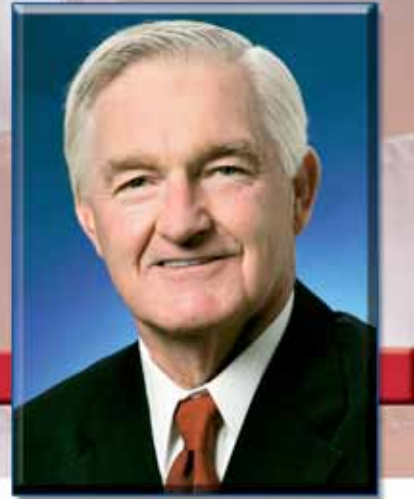


# State Senator Bob Robbins

REPORTS TO THE 50TH DISTRICT

SUMMER 2007



## Standing Firm Against Tax Increases in New Budget

Many people wondered why it took so long to finish the state budget this year. Well, the truth is, it took 17 days and a one-day government shutdown (ordered by the Governor) before everyone finally agreed that spending would be held in check and – more importantly – there would be no tax increases. Senate Republicans maintained all along that government must live within its means and not go to the taxpayers for more money.

In the end, the Senate approved a \$27 billion budget that included a scaled-back 3.2 percent increase in spending – a figure that was well below what Governor Rendell wanted. And, the final budget does not include the seven tax increases proposed by the Governor. That means taxpayers will be spared more than \$2.5 billion in tax increases aggressively sought by the Rendell Ad-

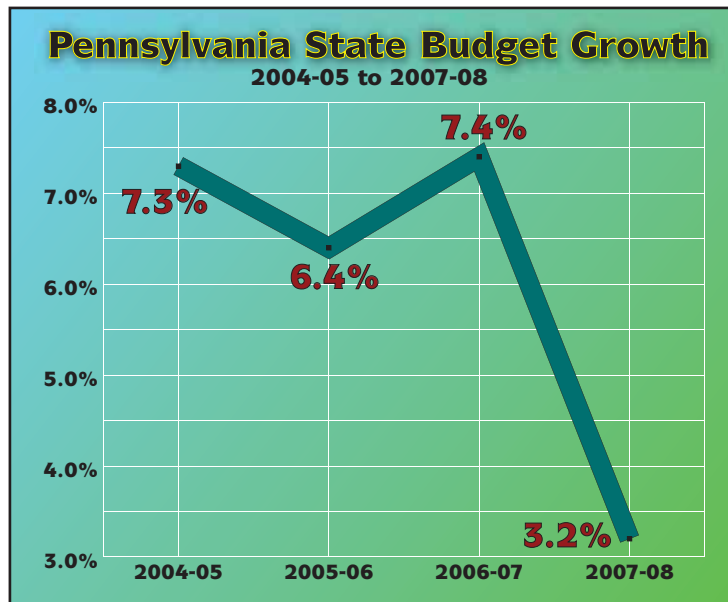
ministration, which would have cost a family of four nearly \$800 each year.

These tax hike proposals included:

- Sales Tax Increase (\$1.4 billion)
- Oil Company Gross Profits Tax (\$760 million)
- Fair Share Payroll Tax (\$60.4 million)
- Cigarette Tax (\$49.7 million)

- Cigar/Loose Tobacco Tax (\$27.8 million)
  - Municipal Solid Waste Fees (\$46 million)
  - Energy Use Tax (\$75 million)
- “While we held the line on spending, the final budget restored funding that Governor Rendell slashed from programs such as agricultural assistance, Science in Motion, hospital-based burn centers and the New Choices/New Options Program for women in need of increasing their job skills. There is no way that the General Assembly would ever condone nor allow those cuts to occur,” Senator Bob Robbins said.

This is a fiscally responsible budget that received strong bipartisan support. It provides funding for the essential operations and services provided by the Commonwealth, without increasing the burden on Pennsylvania taxpayers.



## Robbins Opposes Mass Transit Bail-Out Bill

Even though Senator Bob Robbins supported the budget, he strongly opposed the transportation bill that was part of the package because it is unfair to place a burden on rural communities to bail-out mass transit agencies in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

“The proposal is based on borrowing and by imposing tolls on the thousands of motorists who use Interstate 80,” Senator Robbins said. “That is a bad proposal from the word go. There is no way I could support a plan that makes the people I represent dig deeper into their pockets to pay tolls when that

money will most likely go to benefit SEPTA and PAT in one way or another. In addition, those few dollars Pennsylvania may gain in tolls could mean the loss of even greater revenues that we could see through business development and job creation.”

