

# Senator Tommy **TOMLINSON** **REPORTS**

*To The 6th Senatorial District*

**SUMMER 2006**



## **Senate Passes Tomlinson Bill To Prevent Scams**

A number of Bucks County residents have been victimized by home improvement scams, when dishonest “contractors” fail to complete work they are paid to do. Local law enforcement authorities often have a hard time tracking down these scam artists because they do not provide proper contact information. Homeowners are often forced to bear the financial burden of these scams.

The Senate recently passed legislation that I sponsored which would prevent fraudulent home improvement contractors from taking advantage of Pennsylvania consumers.

Senate Bill 1000 would require home improvement contractors to register with the Bureau of Consumer Protection in the Attorney General’s Office. The Bureau would offer a toll-free number for consumers with a contractor’s registration information so a

homeowner would know if they are dealing with a registered contractor. This will ensure that honest, reputable contractors would set themselves apart from the crooks who try to take advantage of homeowners.

My legislation would also mandate contracts for all work that exceeds \$500 performed in people’s homes. The bill provides specific criteria that a home improvement contract should include. For example, all contracts must include a description of the materials and work to be completed, as well as an approximate start and completion date and total project price. This important protection for homeowners will help all parties understand the work to be completed, the time frame for completion and the total costs

involved for every home improvement contract.

Since unscrupulous repairmen target older homeowners, my bill also includes tougher penalties if the victim is 60 or older. Senate Bill 1000 gives District Attorneys and the Attorney General strong enforcement authority for investigating and prosecuting home improvement fraud as a new crime. Penalties range from a misdemeanor to a felony and the revocation or suspension of registration.

Many of the contractors I have spoken to support this legislation to protect their business and their customers. I hope that we can extend this valuable protection to both homeowners and contractors when the General Assembly returns to session this fall.



**2006  
Senior Expo**

**Date: Thursday,  
September 14**

**Time: 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.**

**Place: King’s Caterer’s,  
4010 New Falls Road,  
Bristol**

**I will be hosting a Senior Expo on September 14 to provide senior citizens with information about programs and services available to them. The event is free and open to the public. I hope to see you there!**



*Senator Tomlinson speaks with one of the participants at his Senior Expo in Bristol.*

## Tomlinson Obtains Funding For Area Nature Centers

Preserving open space and protecting the environment are among my top priorities as a legislator. Working toward these goals, I was able to obtain funding for two Bucks County nature centers, to protect valuable open space and promote environmental education in our area.

A grant for the expansion of the Churchville Nature Center will help to accommodate the growing number of visitors to the center and ensure its continued growth.

The building will be environmentally friendly, with solar panels, geo-thermal heating and cooling and natural day lighting. The

center will also feature earth sheltering and native landscaping, a green-vegetated roof and water-efficient fixtures. The grant will go towards the total estimated \$2.3 million project cost.

Secondly, a grant will ensure that an important interactive outdoor education program at the Silver Lake Nature Center is able to continue. This program is presently funded by the Bristol Township School District. The center has been a valuable educational tool for residents and students for more than 30 years, permitting a number of students to work on school projects and learn

more about the environment at the center.

## Property Tax And Rent Rebate Program Expanded

For the last several years, the state's popular Property Tax Rent Rebate Program has helped senior citizens and disabled individuals in need by providing rebates of up to \$500 on real estate taxes or rent they pay. With my strong support, the General Assembly approved legislation that was signed into law to provide an historic expansion of this program beginning next year.

The size of the program will more than double with an additional 420,000 Pennsylvania seniors expected to benefit from the program in 2007. The household income limits of the program have increased from \$15,000 a year to \$35,000, excluding half of all Social Security, Supplemental Security Income and Railroad Retirement Tier 1 benefits. The maximum rebate will increase from \$500 to \$650.

This historic expansion of the program will be funded from expanded gaming in Pennsylvania. As a leading advocate for passage of legislation to authorize slot machine gaming in the Commonwealth, I am proud that this funding will help our seniors who have been hit hardest by rising property taxes. Providing property tax relief for all homeowners has long been my top priority as a legislator, and I look forward to continuing the fight for additional property tax reform in the Senate.

Individuals who qualify for a rebate under the new guidelines can sign up now to have a Property Tax/Rent Rebate claim form mailed to them when the forms are available. District residents can sign up by calling toll-free 1-888-222-9190 weekdays between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., or by visiting [www.papropertytaxrelief.com](http://www.papropertytaxrelief.com).

