

State Senator  
**JOHN RAFFERTY**

*Reports to You*



44TH DISTRICT • WINTER 2005

## Senator Rafferty Introduces “Jessica’s Law” As Part of National Campaign to Crack Down on Sexual Predators

Convicted child molesters would face 25 years in prison and be required to wear a monitoring device for life under legislation which I recently introduced in the Senate.

My bill would require any person convicted of a major sexual offense against a child to serve a minimum of 25 years in prison for the first offense, and when released to wear a GPS positioning unit for life. Additionally, a person convicted of

a second offense would receive a mandatory life sentence.

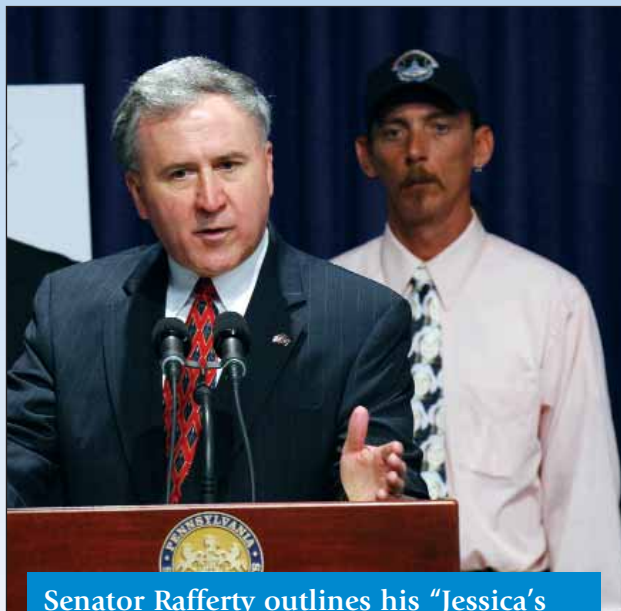
Sexually violent predators have a very high rate of recidivism, and are especially dangerous when released from prison and returned to society.

I have seen many cases where sexual predators are released only to abuse another child – providing them with freedom only gives them a license to harm other children. This bill not only increases penalties for those who prey on children, it also ensures that

when they are released their whereabouts are known.

As part of a nationwide campaign, Pennsylvania is acting to implement severe sanctions against sexual predators who prey on children under 12. After the kidnapping and murder of 9-year-old Jessica Lunsford by a convicted sex offender, Florida Governor Jeb Bush signed similar legislation.

Our goal is to pass this law in all 50 states, so predators are kept off the streets and monitored for life.



Senator Rafferty outlines his “Jessica’s Law” measure at a Harrisburg news conference. He is joined by Mark Lunsford, Jessica’s father (right).



## Rafferty Opposes Pay Raises, Supports Pay Raise Repeal

The Legislature’s recent vote to repeal the pay raise was the right decision – and one that illustrates the influence of Pennsylvania voters.

Because of the strong public outcry and extensive media attention, lawmakers who initially supported the measure were convinced to join those of us who voted against the pay raise, and to vote for its repeal.

In our area, more than 10,000 citizens expressed their feelings on the issue as part of a write-in campaign by the Pottstown Mercury, Daily Local News, and the Times Herald. I personally delivered your letters to Senate leadership offices.

I voted against the original pay raise bill and did not take the increased salary. I felt it was wrong. Repealing the pay raise for all legislators was the right thing to do to restore public confidence in government.

## Taxpayer Fairness Act Would Hold the Line on State Spending

Seeking to lower taxes and control spending, I voted for legislation that would limit state government spending and set aside surpluses in a new fund to reduce the state Personal Income Tax.

Senate Bill 4, the Taxpayer Fairness Act, would hold state spending increases to inflation by statute. A companion measure, Senate Bill 884, would make the spending limits part of the State Constitution.

In addition to controlling state spending growth, the bills would set aside half of surplus revenues in the state's Rainy Day Fund for use in times of economic necessity, and half in a new Taxpayer Fairness Fund to reduce the state Personal Income Tax.

Exceeding the spending limit would require the support of two-thirds of the General Assembly. Both Senate Bill 4 and Senate Bill 884 include exceptions for

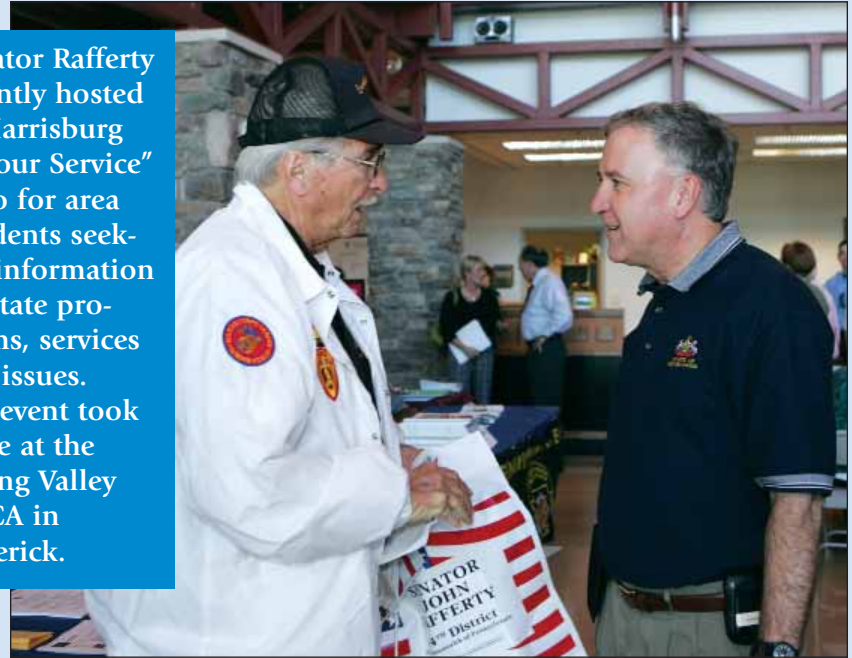
emergencies or disasters.

