

# State Senator **JOHN RAFFERTY**



## *Reports to You*

44TH DISTRICT • SUMMER 2010

### **\$41 Million Expansion at Veterans' Center**



**M**ilitary and public officials joined residents of the Southeastern Veterans Center at the groundbreaking

for a \$41 million facility to be built as a veterans center expansion at the Chester County complex.

The groundbreaking was for a four-story, 140,000-square-foot addition to the existing center, which will be connected to Coates Hall by an enclosed bridge and will focus on a community living concept.

It is a big step, providing beds for our veterans who are in need of medical attention. The Commonwealth is showing its support to those who made sacrifices for us. I proudly serve as Senate representative to the Southeast Veterans' Center Advisory Council and was honored to be a part of this ceremony for this center which will be a new home for our American heroes.

The expansion project has been in the planning stages for several years and Rebecca Kesselring, commandant of the Southeastern Veterans' Center, called the planned facility "a lasting symbol and a tribute to our Pennsylvania veterans."

The community living center will provide a more home-like setting whereby residents will feel more like people in their own living space rather than a group of people living in an institution.

The ground floor will house the dementia unit and an adjoining "town center" featuring a chapel, clinic, canteen café, library and multi-purpose room. The second, third and fourth floors will consist of two homes, with 15 residents living in each home.

Major General Jessica Wright, Adjutant General of Pennsylvania and the commander of the Pennsylvania National Guard, said the planned facility represents "a new era" in veterans' care.

*From left to right, Rep. Paul Drucker, Sen. Andy Dinniman, Major General Jessica Wright, Sen. John Rafferty and Rep. Tim Hennessey turn the first shovels of dirt during groundbreaking for the \$41 million expansion at the Southeastern Veterans' Center.*



### **Legislation Would Provide Fairer Funding for Our Area**

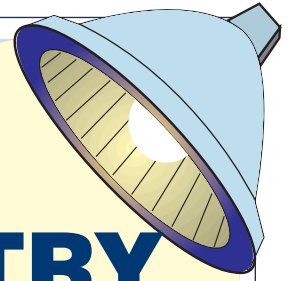


**I**n the coming months, I plan to introduce legislation that would change the state funding formulas for education and transportation to make them more equitable.

I believe this is important to our area because we are often shortchanged when it comes to receiving state funding based on what area residents pay in

taxes to the state. Southeast Pennsylvania is growing rapidly necessitating new roads and highways and more schools. But unfortunately, current state funding formulas do not take that into account.

It is my hope that the legislation will provide a fairer distribution of resources and ensure that we receive the state dollars that our area deserves.



*In each newsletter, we will focus on one of the municipalities in the 44th Senatorial District. In this issue the*

# Spotlight Shines on **NORTH COVENTRY**

## **HISTORY**

**E**arly documents in 1713 refer to the township as "the Forest." The name Coventry was given to the township by Samuel Nutt, an early iron furnace owner.

Coventry Township adopted the name of North Coventry in 1844 when it divided for a third time. The eastern portion of the township then became East Coventry Township. The first split came in 1752 when newly founded Berks County took an area to be incorporated into Union Township on the west side of Coventry. Coventry was split a second time in 1841 when the southern part became South Coventry Township.

What makes North Coventry Township unique in Chester County is from its earliest beginnings it was settled largely by families of German background and many of the older farmhouses reflect this Germanic heritage.

A historical milestone for the township was the opening of the Girard Reach of the Union Canal by the Schuylkill Navigation Company in 1824. Four and a half miles of the Girard Reach passed through North Coventry Township and a portion of the canal with a lock remains on the Laurel Locks Farm.

In 1831, a canal village, known as Pottstown Landing, took shape along Laurelwood Road at the Schuylkill River. This village is on the National Register of Historic Districts.

North Coventry began to change the rural character along major roads and the township's first high school admitted students in 1912. The school ceased as a high school in 1956 when seven townships consolidated into the Owen J. Roberts School District.

In 1964, PennDOT used sections of the canal for a major highway – Route 422, and the Pottstown Pike (Route 100) was also modernized. In 1967, the first township mall, Coventry Mall, was built at Routes 724 and 100.

In the last 10 years, North Coventry has preserved more than 1,000 acres of agricultural and wooded land.