## Governor Signs Robbins' Exemption for AG Fair Buildings

The Governor recently signed Senate Bill 466, a measure Senator Bob Robbins introduced that exempts temporary structures and pole barns at agricultural fairs from Pennsylvania's statewide building code.

More than 6 million people, many from out of state, visit Pennsylvania's 116 fairs each year. It would be extremely unfortunate if Pennsylvania's fairs were forced to close due to unreasonable construction code requirements.

Buildings at agricultural fairs are usually setup for a limited amount of time, so it's unfair that they should have to meet stringent requirements set for permanent structures. In fact, many charitable organizations would have shouldered the unreasonable costs and burden of complying with undue standards set by the Uniform Construction Code if they want to have an exhibit at those fairs.

Many worthwhile community organizations such as: 4-H; Future Farmers of America; local churches; Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, Lions Clubs; Rotary Clubs and Granges could have suffered because a large portion of their operating budgets are raised at fairs.

As defined in Senate Bill 466, temporary structures less than 1,600 square feet in size and erected for a period of less than 30 days will be exempted from the code.



*Senator Bob Robbins visited the Wilmington Area Middle School Arts Club for a special breakfast on March 23 to mark Youth Art Month.*

### Senator Robbins Helps Students Mark Youth Art Month

Senator Bob Robbins is proud of the creativity of our young people and that's why he introduced Senate Resolution 44 that recognized March 2007 as "Youth Art Month in Pennsylvania." As part of that month's activities, he visited Wilmington Area Middle School to talk with young artists and to present art teacher Avalyn Shank with a personal copy of Senate Resolution 44.

"It was a real pleasure to go out to visit with these talented students. The truth is that students who are involved in arts programs are more likely to excel in school," Senator Robbins said. "It is great to see them actively involved in the middle school program and I hope that they remain involved through high school."

Youth Art Month was created in 1961 by the Council for Art Education, Inc as a national advocacy program. It is observed each March as a way to emphasize the value of art education for all children and to encourage support for quality school art programs.

### Fire Departments/EMS Corps Urged to Seek Grants

Senator Bob Robbins is urging all local volunteer fire departments and emergency medical services (EMS) squads to apply for \$50 million in grants from the Volunteer Fire Company and Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Program.

"We in state government are well aware of the financial and recruiting problems many of our volunteer departments face. Vehicles cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Clothing and personal equipment can cost thousands of dollars and construction and maintenance of stations can be beyond the means of many departments," Senator Robbins said. "That's why this grant program is important for those organizations and the communities they serve."

The online application for the grants is available August 28 through October 11 at [www.osfc.state.pa.us](http://www.osfc.state.pa.us). This year, the Office of the State Fire Commissioner will administer two fiscal years of grants on one application. That means the maximum grant amounts – \$30,000 for fire departments and \$20,000 for ambulance services – are double the usual amounts.

Grants may be used for construction or renovation of a fire company facility, purchase or repair of firefighting or rescue equipment, training or debt reduction.

## Senator Robbins Marks “Science in Motion Day”



*Senator Bob Robbins talks about the Science in Motion program during a May 2 press conference in the State Capitol Rotunda.*

## Reforming EMS Tax Helps Working Pennsylvanians

The Governor recently signed into law a bill Senator Bob Robbins cosponsored that made significant reforms to the Emergency and Municipal Services Tax.

“As it previously stood, this tax placed an extremely heavy burden on low-income workers,” Senator Robbins said. “The new law exempts those earning \$12,000 or less per year from the tax, ended the lump-sum maximum payment of \$52 and provides for a maximum deduction of \$1 per week.”

Another key provision of the new law is a requirement that 25 percent of the total revenue collected by a municipality from the tax must go to support emergency services including police, fire and emergency medical services. That ensures that money is dedicated for essential public safety operations.

Young people from across the Commonwealth recently gathered in Harrisburg as part of “Science in Motion Day.” The Science in Motion program partners colleges and high schools to encourage young people to explore science and technology. It is important for our Commonwealth and our nation to foster an interest in science among our young people. They represent our future and by encouraging them to actively explore science programs we can help them bring about fantastic new discoveries. Science in Motion is an outstanding program that gives students an opportunity to go beyond the text book and see that science is a field that has no boundaries, limited only by the imagination.

“I am proud to be the prime sponsor of Senate Bill 472, which would formally enact into law the Science Technology Partnerships Program, better known as Science in Motion,” said Senator Bob Robbins. “The program, which is already in place in some areas of the Commonwealth, makes state funding available to higher education institutions to purchase high tech science equipment. This equipment is then transported to and shared with surrounding schools.”

