

State Senator
JOHN RAFFERTY



Reports to You

44TH DISTRICT • SUMMER 2006

Legislative Reforms Needed to Restore Trust in Government

When I was elected to the Senate, I made a commitment to push for long-needed reforms in the General Assembly. As part of that commitment, I voted against the legislative, judicial and Governor's pay raises and I did not accept the increase. I also voted to repeal the controversial pay raise.

Repealing the pay raise was a crucial first step in restoring public confidence in the legislative process. But further reforms are needed to return integrity and respect to the General Assembly. For that reason, I am sponsoring a series of reform initiatives that will cut costs and make government more accountable. Among those reforms are measures to:

- Explore the reduction of the size of the General Assembly.
- Eliminate taxpayer-paid leases for cars.
- Rotate committee chairperson after they have served for six years, to give "new blood" to the committee process.
- Eliminate taxpayer-paid public service announcements.



Rafferty's Law Promotes Alcohol Awareness

As chairman of the Senate Law and Justice Committee, I was pleased to sponsor a new law that would require restaurant opera-

tors and their employees who have been fined for liquor law violations to take part in Responsible Alcohol Management Program (R.A.M.P.)

training. This is the first of a package of 14 bills to address the problem of underage drinking in Pennsylvania. Many of the bills are currently being considered by the State Senate and House.

The new law will help to ensure that young people do not gain access to alcohol in restaurants by providing restaurant and bar employees with training they need to do their jobs effectively.

Senator Rafferty joins legislators and representatives of the Fraternal Order of Police to announce the introduction of legislation to increase penalties for crimes committed against police officers.



WWII Veteran's Event Held to Honor Those Who Served

In June, I hosted a WWII Veteran's Event at Spring-Ford High School in Royersford. The event was intended to honor our local veterans who served their country in the Second World War and to acknowledge their contributions and sacrifices. We presented certificates and medals to those in attendance and held a ceremony to honor them. If you know a World War II veteran who lives in this senatorial district, please contact my office so we can make sure they receive a certificate and medal honoring their service. These men and women helped to protect our nation during a crucial time in history and they deserve our thanks.



Senator Rafferty and Representative Tom Quigley present a certificate to a WWII veteran.

Rafferty's "Jessica's Law" Gains Senate Approval *Measure Cracks Down on Child Sexual Predators*

I was very pleased that the State Senate recently approved legislation I sponsored to impose a mandatory minimum sentence of 25 years for convicted child molesters and require them to wear a monitoring device for life.

"Jessica's Law" is named for Jessica Lunsford, a 9-year old Florida girl who was kidnapped and murdered by a convicted sex offender.

I am especially proud that Pennsylvania is leading a national effort to crack down on child sexual predators, more comprehensively monitor offenders, and ensure that all offenders register under the current Megan's Law.

Senate Bill 944 would impose a minimum of 25 years in prison for anyone over 18 years who is convicted of sexually assaulting a child, mandatory GPS monitoring for life, and a 50 year to life sentence for anyone convicted of a sexual assault which results in serious bodily injury to a child.

A forfeiture section was also

added to Senate Bill 944, similar to the forfeiture laws currently in place for narcotics offenders, that would allow the courts to seize property or assets linked to the commission of the crime. Assets would be used to offset the daily cost of monitoring sexual offenders.

The bill provides additional penalties for anyone convicted of knowingly harboring or aiding a sex offender who has failed to register under Megan's Law. It also enhances the current Megan's Law web site and offender reporting requirements by mandating more specific residence information and reducing the time permitted for an offender to register after his or her release or relocation.

This bill will put predators on notice. If you harm children, we will lock you up for a long time, and you will lose your freedom. Other states have joined in a national effort to more closely monitor sex offenders and strengthen our laws to protect our children.

Megan's Law Web Site Improved

The Pennsylvania State Police has established a web page to provide timely information, free of charge to the public, on Sexually Violent Predators residing in the Commonwealth. The Pennsylvania Megan's Law web site is www.pameganslaw.state.pa.us. Our recently passed Jessica's Law enhances the current Megan's Law web site and offender reporting requirements by mandating more specific residence information and reducing the time permitted for an offender to register after his or her release or relocation. It requires all of Pennsylvania's convicted sex offenders be listed on the state's Megan's Law web site. Currently, addresses of only about 100 offenders designated as a "sexually violent predator" are listed. The remainder includes only county, hometown, and zip code.

