

Week of July 23, 2018

**HEADLINES**

**Hanna, Policy Committee discuss retirement security for Pennsylvanians**

State Rep. Mike Hanna, D-Clinton/Centre, hosted a House Democratic Policy Committee hearing on retirement security for Pennsylvanians at the Bald Eagle Area High School. Hanna was joined by Policy Committee Chairman Mike Sturla, D-Lancaster, and state legislators from across the commonwealth. The committee discussed the importance of helping Pennsylvanians save for retirement. Hanna said that there are over 2 million workers in the state without access to a retirement savings account, which is unacceptable. At the hearing, Hanna's legislation ([H.B. 465](http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billInfo/billInfo.cfm?sYear=2017&sInd=0&body=H&type=B&bn=0465)) was discussed; it would create the Keystone Retirement Security Program. Under the plan, employers with five or more employees that don't already offer a retirement plan would be required to offer their employees enrollment in the plan. Workers could decline if they choose; otherwise, a small portion of their pay would be automatically deducted and deposited into an account with the state Treasurer's Office. Treasury would manage the accounts similar to the way it currently manages the PA529 college savings accounts. This legislation would offer portable retirement savings accounts to nearly every employee in Pennsylvania with absolutely no cost to taxpayers. The committee heard testimony from Keith Welks, deputy treasurer, Pennsylvania Treasurer's Office; Wendy Young Carter, vice president and D.C. practice director, public sector, The Segal Group; and Ray Landis, government relations manager, AARP Pennsylvania.

**TREASURER TORSELLA ANNOUNCES HISTORIC AMOUNT OF UNCLAIMED PROPERTY RETURNED TO TAXPAYERS**

Pennsylvania Treasurer Joe Torsella announced that Treasury returned $269,299,682 in unclaimed property to Pennsylvanians during the 2017-18 Fiscal Year. That amount is an 18% increase from the total amount returned to taxpayers in the previous fiscal year and an all-time Treasury record. Treasury serves as the custodian of $3.4 billion dollars of unclaimed property. Under Pennsylvania law, entities are required to report any financial asset that has gone unclaimed for a period of time — usually three years — to Treasury. Unclaimed property includes items such as abandoned bank accounts, forgotten stocks, uncashed checks and contents of safety deposit boxes. The assets remain available for claim by the owners or their heirs in perpetuity. Unclaimed property can also include tangible property like jewelry, coins, and, many times, service awards. As part of an ongoing initiative established by Treasurer Torsella, eighteen “lost” military decorations, including three Purple Hearts, were recently returned to their rightful owners: military veterans or their families. Treasury continues to search for the heirs of over 500 service awards from various conflicts. Claimants may search Treasury’s [website](http://icm-tracking.meltwater.com/link.php?DynEngagement=true&H=btYXC68syxnIlVIaW0qBweEUHWPFwuN5EgnqFgPj0oiC1OMl9zi1RuPeFB808aR7R0nCa1G1iuhja%2B81TW4%2FpGFU1%2Bi%2FL1Xhn39XZh5EnXerl2m1Dy7tkQ%3D%3D&G=0&R=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.patreasury.gov%2Funclaimed-property%2F&I=20180725165005.0000000b1def%40mail6-113-ussnn1&X=MHwxMDQ2NzU4OjViNThhYTE4NTg5ZGQ3MGEwMmVmNGY0Zjs%3D&S=nlN5zVohtewA2GafEX3KpFqeLX-irX2EoaA7V8YVh28) for unclaimed property. Treasury’s Bureau of Unclaimed Property is also available toll-free at 1-800-222-2046 and via email at [tupmail@patreasury.gov](http://icm-tracking.meltwater.com/link.php?DynEngagement=true&H=btYXC68syxnIlVIaW0qBweEUHWPFwuN5EgnqFgPj0oiC1OMl9zi1RuPeFB808aR7R0nCa1G1iuhja%2B81TW4%2FpGFU1%2Bi%2FL1Xhn39XZh5EnXerl2m1Dy7tkQ%3D%3D&G=0&R=file%3A%2F%2F%2FC%3A%5CUsers%5Cmconnolly%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CINetCache%5CContent.Outlook%5CFOI25MWS%5Ctupmail%40patreasury.gov&I=20180725165005.0000000b1def%40mail6-113-ussnn1&X=MHwxMDQ2NzU4OjViNThhYTE4NTg5ZGQ3MGEwMmVmNGY0Zjs%3D&S=tAXyAiVzMe4fTzxGdmUT63AHu6PNf9sR3eB1YGyl3f8), to help conduct a thorough search for unclaimed property.