This past year, 307 public, private, and parochial schools were served throughout the state by 11 higher education institutions: Cedar Crest College, Clarion University, Drexel University, Gannon University, Gettysburg College, Juniata College, Susquehanna University, the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford, Ursinus College, Westminster College, and Wilkes University.

## Senate Adopts Senator Robbins’ REAL ID Resolution

The Senate recently adopted Senate Resolution 126, a measure Senator Bob Robbins introduced that urges the Pennsylvania Congressional Delegation to support measures to repeal the REAL ID Act or at the very least delay its implementation. The REAL ID Act requires states to adopt onerous federal standards for drivers’ licenses and identification cards by May 11, 2008.

“While I support federal efforts to prevent additional terrorist attacks on

our country, I have concerns with several issues in this Act,” Senator Robbins said. “The information on the cards could contain errors and false information which would create hardships for those who use this federally-approved ID card. In addition, this sensitive information could also put undercover law enforcement personnel at risk or endanger victims of crimes such as domestic violence, stalking, or criminal harassment.”

## Do-Not-Call List Registrations Due to Expire

Pennsylvania telephone customers who registered for the state’s Do-Not-Call list when it was first created five years ago now need to renew their registration. Registration for the Do-Not-Call list is only valid for five years from the date of initial registration.

The list is updated quarterly, so if a person originally registered in 2002, he or she must re-register by Sept. 15, 2007, or the registered phone number will expire on Nov. 1, 2007. This applies to both residential landline and wireless telephone subscribers.

New registrations and renewals of existing registrations for the “Do-Not-Call” list may be made by either calling a toll-free number 1-888-777-3406 or logging on to [www.nocallsplease.com](http://www.nocallsplease.com).

## Senator Robbins Participates in “National Guard Day”

Senator Bob Robbins was among several legislators who participated in the recent “Day at the Capitol – 2007” hosted by the state Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and the Pennsylvania National Guard.

“As the Vice Chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, I am pleased to recognize the service of our men and women in the Pennsylvania National Guard,” Senator Robbins said. “Certainly, it is important that our men and women in uniform know that they have our deepest gratitude and appreciation. But, it is also important for them to know that our thoughts and prayers are with them every day as well.”

As part of the Day at the Capitol activities, Senator Robbins attended a breakfast briefing conducted by state Adjutant General (Major General) Jessica L. Wright, Pennsylvania Army National Guard. General Wright provided an update on the Pennsylvania National Guard’s activities and recent changes to mobilization and deployment policies.



*Senator Bob Robbins interviewed state Adjutant General (Major General) Jessica L. Wright during the “Day at the Capitol 2007” for his “Robbins Report” monthly television show.*

Afterwards, Senator Robbins toured the array of displays in the State Capitol’s East Wing Rotunda. The displays featured the National Guard, the Scot-

land School for Veteran’s Children, the Military Family Relief Assistance Program, and various other veterans’ service programs and organizations.

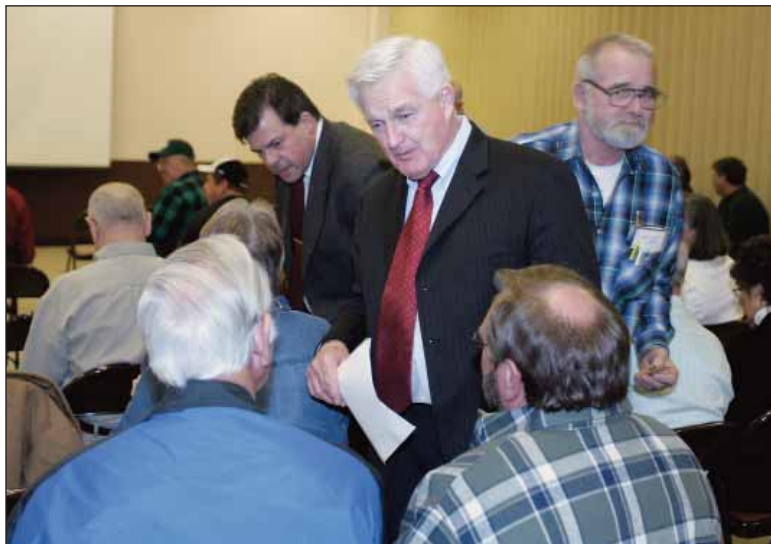
## Senator Robbins Hosts State Grant Workshop

The competition for state grant money is intense. That’s why Senator Bob Robbins hosted a special workshop to give local officials an opportunity to hear from representatives from several state agencies. They found out what state programs are available and the best ways to be competitive in the grant process. The information they learned could very well mean the difference between receiving a grant and sitting on the sidelines.

