The authority will serve as a central point to manage at least \$100 million in federal aid coming to Pennsylvania to expand broadband capabilities in underserved and unserved areas with construction of new towers, lines and broadband equipment. Without the authority,

Pennsylvania could lose out on that funding.

The legislation would establish a single point-of-contact for federal broadband funding and includes safeguards so legitimate contractors are chosen. It would also provide oversight by the Auditor General. Primarily, the PBDA would be tasked with creating a broadband plan that allows the state to apply for competitively awarded federal infrastructure money. The bill would also require the state to create a database to monitor all broadband deployment activities across the state.

Entities eligible for funding must have technical, managerial and financial expertise to design, build and operate

high-speed service infrastructure. Contractors that have defaulted on prior projects or have been convicted of a misdemeanor or felony in the last decade due to their past performance will be ineligible for funding.

The PBDA will be governed by 11 members, including five individuals representing the majority and minority parties of the Senate and House, as well as the governor. Subcommittees consisting of experts within the field may also be created.

Under the plan, the PBDA will dissolve within 10 years or when all federal funds are exhausted.

Please join us on social media:  [www.facebook.com/senatormichelebrooks/](https://www.facebook.com/senatormichelebrooks/)

# Legislation to Roll Back Onerous Vehicle Emissions Test Advances

Legislation I have cosponsored (Senate Bill 777) to exempt newer vehicles from the outdated, needless and expensive vehicle emissions test passed the state Senate recently and is awaiting consideration in the House of Representatives.

Since 2005, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has required Pennsylvania to implement the Vehicle Emissions Inspection and Maintenance (I/M) program to comply with the federal 1990 Clean Air Act amendment. This burdensome emissions program mandates that motorists in 25 counties, including Mercer and Erie, participate in an

erroneous emission test, costing them hundreds of extra dollars over the years.

Now that most newer vehicles pass the emissions test, it is long overdue for the federal government to reform these obsolete regulations.

Pennsylvania is a member of the federally-mandated Northeast Ozone Transport Region (OTR), which sets stricter air quality requirements for 12 states and the District of Columbia. Interestingly, Connecticut, Delaware, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Virginia have already exempted newer vehicles from the emission test. If other OTR

States can exempt newer vehicles, then I believe Pennsylvania can as well.



# New Law Aims to Help Many Older Pennsylvanians Afford their Medication



Legislation that ensures thousands of older Pennsylvanians have access to medications, even if they received the 5.9% cost-of-living increase in their Social Security benefits, has been signed into law. I joined the Senate in voting unanimously to approve the bill, which ensures that anyone enrolled in the state's Prescription Assistance Contract for the Elderly (PACE) and PACENET as of December 31, 2020, remains eligible if their maximum income limit is exceeded due solely to a Social Security cost-of-living adjustment. Without this change, some of the people enrolled in these prescription assistance programs would be deemed ineligible because they exceed its income limits.

House Bill 291, now Act 92, is expected to benefit more than 17,000 PACE and PACENET cardholders.

PACE and PACENET programs offer low-cost prescription medication to qualified residents age 65 or older. PACE has lower income eligibility limits than the PACENET program. The two programs provide prescription assistance to more than 300,000 older Pennsylvanians and is paid for out of money from the state's Lottery Fund.

Please call my office for more information on eligibility and application procedures.

# PACENET for Senior Citizens Income Limit Increases by \$6,000

Income limits for the PACENET prescription drug program will be increased by \$6,000 under a new law signed by Gov. Tom Wolf and supported by my colleagues and me in the full Senate.

This bipartisan legislation, formerly House Bill 1260, expands access to prescription medications for our seniors by building upon the

proven PACE/PACENET program and expanding eligibility.

Act 94, the new law, increases enrollment for the state's Prescription Assistance Contract for the Elderly Needs Enhancement Tier, known as PACENET, by about 20,000 people and raises the income limits to \$33,500 for a single person and \$41,500 for a married couple.

The new law provides financial incentives for PACENET enrollees to also sign up for federal Medicare Part D prescription coverage. Additional funds generated by increased participation in the federal prescription program will be used to pay for the increased PACENET enrollment.

## We will once again be hosting our Senior Expo in the fall. Please watch for details.

At this year's Expo, we will continue to serve as a collection site for Project Support Our Troops, in partnership with Post 52, to send much-needed items from home for those serving overseas.

