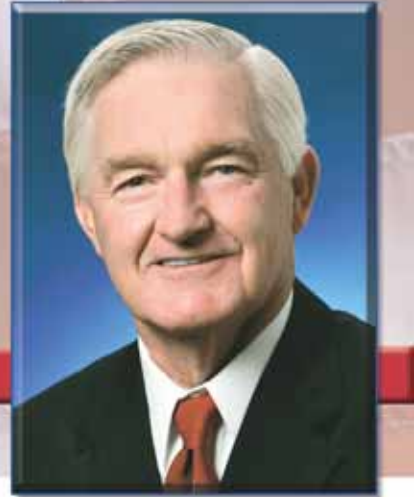


# State Senator Bob Robbins

REPORTS TO THE 50TH DISTRICT

SPRING 2005



## Legislature Reviews Proposed 2005-06 State Budget

Dear Friends,

The State Senate is thoroughly reviewing Governor Rendell's proposed \$23.85 billion budget for Fiscal Year 2005-06.

The budget proposal includes an increase of \$815 million (3.5 percent) in spending, with about three-quarters of the increase (\$612 million) earmarked for programs within the Department of Public Welfare (DPW).

In addition to the increase in DPW spending, the Governor is also proposing modest increases in public education funding and a substantial change in the way the state allocates resources from its portion of the National Tobacco Settlement.

The Tobacco Settlement Fund, created in 2001 through a two-year bipartisan effort, would undergo a substantial change under the Governor's proposal. In effect, the administration wants to make the Tobacco Fund a part of each budget beginning with 2005-06, which would allow programs funded by Tobacco Settlement money to be changed annually.

Basic education and special education would see increases in state funding, with an additional \$109 million (2.5 percent) for **basic education** for a total of \$4.47 billion and an additional \$23.2 million (2.5 percent) for **special education** for a total of \$952.4 million. The Accountability Block Grant program is slated to retain its current funding level of \$200 million.

The budget proposal also includes a 10 percent increase (\$22.8 million) for **community colleges** for a total of \$249 million. Overall, direct funding for the **State System of Higher Education** would increase by \$9.75 million (2.2 percent) to a total of \$443.1 million. PHEAA changes include efforts to promote **nursing education** to address the ongoing need for nurses across the Commonwealth. The budget proposal would include an additional \$9 million in state funding for PHEAA grants.

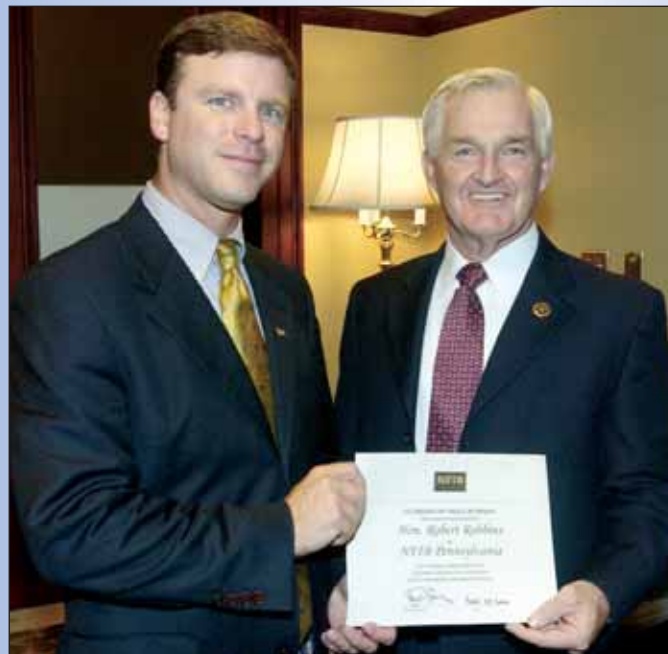
While I am pleased that the Governor highlighted higher education by propos-

ing increased funding, I was disappointed that he would provide no funding for the important **Basic/ Higher Education Science Technology Partnership Program**. This important program provides rural schools access to high tech science equipment. (Please see page 3 for more.)

It is encouraging that the Governor did not attempt to raise taxes in this budget. But it does include a lot of spending that the General Assembly will look into closely.