Experts in the areas of water and sewage, parks and recreation, greenways and conservation partnerships, and state surplus property participated in the

workshop. State agency representatives presented up-to-date information on programs and grants.

Attendees also received a desktop reference manual containing a comprehensive listing of the programs featured at the workshop, important contact information and other available programs.



*Senator Bob Robbins recently hosted a seminar in the Hempfield Volunteer Fire Department designed to help local government officials secure state grants.*

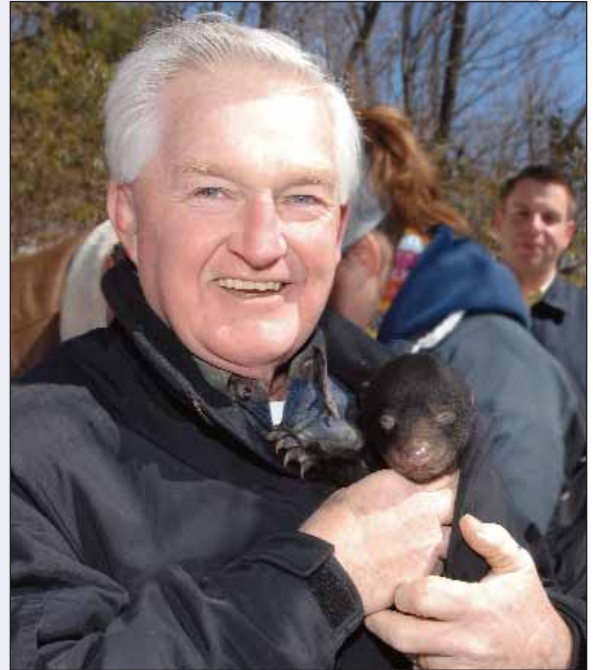


*Senator Bob Robbins discussed senior citizens' issues during a meeting with AARP members in his Harrisburg Office on June 5.*

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*Senator Bob Robbins makes a new friend - a black bear cub - during a Pennsylvania Game Commission bear-tagging mission on March 9.*

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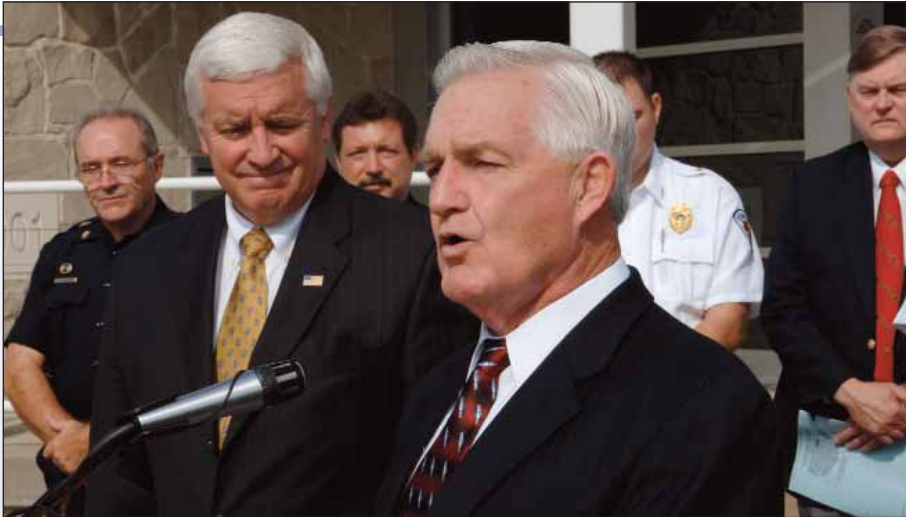
*A group of 4H students received a special tour of the Senate Chamber in April.*

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*Girl Scouts receive a personal civics lesson from Senator Bob Robbins during their visit to the State Capitol this past spring.*

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*Senator Bob Robbins is working with Attorney General Tom Corbett to crack down on Meth labs in Pennsylvania.*

## Meth Lab Disclosure Bill Introduced

“One of my police chiefs informed me that there is currently nothing that requires an owner of a house or apartment to disclose that the premises were previously the site of a Meth lab,” Senator Bob Robbins said. “I believe we need to change that as soon as possible.”

That’s why Senator Robbins introduced Senate Bill 816 which would require the disclosure to potential buyers and renters of properties formerly used

as methamphetamine (Meth) labs.

There are major environmental issues with the clean-up of a Meth lab. Even after the clean-up of a site, it is possible for a small amount of contaminants to be left in ventilation systems, on surfaces, such as sinks, and in absorbent materials like carpets and furniture. The truth is that even in cases involving small amounts, Meth lab contaminants may pose health threats to those persons exposed to them.

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