Individuals who qualified for a rebate in 2005 will automatically receive a form for next year's program and do not need to request the mailing. If you have any questions about the program or need help in submitting an application, please contact one of my district offices.

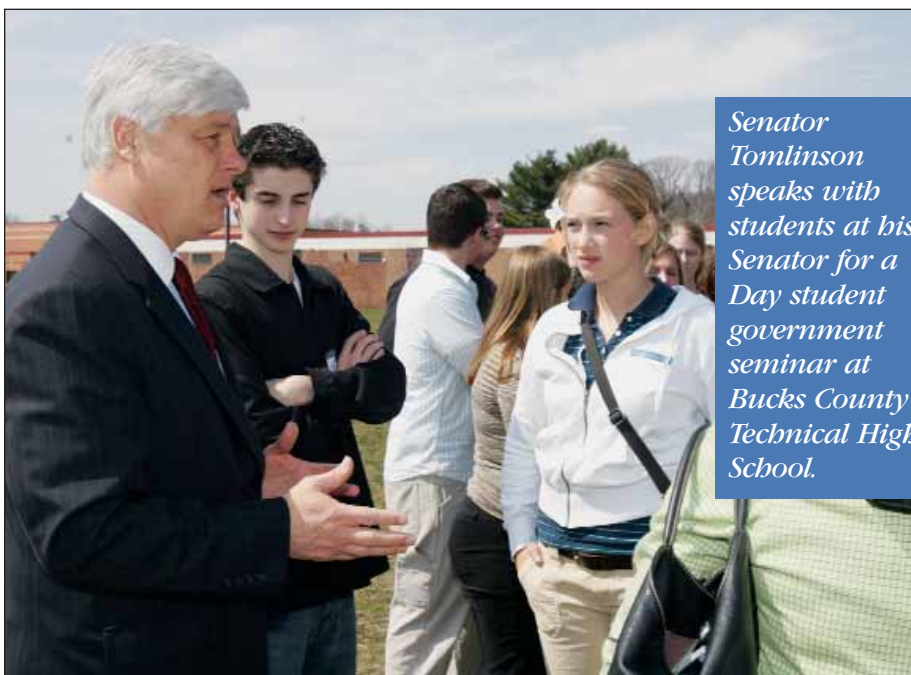
## Grants Awarded For Area Road Projects

Safe and well-maintained roads are important to public safety and a significant factor to business locations. Three area municipalities recently received grants to implement programs designed to improve and beautify the roads and improve the quality of life in our communities.

Grants totaling nearly \$2 million were awarded for improvements in Bensalem Township. The grants will fund the construction of new sidewalks and curbs, as well as new street lights along Route 13. This project is in its early stages, however residents of Bensalem Township can look forward to the progress and improvements to be made in the future.

Northampton Township received a grant to fund a study for their Streetscape Project in Richboro. In an effort to maximize their grant, the Northampton Community and Economic Development Corporation targeted areas in need of improvement. Possible improvements include improved pedestrian access and mobility in the downtown area, public safety and infrastructure improvements, and several measures designed to expand employment opportunities and improve the overall commercial well-being of the town.

Ivyland Borough also received a grant to purchase vintage-style streetlights for Chase Avenue. The lights are helping Ivyland Borough retain its historic character.



*Senator Tomlinson speaks with students at his Senator for a Day student government seminar at Bucks County Technical High School.*

## Tomlinson Assists Area Veterans

The men and women who have bravely defended our nation are among our most respected and admired citizens. I've been honored to take part in a number of local projects to recognize their sacrifices and dedication.

Bristol Township has sought my help on their efforts to renovate Bristol Township Memorial Park. The renovations include a War Dog memorial and other important improvements that will allow the park to continue to serve as a lasting tribute to all those that have served our country honorably. I was happy to

help with these important improvements.

Through a grant, I was also able to assist the renovation of the Pennel Veterans Memorial. The borough received a World War I memorial plaque, and this funding will be used in part to install this plaque on the veteran's memorial at Pennel Memorial Recreational Field. In addition to other improvements, the memorial will also include an additional plaque honoring veterans of all wars.