Eminent Domain Laws Will Protect Property Owners From Land Seizures

Last year, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that local officials in New London, Connecticut, could condemn private property for redevelopment using eminent domain laws.

The decision raised major concerns that government could use its powers to take over private property to boost economic development – meaning that private landowners had little or no ability to protect their land.

I helped to lead the passage of new laws that will prohibit the use of eminent domain to benefit private businesses. The Private Property Protection Act would still allow government to condemn abandoned, dangerous, or severely tax-delinquent properties.

I also included language in the bill to prohibit any local government from taking land from an adjacent township without an agreement from both local governments. This will help to prevent the reoccurrence of a situation in Valley Township in which the City of

Coatesville attempted to exercise eminent domain to take a family farm for development.

The idea that a citizen's home or property can be taken by the government and turned over to another citi-

zen for non-governmental use is contrary to our fundamental beliefs. This new law will protect Pennsylvania homeowners, small businesses, farms, and churches from land seizures for private development.



Senator Rafferty joins Senator Jeff Piccola, left, at a news conference to unveil the Private Property Protection Act.



Protecting Our Environment

In May, I held a third environmental roundtable at Ursinus College. I met with builders, environmental and conservation organizations, educators and state and local governments to discuss a number of important environmental initiatives. These include a bill I am introducing in the near future to encourage the protection of riparian areas along our state waterways. It is important that we utilize riparian buffers to protect the Commonwealth's rivers and streams.

Clean water is crucial to public safety and quality of life. And those who intentionally pollute our streams and water should be held accountable. I am introducing legislation to increase penalties for any person or municipality who negligently or intentionally violates any provision of

the Clean Streams law. The bill also extends the statute of limitations for such crimes to five years from the time it was committed. Those who violate the law could be charged with a third-degree felony and face fines of up to \$50,000 and prison sentences of up to seven years.

Finally, on a related issue, I voted against legislation that would have derailed plans to require state power plants to reduce mercury pollution beyond weaker federal standards. Given the public health and

environmental threats posed by mercury in Pennsylvania, we need the strongest possible rules and standards in place to protect against mercury exposure.



Rafferty participates in a Senate hearing, which he requested to focus on the problem of radiation in PA landfills.



Capitol Centennial Celebration Slated for Sept. 30 to Oct. 4

Pennsylvania's Capitol is, first and foremost, a public building belonging to the citizens of the Commonwealth. It is also a priceless, architectural and artistic treasure, a majestic symbol of history and power, and an icon of democracy and freedom.

This year marks the centennial celebration of the Capitol, and a number of events and activities are scheduled from September 30 to October 4 to mark this historic event.

Among them are a treasure hunt and expo for kids, an arts and architecture tour of the Capitol, a parade featuring the state's 67 counties and a rededication ceremony on Wednesday, October 4.

The Centennial is a perfect time to visit the state Capitol.

To find out more about the celebration and the schedule of events, go to <http://www.pacapitol.com>.

Senate Republicans Push For Gaming Reforms

For several months, I have been working with my colleagues to develop a gambling reform agenda. We recently unveiled our comprehensive plan to make major structural reforms to the two-year-old gambling law. The package is designed to close loopholes in the law; enhance the accountability of the Gaming Control Board; improve the administration of the law; and strengthen oversight by the Attorney General and the General Assembly over the conduct of gaming in Pennsylvania.

These reforms are needed to restore public trust and confidence in the process being used to award the casino licenses, and to guard against fraud, influence peddling and reduce criminal activity. Although I did not support the gambling expansion, now that it is in effect, the priority is to strengthen the law and ensure the integrity and accountability of the process.

These are important, common sense and necessary reforms that all sides can support.



State Senator John Rafferty

44TH DISTRICT LEGISLATIVE OFFICES

Collegetown Professional Center, 3770 Ridge Pike, Collegetown, PA 19426
(610) 831-8830 • FAX (610) 831-8837

The Shoppes at Pughtown, 2325 Pottstown Pike, Pottstown, PA 19465
(610) 469-8390 • FAX (610) 469-8394

Senate Box 203044, Harrisburg, PA 17120-3044
(717) 787-1398 • FAX (717) 783-4587 • TTY (800) 364-1581

Email: jrafferty@pasen.gov • Website: www.senatorrafferty.com