

Senator Mike Folmer

48th Senatorial District



“Promise to Pennsylvania”

Summer 2008 Report

Promise to Pennsylvania

- When I ran for office in 2006, I signed the “Promise to Pennsylvania,” a contract between myself and the citizens of the Commonwealth focusing on three areas of reform:
 - Legislative and Political
 - Taxation and Spending
 - Legal and Labor

- Consistent with this pledge, I have introduced numerous bills focused on reform including:
 - SB 707, “The Taxpayer Protection Act”
 - SB 1015, “The Taxpayer Funded Advertising Transparency Act”
 - SB 1290, Establishing a Citizen’s Constitutional Convention
 - SB 1292, Creating a “Tax Me More Fund”
 - SB 1499, Instituting stricter use of state vehicles

- Additionally, I have cosponsored many reform bills, including:
 - SB 137: Establishing Initiative and Referendum
 - SB 468: Eliminating sine die sessions
 - SB 729: Posting government salaries online
 - SB 986: Banning Legislative Bonuses
 - SB 1488: Providing for a “Gift Ban” from lobbyists

REAL ID SB 1220

- My Anti-REAL ID legislation would exempt Pennsylvania from a federal mandate requiring the establishment of a national identification card.
- The REAL ID Act is both invasive and costly.
- The Act requires that each state provide all other states with access to information contained in motor vehicle databases, creating a single, national database.
- Virginia estimates its compliance costs to be around \$240 million—a significant financial burden.
- Under REAL ID, states retain a digital scan of identity documents (including birth certificates and social security cards) for ten years.
- REAL ID empowers the Department of Homeland Security to collect biometric data, including fingerprints and eye scans, and to place Radio Frequency Identification chips in every American's driver's license.
- REAL ID offers no controls on what confidential data can be collected, where and how long it can be stored, and who is authorized to obtain, share, trade, or sell that information.
- Instead of REAL ID, Americans need to be vigilant, and exercise their right to self-protection.

Tax Me More Fund SB 1292

- I introduced my “Tax Me More Fund” legislation in response to those citizens who feel they aren’t being taxed enough.
- This legislation is consistent with my Taxpayer Protection Act (SB 707).
- The “Tax Me More Fund” allows citizens to make voluntary financial contributions to the State Treasury.
- This fund gives those who support increased state spending the opportunity to donate money towards their favorite program(s) and project(s).
- With the Commonwealth collecting \$110 Million daily, the problem isn’t a lack of taxes. We simply can’t prioritize our spending.

Healthy Pennsylvania

SB 1184-1191

- I introduced Healthy Pennsylvania (consisting of SB 1184 - SB 1191) as an alternative to Governor Rendell's government fiat solution to our Commonwealth's health care problems.
- The main points of Healthy Pennsylvania are:
 - Establish Sunset Health Care Mandates
 - Increase competition among health care insurers
 - Establish a State High Risk Pool (*Part of Health Net PA*)
 - Promote Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) (*Part of Health Net PA*)
 - Adopt Cost Containment Measures Used in Other States
 - Reform Medicaid, CHIP and adultBasic
 - Weed Out Bad Doctors
 - Give Consumers More Price Information
 - Phase Out MCARE
 - Establish Tax Deductions/Credits for Those Who Pay for Their Own Health Care
- I believe the best solution to Pennsylvania's healthcare is empowering consumers with choice and autonomy over their healthcare decisions.