To honor our area veterans, we dedicated and renamed a portion of Route 413 as "Veterans Highway." A memorial site is

planned at the beginning of the road, which runs from the intersection of Route 413 and State Route 13 to US Route 1 in Middletown Township.

In the legislative area, I have introduced a bill to make it easier for disabled veterans to obtain an exemption from paying real estate taxes. Individuals with a total income of \$75,000 or less would be entitled to the exemption, unless disqualified by the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. In addition, the time period for the State Veteran's Commission to review individuals need for exemptions would be extended from two years to five years. This will cut the red tape

and encourage more eligible disabled veterans to apply for the exemption. The bill is moving through the General Assembly.

I want to extend my personal thanks for all who serve and have served our Commonwealth. We will continue to work on initiatives for our active and retired servicemen and women and their families.



*Senator Tomlinson joined a number of veterans, veterans' advocacy groups and legislators at a Capitol press conference to support legislation that would limit protests at funerals that target military families.*

## General Assembly Approves Minimum Wage Increase

In June, I voted for a new law to increase the minimum wage. When setting the new minimum wage, we had to weigh the interests of working families against those of business owners to ensure that any increase would enhance the state's economy. I am confident that the legislation passed earlier this summer successfully strikes a balance between the interests of both constituencies.

One key provision of the legislation is the staggered increase. The minimum wage will increase to \$6.25 on January 1, 2007 and to \$7.15 on July 1, 2007. This allows businesses to better plan for the future while still giving a wage increase to our low-income Pennsylvania families.

The legislation also contains other provisions to protect small businesses. Businesses with fewer than 10 full-time employees will

have additional time to meet the minimum wage requirements. These companies will pay a wage of \$5.65 beginning January 1, 2007. The required wage will increase to \$6.65 on July 1, 2007 and meet the requirement of \$7.15 on January 1, 2008.

The bill also includes a training wage provision, which allows employers to pay a reduced minimum wage to workers under the age of 20 for their first 60 days of employment. This helps ease the burden on seasonal businesses that employ teenagers.

### Minimum Wage Timeline

- **Current Minimum Wage – \$5.15**
- **Minimum Wage on January 1, 2007 – \$6.25 (\$5.65 for small businesses)**
- **Minimum Wage on July 1, 2007 – \$7.15 (\$6.65 for small businesses)**
- **Minimum Wage on January 1, 2008 – \$7.15 for ALL businesses**

## S.A.G.E. Program Benefits Area Schools

The Senior Adults for Greater Education (S.A.G.E.) program gives Bucks County students the chance to benefit from the knowledge and talents of older members of the community. The non-profit organization invites older residents into schools for a

variety of intergenerational activities. To date, more than 300 volunteers have served in classrooms, and the program now includes more than 700 volunteers.

S.A.G.E. was launched in 1999 in the Council Rock School District. Due to the success of the

program, S.A.G.E. has been invited to expand into the Bensalem and Neshaminy School Districts in the near future. As a member of the advisory board for this organization, I am pleased that more students will have the opportunity to take advantage of the program.

In addition to providing young people with the valuable insights of older citizens, they may provide mentoring to children. Learning about seniors' life experiences may teach students about making good choices to the challenges that present themselves.

The program benefits seniors as well, giving them a chance to work with children and learn about their education and goals. It also presents an opportunity to fill their retirement years with rewarding volunteer hours.

More information about the S.A.G.E. program is available by calling 215-357-2332 or visiting the S.A.G.E. website at [www.beasage.com](http://www.beasage.com).

*S.A.G.E. founder and executive director Beryl Katz and representatives from Senior Adults for Greater Education met with Senator Tomlinson in July at his Bensalem office.*



### **SENATOR TOMLINSON'S LEGISLATIVE OFFICES**

2212 Bristol Pike, Bensalem, PA 19020 • (215) 638-1784 • FAX (215) 638-1786

841 2nd Street Pike, Richboro, PA 18954 • (215) 942-5157 • FAX (215) 942-5184

2222 Trenton Rd., Suite A, Levittown, PA 19056 • (215) 945-2800 • FAX (215) 945-2808

Senate Box 203006, Harrisburg, PA 17120-3006 • (717) 787-5072 • FAX (717) 772-2991 • TTY (800) 364-1581

[rtomlinson@pasen.gov](mailto:rtomlinson@pasen.gov) • [www.senatortomlinson.com](http://www.senatortomlinson.com)