We will be collecting: lip balm, toothpaste, toothbrushes, trail mix, Kleenex packs, crossword puzzles, pens, stamps, peanut butter, playing cards, crackers, peanuts, beef jerky, hand sanitizer and other nonperishables. We also collect these items year-round in our district offices.



## Welcome to Our Satellite Offices; We're Here to Help

In our ongoing efforts to bring state government closer to you, we have several satellite offices, with our newest at the Meadville Chamber Building.

We are very grateful to our office hosts for helping us bring our services closer to you: the Meadville-Western Crawford County Chamber of Commerce, Linesville Borough and Sandy Lake Borough.

You may talk to a staff person on these days and times about any state-related issue.

- Meadville Chamber Building, 908 Diamond Park, Meadville, Tuesdays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Sandy Lake Borough, 3271 South Main Street, Sandy Lake, Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Linesville Borough, 103 West Erie Street, Linesville, Fridays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

My offices in Greenville, Vernon Township and Edinboro are also available. You can contact our office by calling 1-800-457-2040. For your convenience, you can email me around-the-clock at [mbrooks@pasen.gov](mailto:mbrooks@pasen.gov).

## POW-MIA Flags Fly Along Roadways, Authorized by Brooks Legislation

I was humbled to sponsor legislation which required the flying of the official POW-MIA flag at all Pennsylvania Turnpike service plazas, highway welcome centers and rest stops, keeping POWs and those missing in action close at heart and reminding us of those families who sacrifice so much for our freedom. It is my hope that these flags serve as a testament to Pennsylvania's enduring gratitude to our veterans and, as a state, we remember and pray that one day ALL will be returned home. The flag, which features a black background and white lettering, also includes barbed wire, a watchtower and the words, "You are not forgotten."

In advocating for Senate Bill 395 of last session, I spoke on the Senate floor of a heart-warming hometown procession held in 2012 to honor Army Sgt. Chester Williams, a local Prisoner of War from the Korean Conflict whose remains were returned to Meadville.

This community outpouring of love and support included not only veterans, but

residents of every age group, from the smallest children to our most seasoned seniors, who stood somberly with tears in their eyes and hands over their hearts to welcome home this hometown hero. By flying the POW-MIA flag in more prominent public places, it is this recognition, gratitude and remembrance that I seek for our POWs and MIAs.

In remembrance of these heroes, for years in my district, every January, often in bitterly cold temperatures, the late Col. Gary Solander led a community vigil to remember Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action. Crowds of people would endure the biting wind and cold to light candles and join together in prayer for the return of our hometown heroes. Although Col. Solander has passed away, I am grateful the state is preserving his legacy and carrying forth his efforts.

It is my hope that motorists who catch a glimpse of this flag throughout Pennsylvania will take a moment to reflect upon what this symbol of heroism truly means, and recall the



many families across Pennsylvania and our nation who still grieve, yet hold on to hope that their loved ones' remains will be returned back home.

According to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, from World War II to the Korean War to the Vietnam War, approximately 5,461 members of the military were missing or held captive by the enemy, giving their families no final resting place to mourn their loved ones.

## Brooks Honored with Award from Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs

Senator Michele Brooks has been selected as "Legislator of the Year" by the Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs (PSACF).

In presenting the award at their banquet in

Hershey recently, the group cited her year-round support of local fairs and her strong belief in the benefits they provide to our communities, along with her successful effort to continue funding for fairs despite their cancellation during the

COVID-19 pandemic.

"On behalf of the Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs, we would like to thank Senator Michele Brooks for her strong advocacy and leadership in the Senate. Senator Brooks has been a champion of the fairs in the Capitol since she was first elected in 2006, and we truly appreciate her support," said Harry Reffner, Executive Secretary and Treasurer of PSACF. "She not only continues to help us protect our annual budget-related line-item, but she also provided us with an essential voice in the Capitol during the COVID-19 related shutdowns. Congratulations, Senator, and we look forward to continuing to grow our partnership in the years to come."

In accepting the award, Brooks said, "I am very honored by this recognition and look forward to continuing to serve as a strong advocate for our local fairs and northwestern Pennsylvania, working across party lines to build consensus in Harrisburg and move the Commonwealth forward," Brooks said. "I always enjoy supporting our 4-H kids back home and attending the 4-H auctions. I also appreciate the dedication of our thousands of remarkable volunteers who work to make our fairs happen."