*Senator Rafferty meets with, from left, Police Chief Robert Schurr, Andrew Paravis, chairman of the township board of supervisors, and Patrolman Jesse Smith outside the North Coventry Township building.*

## **TOWNSHIP-AT-A-GLANCE**

- North Coventry is at the northern edge of Chester County, bordering Berks County to the west and Montgomery County to the north.
- The township covers 14-square miles and is home to 8,000 people.
- The North Coventry Township building is located at 845 S. Hanover St. and the office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.
- The Township Board of Supervisors meetings are held on the second and fourth Mondays of each month at 7 p.m. in the township building.
- North Coventry participates with the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee.
- Members of the Board of Supervisors are Andrew Paravis, chairman, Jim Marks, E. Kent High, Harvey Greenawalt, Jr., and Spencer Claypoole.
- Kevin Hennessey is Township Manager.
- Township office phone – 610-323-1694, Fax – 610-323-7239

## **FUN FACTS**

- Peter Bezalis, a trapper and trader, is believed to be the township's first settler, living in a cabin along the Schuylkill River near the mouth of Manatawny Creek.
- The two oldest dwellings in the township are believed to be Shellbark House on Creek Road near Laurel Locks, dating back to 1713, and a home with exposed logs in the framing on Cherry Lane.
- Coventry Church of the Brethren, built about 1724, is the oldest church of that denomination in continuous use in America.
- The township's earliest cemetery off Urner Street dates to 1741.
- The Swan Stagecoach Inn, in the village of Kenilworth, dates to 1744.
- Pottstown Landing, a canal village built in 1831 along Laurelwood Road at the Schuylkill River, is on the National Register of Historic Districts. It is the only village along the canal that owes its development to the canal industry.
- The former Jerome Titlow barn at Cedarville Road and South Hanover Street, which was demolished in 2006, and the John Stubblebine farmhouse along St. Peter's Road are believed to have been stops along the Underground Railroad during the 1850s.

*Sen. Rafferty speaks during budget hearings.*



**Senator John Rafferty's**

# PHOTO GALLERY



*Sen. Rafferty addresses students who became "Senators for a Day" and got a hands-on look at how legislation works its way through the Pennsylvania Senate and is defeated or becomes law.*



*Sen. Rafferty reminded the crowd gathered at the Southeastern Veterans Center Memorial Day Ceremony of the great sacrifice made by Americans in all wars who gave their lives for the freedoms we enjoy today.*



*Sen. Rafferty with former Pottstown High School and Villanova University basketball star Howard Brown during the dinner kicking off Brown's annual Skoolz Classic Basketball scholarship fundraiser. Brown currently is playing professionally in Europe.*



*Sen. Sean Logan, left, Sen. John Rafferty, second from right, and Bruce Edwards, president of the Pennsylvania State Troopers Association, right, with the widow and children of Trooper Paul Richey. Trooper Richey's family was the first to benefit from Senate Bill 369, which provides benefits to survivors of those killed in the line of duty.*



*Sen. Rafferty asks a Lewis Environmental worker about his company's airboat on display at the Alternative Energy and Environmental Resource Expo at Spring-Ford School District's 9th Grade Center.*

## Senate Transportation Panel Holds Hearings on Funding Issues

Transportation issues affect every resident in Pennsylvania, whether it involves a daily commute to work or a bus ride on the public transit system or the movement of goods. Our goal is to have a modern, efficient system that meets the needs of its users.

In an effort to reach that goal, the Senate Transportation Committee is holding a series of public hearings on transportation funding issues.

Pennsylvania faces crucial challenges in maintaining and enhancing its transportation network, and as Chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee, I want input from those in the public and private sector on how to best allocate resources and generate needed revenue.

We first heard from PennDOT Secretary Alan Biehler, who talked about projects that are being planned and others that are on hold because of funding is-



*Sen. Rafferty, chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee, left photo, questions Governor Rendell during a hearing in Harrisburg on transportation funding issues.*

sues. In upcoming hearings we hope to hear suggestions from those in the private sector on how we can make the best use of tax dollars and find innovative new ways to meet our growing needs.

Funding transportation needs is a major challenge, especially during an economic downturn, and it is important to hear from those with expertise in the field to develop good policies and initiatives.

Money is tight, and we are facing a

projected revenue shortfall again this year. But highways, roads and bridges still need to be maintained and new networks built to accommodate growth and ensure that our economy remains strong. So we have to find ways to do more with less and take advantage of innovation.

Other topics the committee will look into are the Turnpike's financial outlook, and the reconstruction, widening and slip ramps, as well as funding for rail, ports and aviation.

## Senate to Hold Hearing on Alleged Misconduct at DRPA

The Senate Transportation Committee will hold a public hearing in September to further probe widespread allegations of mismanagement, fraud and political patronage at the Delaware River Port Authority (DRPA).

I believe this hearing is crucial to investigating allegations of misconduct and poor management practices that have existed for some time, and restoring public confidence in the agency.

Before we can make long-term, systemic changes we have to have a proper and thorough review. Fearing this kind of scrutiny, the DRPA has proposed a series of "empty and misleading reforms" – many of which are practices that should have been in place already and others which have no accountability standards. These changes have been proposed, in my mind, to calm the growing media storm without implementing strong

safeguards that will lead to real reform.

It is our intent to ensure that the DRPA comes under the jurisdiction of the Senate and House and Transportation Committees so we can review current practices and establish standards to prevent future misconduct.

The Senate Transportation Committee will also exercise its oversight over the Pennsylvania Turnpike and related state agencies.