Thirty states have spending controls, revenue controls or both. Pennsylvania is in the minority of states which have no controls.

One of the fundamental premises

of the Taxpayer Fairness Act is that state government should live within its means. It would help state residents keep more of the money they earn: to save for college, buy groceries or pay for medical needs.

Senator Rafferty recently hosted a "Harrisburg At Your Service" Expo for area residents seeking information on state programs, services and issues. The event took place at the Spring Valley YMCA in Limerick.



## Southeast Senators Unveil Tax Reform Plan To Help Ease Skyrocketing Property Taxes

Recently, I joined six of my Senate colleagues who represent Southeastern Pennsylvania to unveil a major tax reform package aimed at giving homeowners "Independence from Property Taxes."

During a news conference at the Valley Forge Convention Center, we called for legislation to lower property taxes, provide additional tax relief to senior citizens, and enable school districts, municipalities and counties to shift from property taxes to income taxes.

After Pennsylvania's school districts made their decisions about Act 72, my fellow senators from the Southeast and I went to work and created an agenda to achieve independence from school property taxes

once and for all. The policies that we're proposing are significant and achievable, and they'll work not only in the districts that we represent but across the Commonwealth.

My colleagues have issued a call to action for the General Assembly to take up the legislation as part of its deliberations during the upcoming session. Along with the Commonwealth Caucus Plan, a number of Tax Reform Bills will be considered by the General Assembly.

We realize there are many specific issues that still must be resolved. However, this package provides an overall framework from which we can work.

Among the legislation in the package are proposals to:

- Freeze property taxes
- Enact greater homestead exemptions
- Replace property taxes by shifting to more equitable taxes
- Provide tax relief for seniors on fixed incomes
- Give taxpayers greater control over local tax decisions

Specifically, the package is aimed at providing relief to homeowners who have seen their property taxes skyrocket in recent years. School property taxes have increased by as much as 60% in many school districts just during the past five years. We must act to provide relief to residents who are being taxed out of their homes.

## Rafferty Introduces Bill to Reduce Alcohol-Related Deaths Among Young People

Minors would be granted immunity from criminal prosecution for underage drinking if they are seeking medical attention for another person under the age of 21 who has consumed too much alcohol.

Senate Bill 780 is one of a number of bills I have introduced to reduce the number of alcohol-related deaths throughout the state. It will grant partial immunity to individuals who are attempting to assist a person who may be at risk.

The number of alcohol-related deaths, especially on college campuses, has created a need for another approach to saving lives. An estimated 474,000 children and teens in Pennsylvania drink alcohol each year. Tragically, some of these young people die as a result of drinking to excess.

Under my bill, an individual must call 911 to report the person in need of medical attention, must provide their name to the dispatcher, and must remain with



Senator Rafferty speaks at a rally against underage drinking at the state Capitol in Harrisburg.

the person in need of assistance until the first responder arrives.

This bill will hopefully save lives by allowing minors, who may be fearful of being charged with underage drinking, to call police and save a life.

## Legislation Would Get Tough on Child Sexual Offenders

Child sexual abusers would face stronger penalties under legislation that I introduced in response to a recent Grand Jury Report. The bill would ensure that abusers do not avoid prosecution because time has run out to file a charge.

There have been cases where child abusers have been identified and their victims want to come forward and file charges but time has simply run out. This legislation would ensure that victims have their day in court, and that abusers are held accountable for their past crimes.

My first measure would increase the penalty for the crime of rape to a mandatory minimum sentence of 25 years and a maximum of 50 years imprisonment for a first offense. Second and subsequent offenses would be punishable by a mandatory term of life imprisonment.

A second bill would eliminate the statute of limitations for major sexual offenses for the life of the victim.

Currently, a prosecution for a

major sexual offense must begin within 12 years from the date the alleged offense was committed. In cases of minors, the limitation for major sexual offenses would not commence until an individual is 18

years of age. With this exception in place, an individual has until age 30 to prosecute for such an offense.

That exception has allowed some abusers to avoid prosecution because the statute of limitations has run out.