Sincerely,

*Bob Robbins*



Pennsylvania's small business advocacy group - the National Federation of Independent Businesses - presented Senator Robbins with the Guardian of Small Business award. Small businesses account for 52 percent of Pennsylvania jobs. (Left): NFIB Assistant State Director Mark Richards and Senator Robbins.

# Tax Dollars Returning to Communities for Local Projects

*Senator Robbins has been instrumental in bringing state dollars back to the 50th district. Following is a sample of some of these tax dollars working for local projects.*

## BUTLER COUNTY

- \$374,500 to expand manufacturing education at Butler County Community College.
- \$64,000 to hire a Butler County Conservation District watershed specialist.
- \$17,000 to reimburse the county for 50 percent of the county recycling coordinator's salary and expenses.

## CRAWFORD COUNTY

- \$63,000 to help Cambridge Springs develop the Cambridge Area Recreational Park.
- \$77,000 to allow the Conneaut Lake-French Creek Valley Conservancy to acquire an easement on 141 acres along French Creek for stream protection.
- \$121,356 to monitor for the deadly West Nile Virus in Crawford County.
- \$300,000 to redevelop the Crawford County Industrial Park, resulting in additional jobs.
- \$1 million to implement a comprehensive leaf waste composting system through the Crawford County Solid Waste Authority.
- \$650,000 to widen Delano Road in the Keystone Regional Industrial Park, helping businesses at the park retain access to their facilities and allow job growth.
- \$28,000 to stream bank improvements along Mill Run behind the Meadville Medical Center.
- \$60,000 to prevent the runoff of pollutants in the Oil Creek Watershed.
- \$228,074 for rail improvements on the Oil Creek & Titusville Lines, maintaining 856 jobs and stimulating economic growth.
- \$260,000 to assist multiple improvement projects in the Oil Heritage Region Park.
- \$140,000 to construct a railroad siding at the intermodal rail facility in Titusville.

- \$50,000 to provide Enterprise Zone tax credits through the Titusville Redevelopment Authority.
- \$360,000 in grants and tax credits to help create new jobs at Universal Well Services, Inc.
- \$2 million to assist with improvements to the Western NY & PA Railroad Co. line between Meadville and Corry.

## LAWRENCE COUNTY

- \$73,338 to monitor for the deadly West Nile Virus in Lawrence County.
- \$28,526 to reimburse the county for 50 percent of the county recycling coordinator's salary and expenses.
- \$7,484 to help pay for recycling expenses.
- \$64,000 to support the Lawrence County Conservation District.

## MERCER COUNTY

- \$501,000 to help Bessemer & Lake Erie Railroad upgrade tracks.
- \$400,000 to provide housing rehab and loans in Delaware, Jefferson, and Pymatuning townships and Clark Borough.
- \$1.89 million in loans and grants to install new equipment at Duferco Farrell Corp.
- \$93,000 to help replace a water line in Greenville.
- \$650,000 to help revitalize downtown Grove City.
- \$199,386 to improve safety and maintenance at Grove City Airport.
- \$331,319 loan for the Heritage II senior housing project in Mercer.
- \$34,154 to install a wind turbine at McKeever Environmental Center.
- \$28,291 to reimburse the county for 50 percent of the county recycling coordinator's salary and expenses.
- \$80,717 to monitor for the deadly West Nile Virus in the county.
- \$530,651 to Community Action Partners of Mercer County to weatherize homes.

- \$42,000 to support the Mercer County Conservation District.
- \$54,750 to Mercer County Homebuyers Inc. to promote family savings accounts.
- \$85,500 to support regional planning in Mercer County.
- \$60,000 to assist the Shenango Valley Regional Lock-up and countywide video arraignment.
- \$507,517 to purchase curbside containers, drop-off containers and construct a compost building for county residents.
- \$156,000 to expand Novocell Semiconductor in Hermitage, adding 35 jobs.
- \$20,000 to develop Erie Canal Lock Walkway in Sharpsville.
- \$40,000 to renovate Shenango Township community park.
- \$42,000 for Greenville-Reynolds Development to assist with wetland remediation at the industrial park.
- \$80,000 to implement a wetland treatment system on Fox Run.
- \$1.47 million in loans and grants to develop Stateline Industrial Park in Hermitage.
- \$10 million to turn Sharon's old Westinghouse plant into Winner Steel/Sharon Industrial Park, immediately creating or retaining 230 jobs.

