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AN ON TIME 2011-2012 PA BUDGET REDUCES SPENDING AND DOESN'T RAISE TAXES.

This week the Pennsylvania State Legislature handed Governor Tom Corbett a budget that reduced overall spending by \$1.1 billion without any tax increases. The spend number is \$27.149 billion which is \$1.1 billion less than last year. There is no doubt about it, this is a tough budget. We were facing a \$4.2 billion deficit in January so spending cuts had to be made in order for Pennsylvania to begin getting its financial house back in order. Although since January we have received approximately \$600 million in unanticipated revenue, the fact of the matter is that we still have a huge deficit and didn't believe spending all of that revenue was a wise choice at this time. I am hopeful that the revenues continue to roll in so that our Commonwealth will be in much better shape next year.

The final budget included \$250 million more for basic education than Governor Corbett proposed in March, with \$50 million of that money coming from the annual operating budget of the legislature for the Accountability Block Grant which funds full day kindergarten. Returning that money to the general fund was an important first step toward the goal of eliminating all legislative surplus funds in excess of a reasonable reserve.

One of the items which legislators hear the most about from constituents is welfare spending. With Welfare spending at approximately \$10 billion per year, better accountability was absolutely necessary. From Auditor General Wagner's audit of the Special Allowances Program to my own legislation which passed the full Senate eliminating unnecessary spending for state funded methadone transportation, we have made significant progress in cutting waste and abuse. Welfare Bill [House Bill 960](#).

The Governor signed numerous bills into law in the last two weeks, but three are particularly significant. First, the Governor signed an expanded Castle Doctrine [House Bill 40](#) into law which provides people with the ability to better protect themselves against intruders. Second, the Governor signed a Fair Share law suit reform bill into law earlier this week [Senate Bill 1131](#). Third, a back end referendum bill requiring school boards to get the public's approval before raising taxes with only two exceptions was signed along with the budget on June 30 [Senate Bill 330](#).



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Senate Approves Ward Bill Limiting State-Funded Transportation to Methadone Clinics

The State Senate recently approved legislation sponsored by Sen. Kim Ward (R-39) that enacts limits on transportation for methadone clients who are part of the Medicaid Transportation program.

Under [Senate Bill 638](#), the Department of Public Welfare would require that individuals who receive methadone treatment services, covered by Medicaid under the Medical Assistance Transportation Program, receive treatment at the clinic closest to their residence if they are using paratransit services by taxi or bus; or being reimbursed mileage for using their own vehicles.

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“At a time when the Commonwealth is faced with the challenge of producing a balanced budget with tight resources, we need to place commonsense limits on expenditures such as this,” said Ward.

Currently, methadone recipients choose their preferred service location and the cost of the transportation is paid with tax dollars. The transportation costs totaled \$32.5 million in 2009-10, an increase of 26.3 percent from 2007-08. More than one in three trips paid for through the Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP) is for methadone maintenance.

The legislation is expected to produce at least \$1.8 million in savings.

“We must be vigilant in identifying and eliminating waste wherever possible. This bill represents more than just saving dollars from this one program, it represents the opportunity to gain additional savings as we move forward looking at many other line items in the budget,” said Ward.

Senate Bill 638 is currently in the House of Representatives for consideration in the fall.

Have a wonderful and safe 4th of July Weekend !