## Law Makes School Board More Accountable to Taxpayers

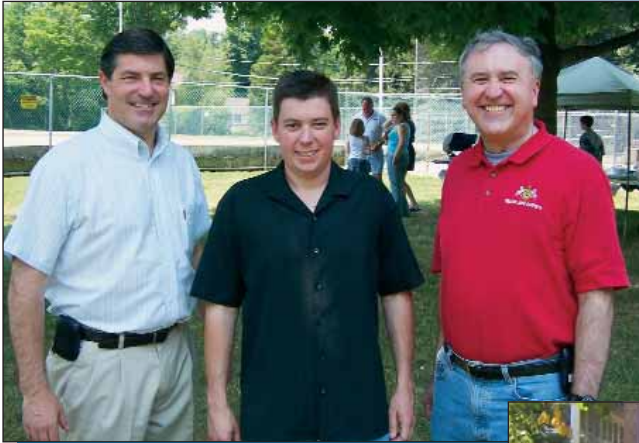
School board officials must now release their budget for public review and duplication and provide detailed line-item budget information under a measure I sponsored that is now law.

The new law will give taxpayers greater accountability when school boards are considering the school district's budget.

It is the direct result of working with the Taxpayers Alliance in the Coatesville Area School District, after hearing about their frustration in getting substantive and timely budget information from the school district. This change will benefit the state taxpayers.

The legislation will require the school board to make their proposed budget available for public inspection and duplication twenty days prior to the date set for adoption of the budget. Additionally, school district budgets must list all line-item expenditures in a format approved by the Department of Education. School districts will be prohibited from approving a budget and expending money for operations and salaries until the Department of Education has certified that the school board complied with the law.

## Around the District



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Senator Rafferty (right) and Congressman Jim Gerlach (left) join Bryan McDonough, Community Day Coordinator, and Wallace Township Supervisor-Elect, at the recent Wallace Township Community Day.

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Senator Rafferty visits the Trappe EMT tent at the Perkiomen Township Community Day.



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Senator Rafferty presents a certificate of appreciation to (left to right) Denny, Peggy and Don Dewane and Wendy Watro. The Dewane's Garage has been in business for 50 years in Lower Providence Township.



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Senator Rafferty and Amity Police Chief Roy (right) honor police officer Cory Huntsinger for saving the life of a nurse.



## Montgomery County to Benefit From \$20 Million In Federal Highway Funding for Route 422 Corridor

The U.S. Senate recently approved \$20 million in federal transportation funding for the redesign and reconstruction of interchanges on the Route 422 Corridor. The funding coupling with State money will be used to relieve congestion at the Route 422 and Pennsylvania Route 363 interchange and widen the U.S. 422 Schuylkill River bridge. The project will also improve public safety through the construction of exit ramps on Route 422 that are more easily negotiated. I was pleased to work with U.S. Senator Rick Santorum and State Senator Robert Thompson on this very important economic development and public safety project.

Senator Rafferty, Senator Rick Santorum, (left) Representative Jacqueline Crahalla, and Senator Robert Thompson (right) present a \$20 million check for transportation improvements in Montgomery County.



## Rafferty Bill Calls For Gaming Reform

The Senate recently passed a reform bill I sponsored to prohibit the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board from authorizing emergency non-bid contracts. Contracts that involve public money should be awarded through the standard open bid process required of all state government agencies. The Gaming Board has elected to sidestep that process and grant numerous contracts under an "emergency procurement" provision of state law. I believe the Board should have to follow the same procedures other state agencies follow in conducting public business.

## SENATOR RAFFERTY'S VOTES ON KEY LEGISLATION

- Growing Greener – YES
- Higher State Income Tax – NO
- Allowing Gaming in PA – NO
- National Guard Life Insurance – YES
- Legislative Pay Raise – NO
- Promoting Alternative Energy – YES
- Stronger Landfill Management – YES
- Nursing Home Bed Tax – NO
- Home Heating Assistance – Yes



Senator Rafferty and Representative Kate Harper participate in an Earth Day celebration in Whitpain Township.



Senator Rafferty voices his support for legislation that restricts eminent domain property seizures and restores the rights of Pennsylvanians to protect their property from government taking.

## Rafferty Works to Improve Small Airport Security

To protect residents of my senatorial district from security breaches, I have been working with the state Department of Transportation and General Aviation Security Task force to find ways to strengthen security measures at local airfields.

I am particularly concerned over what is being done to secure our more vulnerable regional airports and local airfields from being breached by an individual or individuals looking to steal small aircraft to do harm.

People have expressed some understandable concerns and want to know that we are doing all we can to make sure these airfields are secure.

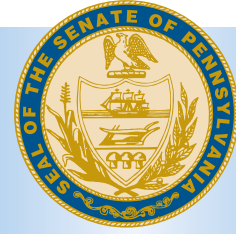
One recommendation we are looking at is requiring a two-lock

system for aircraft.

Simple measures such as requiring a throttle lock or propeller chain or even requiring a pilot to lock a cockpit door can certainly be an effective deterrent in reducing the probability of the theft of that plane.

The General Aviation Security Task Force is composed of representatives from various federal, state, and local agencies, including officials from the Transportation Safety Administration, FAA, PA Office of Homeland Security, and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.

The Task Force also includes representatives from the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association along with officials from several of Pennsylvania's international and regional airports.



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