## Lyme Disease Season

**T**he transmission season for Lyme disease is here.

Lyme disease is an inflammatory illness spread by ticks. While we don't live in a high-risk area, there are few precautions worth keeping in mind.

When heading to wooded areas, use insect repellent and wear light-colored clothing that covers as much skin as possible. Walk in the center of trails to avoid overhanging brush and check yourself, family members and pets for ticks after leaving wooded areas.

You can read more about Lyme disease at [www.health.state.pa.us](http://www.health.state.pa.us).

## Robbins: Boost Science Education

Senator Robbins recently introduced legislation that would place into state law a nationally acclaimed science education program.

Senate Bill 414 would establish the Pennsylvania Basic Education/Higher Education Science and Technology Partnerships Program as a permanent line item in the state budget. Also known as "Science in Motion," the program makes state funding available to higher education institutions, which in turn **share high-tech science equipment with schools** in their surrounding areas.

This past year, 235 public, private, and parochial schools were served throughout the state by 11 higher education institutions, including **Westminster College** in Lawrence County. Westminster College serves the Farrell, Grove City, Hermitage, Highlands, Jamestown, Lakeview, Laurel, Mercer, Mohawk, Neshannock, New Castle, Penn Crest, Seneca Valley, Sharon, Sharpsville, Slippery Rock, and Wilmington school districts.

This is a cost-effective, innovative initiative that provides schools with science and technology resources they could not otherwise afford.

## NASCAR License Plates

Pennsylvania motorists can now purchase specialty NASCAR license plates featuring their favorite driver. A portion of the proceeds of each plate will go to Victory Junction Gang Camp, a non-profit organization aimed at enriching the lives of children who have a terminal or chronic illness. You can download an application form at [www.dmv.state.pa.us](http://www.dmv.state.pa.us).

## Robbins Resolution Honors State Police

The Pennsylvania State Police became the nation's first uniformed police organization of its kind 100 years ago.

Senator Robbins introduced Senate Resolution 27 to mark this significant anniversary. From patrolling highways, to leading criminal investigations and enforcing liquor laws, our State Police serve a vital function.

In 1993, the State Police became the **largest accredited police agency** in the world and today has an authorized complement of 4,545

sworn members, along with more than 1,600 civilians serving in a variety of roles.

Since 1929, all State Police have been required to memorize the "Call of Honor," which reads, in part: *I am a Pennsylvania State Trooper; a soldier of the law. To me is entrusted the honor of the force. I must serve honestly, faithfully, and if need be, lay down my life as others have done before me, rather than swerve from the path of duty.*

Congratulations to the Pennsylvania State Police!

## Robbins Appointed to PIAA Oversight, Senate Committees

As a former wrestler and coach, and as a big fan of scholastic sports, Senator Robbins was pleased to be appointed to the new Pennsylvania Athletic Oversight Committee.

The panel's job is to ensure that the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Agency (PIAA) continues to **comply with reforms** put in place by the General Assembly in 2000 to address mismanagement.

Senator Robbins is also proud to be the new Vice Chairman of the **Senate Veterans Affairs and**

### **Emergency Preparedness**

**Committee**, a committee on which he has served for many years and previously chaired. Senator Robbins also has a new committee assignment as well – Banking and Insurance – and he continues to serve on the Games and Fisheries, Local Government, and Rules and Executive Nominations committees.

Senator Robbins was re-elected to his leadership position as Majority Caucus Secretary by his colleagues for the 2005-06 session.

### CREATING AND MAINTAINING JOBS

(From right): Senator Robbins and Representative Michael Gruitza (D-7) tour the pickling processing equipment recently installed at Dufenco Farrell Corp. in Sharon. The company received nearly \$2 million in loans and grants to upgrade their equipment, creating 10 new jobs and retaining 486 employees.



Photo purchased from The Sharon Herald

## Robbins Hosts Student Government Seminar

State government came alive for more than 100 area high school students at the 2004 Student Government Seminar entitled "State Government: A Closer Look."

The event was held at Thiel College in Greenville on October 22nd. Seventeen of the 24 school districts in the 50th Senatorial District were represented. Students questioned lawmakers and

lobbyists about the legislative process and became "Senators for a Day," participating in com-

mittee meetings and a mock session of the full Senate.

"Allowing the students to take an active role in the legislative process means they will leave with a better understanding of how bills become law in Pennsylvania. I think it is important for our students to recognize how their participation in government will shape Pennsylvania in the years to come," said Senator Robbins.