Brooks said fairs have a special place in her heart, noting their transformational impact in the community, which transcends the timeline of the fair and the boundaries of the fairgrounds to advance the mission of 4-H and agricultural groups, churches, fire departments, veterans' organizations and other nonprofits all year long.

**TEST THAT TICK**

**HAVE YOU BEEN BITTEN BY A TICK?**

**You can test that tick for Lyme Disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, and other tickborne diseases.**

**IT'S FREE TO YOU**

**The free testing program is being conducted in partnership with the state Department of Health.**



After a tick is carefully removed, please place it in a plastic sandwich bag and then order a tick test at [www.ticklab.org](http://www.ticklab.org). No special kit is required.

**Mail your receipt from your online order and your tick to the East Stroudsburg University Tick Lab for testing. The address will be provided with your order.**

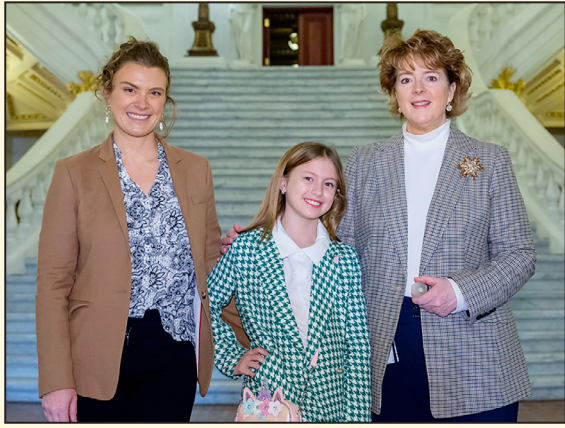
Test results will be delivered within three business days.

If you have multiple ticks from multiple people or pets, please place separate orders.

For other questions and more information on free tick testing for all Pennsylvania residents, please visit [www.ticklab.org](http://www.ticklab.org).



*4-H is such a great program! The kids work so hard to raise their animals to sell at the livestock auctions in Crawford, Mercer, Erie and Warren counties.*



**LEFT:** It was an honor to host pageant princess Mayland Learn and her mom Laurel in November to advocate on their behalf for Children's Grief Awareness Day. Mayland, who is now 9 years old, wrote to me about her father's death and asked if I could help her in having Pennsylvania formally declare Children's Grief Awareness Day on Nov. 18, 2021. Mayland was introduced on the Senate floor, and met Lt. Gov. John Fetterman, Majority Leader Kim Ward and many other senators.



**RIGHT:** Ruby Johnson, 7, her brother Isaac, 8, and her mom Mandi came to the Capitol in January. Ruby was crowned Miss PA Princess USA National and her platform is to spread kindness, compassion, and earth awareness through pink, purple and blue bracelets.



**ABOVE:** In honor of all those who are battling or who have beaten breast cancer, we dyed the fountain at the Capitol pink for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Pictured with me are Wellspan CEO Roxanna Gapstur, Majority Leader Kim Ward, Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill and Senator Bob Mensch.



**ABOVE:** I was so moved to meet Mr. Ray Wallace of Lancaster County. He visited the Capitol with Christopher Adam, who won national recognition for his Eagle Scout project inspired by his war-hero friend. Mr. Wallace of the 82nd Airborne, was just 18 years old when his plane was shot down on the evening of D-Day. His plane landed 20 miles from the intended drop zone. He connected with other mis-dropped soldiers and together 180 soldiers fought 2,000 Nazis for two long days. Ray somehow survived but was placed in a Nazi prisoner of war camp. When he was liberated at the end of WWII, he weighed less than 100 pounds. He went on to marry the love of his life and raise 13 children and 16 grandchildren. We salute you, Mr. Wallace, and thank you.



**ABOVE:** I was humbled to be among those who received the statewide "Legislative Champion" Award from the Pennsylvania Health Care Association for my work in advocating for our senior citizens as well as the HVAC grant program to improve indoor air quality in long-term care facilities.

**RIGHT:** Senator Scott Hutchinson, Representative Lee James and I were happy to see this group and many other pro-life advocates at the PA March for Life.



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