## Committee Wants Super Majority Vote to Raise School Tax

The Senate Education Committee recently approved legislation I sponsored that would require a "super majority" vote for school boards to raise taxes.

Senate Bill 553 would amend the Public School Code to require all millage property tax increases to be approved by a two-thirds majority vote by the members elected to the board of school directors.

Taxpayers are rightfully concerned that property taxes continue to increase, as does school spending. Many tax increases are being passed by a single vote. I believe there should be a compelling need and strong support by the board before property taxes are raised.

This legislation would provide greater taxpayer protections and ensure that school boards of directors first seek to

control spending before raising taxes.

Taxpayers have repeatedly told me that they want a stronger say in taxing decisions. My bill will provide an added protection against tax increases because it will raise the bar when it comes to voting for an increase.

This is an important step to rein in property tax increases and control spending.

## Legislation Lays Foundation for “Green Buildings”

**I**ntroduced legislation this session which will require that the design, construction, and renovation of certain state and local government buildings and schools comply with specified energy and environmental building standards.

This legislation will apply to any state-funded major facility project and all major facility projects that are owned or leased by a municipality or school district. This legislation will require the Department of General Services, in cooperation with DEP, to develop regulations and adopt high-performance building standards. This legislation will apply to any state-funded new construction, renovation,



*The new “green” headquarters building of the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency in Harrisburg is a good example of what can be done when combining fiscal responsibility with a concern for the environment. In this conference room lights adjacent to windows dim based on the amount of natural light that is present in the room.*

and commercial interior tenant fit-out projects in which the building is larger than 5,000 square feet.

The purpose of this legislation is to promote effective energy and environmental standards for the buildings in this Commonwealth while at the same time, optimizing

indoor air quality.

It would also reduce state and local dependence upon imported sources of energy through buildings that conserve energy and utilize local and renewable energy sources.

The bill is currently in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

energy conservation in the state through proper building construction and design.

This legislation would increase the demand for environmentally preferable building materials, improve environmental quality in the Commonwealth by decreasing the discharge of pollutants and would bring public awareness of new technologies that can promote healthier

## Adam Walsh Child Safety Act Reported Out From Committee

**L**egislation I sponsored seeking to protect children from sexual predators and establish federally mandated national standards to strengthen sex offender registration has been unanimously approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Senate Bill 428 seeks to have Pennsylvania implement the national Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act, also known as the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA).

The Adam Walsh Act is crucial to protecting our children from predators because it seeks to create a national standard for sex offender registries. We need to have a strong and coordinated system in place to protect our children from predators.

The act also provides stricter registration requirements for convicted sex offenders as well as keeping their information more current. The convicted offender will have to register in person and the worst offenders will have to check in more frequently to ensure that they don't slip through the cracks.

I am hopeful for continued consideration of Senate Bill 428 in the Senate and House so that the process may move forward.

## Property Tax/Rent Rebate Deadline Extended

**P**ennsylvania's Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program application deadline was extended from June 30 to December 31, 2010 to ensure sufficient time for eligible Pennsylvanians to apply for the rebate program.

Eligible individuals include:

- Pennsylvanians who are 65 and older;
- widows and widowers 50 and older; and
- people with disabilities 18 and older.

Depending upon income, homeowners may qualify for a rebate ranging from \$250 to \$650 with eligible renters receiving a maximum rebate between \$500 and \$650.

Residents receiving rebates last year should have received a new application form in the mail. Eligible residents may obtain Property Tax/Rent Rebate Forms by calling 1-888-222-9190 or by visiting the Department of Revenue's website at [www.revenue.state.pa.us](http://www.revenue.state.pa.us).



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*Pennsylvania State Senator*

# John Rafferty

44th Senatorial District

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Visit my website at [www.senatorrafferty.com](http://www.senatorrafferty.com)

## Office of Open Records Provides Citizen Access

One year after the revamped Right-To-Know Law went into effect, the Office of Open Records reported that it has fielded more than 5,000 inquiries, issued decisions on 1,200 Right-To-Know appeals and held 250 training sessions around the state.

Ninety percent of the requests for government information come from private citizens seeking a wide range of information from local and state agencies.

People want to see financial records, land development plans, engineering studies and many other government documents. Pennsylvania used to rank among the worst states in providing citizens with access to public documents. The revised law has made thousands of additional government records available for public inspection and has served as a model program across the nation.

## Senator Rafferty's Newsletter Is Now Available Electronically

In an effort to reach constituents quicker and do our part to help the environment, Senator Rafferty's newsletter is now available electronically. You can register at [www.senatorrafferty.com/email.htm](http://www.senatorrafferty.com/email.htm) for the email version or find the link on our website to sign up for email updates.



## State Senator John Rafferty

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### OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Wednesday evening until 7 p.m. in the Pottstown office only

First Saturday of the month 9 a.m. to noon in the Collegetown office