*Senator Robbins talking to students at the Student Government Seminar held at Thiel College in October. The event was attended by more than 100 students. The 2005 Student Government Seminar is scheduled for October 14 at Thiel College. Please call the senator's Greenville office for more information at 724-588-1323/724-983-5047 or toll-free 1-800-222-8793.*



*Students from Crawford County Vo-Tech represented Crawford County and the school at the Career and Technical Education Week Celebration at the Capitol in February. (From left): students Melissa Schwartzbauer, Lynnette Bonanno, Lindsey Leonard, Senator Robbins, instructor Shari Wilkinson, student Ashley White and instructor Bonnie Stein.*



*The Career and Technical Education Week Celebration, held at the Capitol in February, featured a display from Mercer County Career Center students. (From left): instructor Paul Ryan, student Aaron Buchanan, Senator Robbins, Principal Larry Klemens, student Corry Keck and instructor Brenda Little. Senator Robbins is holding a telephone designed by the students in the Electronics and Manufacturing Related Technology Program.*



*Senator Robbins met with legendary musical performers Jon "Bowzer" Baumann, formerly of "Sha Na Na," (rear); and Joe Terry (left) and Frank Maffei (right), both of "Danny and the Juniors," to discuss Senator Robbins' "Truth in Music" legislation, which would restrict "knock-off" musical groups from capitalizing on the names of famous groups.*

*American Cancer Society volunteers, survivors, caregivers and community leaders from across Pennsylvania traveled to Harrisburg for the Pennsylvania Relay for Life Celebration at the state Capitol in September. Members who attended the Relay for Life from Crawford, Lawrence and Mercer Counties met with Senator Robbins in his Harrisburg office to discuss pertinent issues.*



*Miss Crawford County Alycia McCullough visited local legislators at the Capitol to promote her platform "G.E.T.Active," which encourages citizens to gain information, exercise regularly and take an active role in fighting cardiovascular disease.*

*(From left): Representative Rod Wilt, Senator Robbins, Alycia McCullough, Representative Teresa Forcier and Representative John Evans.*

## Robbins Legislation Becomes Law

Two bills Senator Robbins sponsored and another he strongly supported have been signed into law by the Governor.

Senate Bill 959 – Act 233 of 2004 – provides state and county probation and parole offices with **relief from an unnecessary requirement**. Prior to the law, a 48-hour supply of medication was to be provided to state and county probation and parole offices when a prisoner was released from a correctional facility. This new law stipulates that the parolee is directly provided with the medication instead. Probation and parole offices are not pharmacies and should not be in the business of dispensing medication. Parolees should be capable of self-medication.

Senate Bill 981 – now Act 212 of 2004 – ensures full funding of Pennsylvania's **National Guard Educational Assistance Program**. Under the program, which Senator Robbins helped create in 1996, Guard members can receive free college tuition for up to five years in

exchange for six years of service. However, the increasing number of Guard members entering and leaving the program as a result of deployment has made it difficult to project future participation rates and costs. Act 212 requires that any unspent funds remain in the program at the end of each fiscal year, rather than going back into the General Fund as had been the procedure. This program has been a fair exchange for National

Guard members and the Commonwealth, and should be fully funded.

House Bill 2055 – a companion bill to Senator Robbins' Senate Bill 1086 and now known as Act 195 of 2004 – ensures that **the state veterans preference law** is extended to military reservists and members of the National Guard who were federally activated for war or armed conflict, then released from that active duty to serve out their remaining service obligation.

## Combating the West Nile Virus

As the temperature outside increases, so does the need to monitor for the West Nile Virus.

The state and counties cooperate in an aggressive mosquito surveillance and control program to contain the virus in Pennsylvania. West Nile virus is spread to people and animals by infected mosquitoes. While anyone can contract the virus, older adults and people with compromised immune systems are at highest risk of developing the disease.

The virus can cause an inflammation of the brain.

The safest precautions are to eliminate standing water and cover skin as much as possible outdoors. In recent years, a handful of cases have been reported in the 50th Senatorial District. For more information about West Nile virus, including current test results for mosquitoes, birds and horses, visit the West Nile virus website at **[www.westnile.state.pa.us](http://www.westnile.state.pa.us)**.



## State Senator Robert D. Robbins

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