Military Child Custody

SB 1107

- SB 1107 protects the child custody rights of deployed military service people.
- While service personnel are deployed for active duty, SB 1107 would prohibit any court of:
 - Entering an order modifying or amending any previous judgment
 - OR
 - Issuing a new order changing the custody arrangement for that serviceperson's child
- The failure of a serviceperson to appear in court because of deployment would not be sufficient to justify a modification of a custody or visitation order.
- Overwhelming passed both chambers
- Awaiting the Governor's signature

Bingo Bill

SB 978

- I introduced SB 978 as companion legislation to Senator Browne's SB 845, which increases the weekly limits for small games of chance to \$20,000 from \$5,000.
- Separate legislation is required as there is a Small Games of Chance Law and a Bingo Law.
- Under the current Bingo Law, no prize may exceed \$250 except for jackpot games, which are limited to \$2,000 per day.
- My bill would allow for an increase for bingo games to \$8,000 per day from \$4,000 per day.
- My bill will also change bingo licenses to a biennial basis with new license fees:
 - Nonprofit associations: \$300
 - Senior Citizens' groups: \$150
 - Agricultural associations/county fairs: \$300
- Additionally, SB 978 would change the financial reporting and educational requirements for bingo operators.
- Similar changes were proposed by last session's HB 10, which passed the House 115 – 80, but were not considered by the full Senate.

Education Accountability

SB 805

- SB 805 would increase accountability in the Department of Education.
- The bill requires:
 - The Department to issue an annual report on the operation of the Educational Assistance Program:
 - Submitted to the majority and minority chairmen of the House and Senate Appropriations and Education committees
 - Posted on the Department's website
 - The Report would be required to include:
 - A listing of approved education assistance providers
 - A listing of each eligible school that has entered into a contract with the provider
 - The number of students for whom tutoring services were provided, by grade level
 - The assessment of academic progress conducted by the Department
- SB 805 was passed unanimously by the Senate
- Died in the House Education Committee

Taxpayer Protection Act

SB 707

- As part of my Promise to Pennsylvania, I introduced the Taxpayer Protection Act to require more fiscally responsible budgets.
- SB 707 is a companion bill to SB 7, which would protect taxpayers by amending Pennsylvania's Constitution.
- The Taxpayer Protection Act would:
 - Limit any future increase to the combination of inflation plus the percentage change in population growth.
 - Return 75 percent of all state surpluses directly to the taxpayers through an offsetting reduction in the Personal Income Tax
 - Require 25 percent of surpluses to be deposited in the state's Rainy Day Fund
- SB 707 has 30 cosponsors.

Piccola's Call for Special Session Ethics and Reform

- Legislation I plan to reintroduce in a Special Session:
 - SB 1015 Taxpayer Funded Advertising Transparency Act
 - SB 1290 Citizen's Constitutional Convention
 - SB 1499 Use of State Vehicles
 - Voter's Choice Act

- Other reform legislation that could be considered in a Special Session:
 - Senator Rhoades' SB 137 Establishing Initiative and Referendum
 - Senator Boscola's SB 346 Reforming the redistricting process
 - Senator Regola's SB 468 Eliminating sine die sessions
 - Senator Piliaggi's SB 729 Posting government salaries online
 - Senator Eichelberger's SB 986 Banning Bonuses
 - Senator Piccola's SB 1236 Establishing a Constitutional Convention

- Additional legislation that could be discussed includes:
 - Pension Reform
 - Recall

Taxpayer Funded Advertising Transparency Act SB 1015

- SB 1015 would require all advertising by state government to include the statement:
 - “Paid for with Pennsylvania Taxpayer dollars.”
- It is estimated that state government spends tens of millions of taxpayer dollars advertising annually.
- SB 1015 was unanimously passed in the full Senate and is currently in the House State Government Committee.
- Modern means of disseminating information without cost, particularly the Internet, should preclude practices of spending excess amounts of money on so-called public service announcements
- Passed unanimously by the full Senate
- Reported from the House State Government Committee
- Died in the House Appropriations Committee

State Vehicle Bill

SB 1499

- SB 1499 would institute stricter use of state vehicles by requiring:
 - Employees assigned the use of a state vehicle to drive 1,200 miles or more per month on average on official business (excluding travel to and from work)
 - Any state employee assigned a state vehicle to maintain a monthly mileage log
 - The Department of General Services (DGS) to post mileage logs online with the following information:
 - Department
 - Employee name
 - Vehicle make and model
 - Any state employee assigned a state vehicle to reimburse the state for insurance and gasoline, based proportionally on personal usage
 - Vehicles assigned to state employees to bear an “official use” license plate, unless the employee performs undercover law enforcement duties