**DePasquale report cites $581 million in potential recreational marijuana revenue, but that doesn’t mean lawmakers are biting**

A year after coming out in favor of legalizing recreational marijuana, Auditor General Eugene DePasquale released a special report that estimated the state could get an extra $581 million a year from regulating and taxing it. The report itself was based off of looking at other states that had already legalized cannabis, like Washington and Colorado, and extrapolated from their consumption. DePasquale said he released the report to try and advance dialogue around the topic. DePasquale released the report last Thursday in Pittsburgh, standing with Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto, who just this year came out in favor of legalization. DePasquale’s full report cites that besides the state’s share, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh could both get an additional $6.9 and $3.8 million respectively from a local sales tax. The report also saw numerous positive and negative tangential impacts, from cost savings in the criminal justice system to the risk of running afoul of federal laws and increasing the risk of drugged driving. The latter especially loomed large for House Republican Caucus spokesperson Steve Miskin, who pointed to the risk of drugged driving in opposing any measure. He also labeled support for legalization an extreme liberal viewpoint and questioned using money as a pro.

**Longtime state legislator dies at 73**

After over a year-long battle with cancer, Rep. Flo Fabrizio (D-Erie) died Tuesday morning, [per GoErie.](http://www.goerie.com/news/20180724/flo-fabrizio-erie-political-stalwart-dies-at-73) He was 73 years old. Fabrizio, first elected in 2002, was diagnosed in April 2017 with pancreatic cancer. In a statement, Gov. Tom Wolf remembered Fabrizio as a "loyal and loving husband, father, colleague, friend and representative" with a passion for his life and work. Born in 1944, Fabrizio earned a bachelor’s degree from Penn State University and a master's in education from Edinboro State University. After teaching in public schools in Erie and Philadelphia, he become Erie County clerk in 1982. He would stay in the post for 20 years. Fabrizio is survived by his wife Victoria, his daughter, Jill, and his stepsons, Anthony and Matthew. The Capitol dome will be lit up red, white and blue in his honor Tuesday night.

**Attorney General Josh Shapiro Sues Five Companies, Two Individuals in Mortgage Modification Scam**

Attorney General Josh Shapiro announced a lawsuit against five Pennsylvania mortgage foreclosure companies and two company owners for deceiving consumers into signing contracts to have their mortgage loans modified – and never delivering the services paid for. In some cases, homeowners instructed by the scammers to not pay their mortgages ultimately lost their homes in sheriff’s sales.    The Office of Attorney General received 21 complaints from Pennsylvania consumers, and nearly 50 more from consumers across the country, who entered into mortgage modification contracts with companies owned by Mark Goldstein and Drew Alia, including GMK Solutions, the Foreclosure Law Center; Century Legal Group; Alia Law Group; and the Law Offices of Drew Alia.  Pennsylvania homeowners and other consumers wound up agreeing to pay the defendants more than $280,000 through their scam conducted between 2008 and 2015.  In addition to claims filed under Pennsylvania’s Unfair Trade Practices and Consumer Protection Law, the Attorney General’s lawsuit bases other claims against the defendants under the Pennsylvania Mortgage Licensing Act. The lawsuit in the Philadelphia County Common Pleas Court seeks injunctive relief and restitution in excess of $280,000 total for all consumers who are currently or have ever been in a transaction with any of these companies or their affiliates.

**Capitolwire: To freeze or not to freeze tuition has been the question for several PA universities.**

To freeze or not to freeze, that is – or at least was - the question. With all apologies to the immortal bard, the revised Hamlet line, or something similar to it, has been played over and over this summer in the minds and on the lips of many Pennsylvania higher education officials. And depending on their answer, they find favor or fire from state lawmakers and government honchos. Several of those politicians and leaders, after the 2018-19 state budget increased funding for the state’s higher education institutions, urged those institutions “to hold the line on tuition increases.” The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) and its 14 state-owned universities got a $15 million, or 3.3 percent, with state funding rising to a total of $468 million. That increase came even though PASSHE projects an overall decline in student enrollment of 2.2 percent. Pennsylvania’s state-related universities - Penn State, Pittsburgh, Temple, Lincoln and the University of Pennsylvania’s School of Veterinary Medicine – received a combined funding increase of approximately $19.4 million, which is a 3-percent boost, pushing total state funding in excess of $600 million. While a host of leaders thought the funding increases should produce tuition freezes, that hasn’t been the case for every higher education institution. So far, Pitt and Penn State have frozen their tuition, but for the tenth year in a row, PASSHE has voted to raise its tuition. Praise for the state-related universities and criticism for PASSHE followed. Lincoln and Temple, however, raised their tuitions 2 percent and 2.5 percent, respectively.

**PENNSYLVANIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION SCHEDULE:**

**2018 SENATE SESSION SCHEDULE**

September 24, 25, 26

October 1, 2, 3, 15, 16, 17

November14

**2018 HOUSE SESSION SCHEDULE**

September 12, 13, 24, 25, 26

October 1(NV), 2(NV), 3, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17

November13

**COMMITTEE NEWS**

[**House Finance**](http://www.ctbpls.com/htbin/web_com.com?Comnam=018&Session=17R)**(POSTING CHANGE)**  
**TUESDAY - 9/25/18**  
**8:30 a.m., Room 140 Main Capitol (Note time change from 9am)**

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|  | Joint public hearing with the House Local Government Committee and the House Urban Affairs Committee on Act 47 |