SB 1290

- Guidelines:
 - Prohibits public officials and lobbyists serving as delegates
 - 100 signature threshold for delegate candidates
 - Minimum age of 21 for delegates
 - Nonpartisan election of delegates
 - Salary for delegates
 - Requires delegates to submit statement of financial interest
 - Two-thirds threshold for delegates to approve revisions
 - Simple Majority threshold for electoral ratification

- Ferlo's SB 291 and Piccola's SB 1236
 - Allow public officials and lobbyists to serve as delegates
 - 500 signature threshold for delegate candidates
 - Minimum age of 18 for delegates
 - Partisan election of delegates
 - No salary for delegates
 - Simple majority threshold for delegates to approve revisions
 - Simple majority threshold for electoral ratification

Voter's Choice Act

SB 1578

- My proposed legislation would eliminate the unfair hurdles that obstruct ballot access for minor party and independent candidates by requiring:
 - A political party to garner between 0.05% and 15 of the total number of registered voters in the Commonwealth as of 21 days prior to the date of the Primary Election in order to qualify as a “minor political party.”
 - Under current law, to qualify as a minor political party, a party must:
 - Have at least one candidate who, in the preceding November Election, polled at least 2 percent of the largest vote cast for any statewide candidate in each of at least 10 counties.
 - Have at least one candidate who also garnered 2 percent of the largest vote cast for any statewide candidate in the preceding November Election.
 - Have less than 15 percent of the total number of registered voters in the Commonwealth.
 - An independent candidate to collect the same amount of signatures as is required of major party candidates in order to appear on the November ballot.
 - Under current law, to appear on the November ballot for any office in a given electoral district:
 - Minor party and independent candidates must minimally submit a number of valid signatures equal to 2 percent of the number of votes received by any candidate for any office in the preceding November election within that electoral district.
 - For the 2006 Election, the requirement was 68,000 signatures.
 - Major party candidates automatically qualify to have their names placed on the November ballot with no signature threshold.
 - For the 2006 Election, the requirement was 25,000 signatures.

Elective Assessors in 2nd Class Twp

SB 709

- I introduced SB 709 to eliminate the position of elected assessors in Townships of the 1st Class.
- This bill would complement Senator Gordner's initiatives to eliminate elected assessors in Boroughs in Counties of the 4th to 8th classes.
- Similar bills were enacted into law (Act 166 and Act 167) last Session, eliminating the positions of elected assessors in Townships of the 2nd Class.
- Most municipalities no longer have elective assessors within their jurisdictions.
- These bills are supported by most local government associations.
- SB 709 was passed unanimously by the Senate
- Died awaiting action in the House.

Citizen's Constitutional Convention

SB 1290

- My bill calls for a true Citizen's Constitutional Convention under the following guidelines:
 - Prohibition of public officials and lobbyists serving as delegates
 - 100 signature threshold for delegate candidates
 - Minimum age of 21 for delegates
 - Nonpartisan election of delegates
 - Salary for delegates
 - Require delegates to submit statement of financial interest
 - Two-thirds threshold for delegates to approve revisions
 - Simple Majority threshold for electoral ratification

- Senator Ferlo's SB 291 and Senator Piccola's SB 1236 also authorize a Constitutional Convention. In contrast to my bill, these bills have the following guidelines:
 - Allow public officials and lobbyists to serve as delegates
 - 500 signature threshold for delegate candidates
 - Minimum age of 18 for delegates
 - Partisan election of delegates
 - No salary for delegates
 - Simple majority threshold for delegates to approve revisions
 - Simple majority threshold for electoral ratification