

State Senator  
**JOHN RAFFERTY**



*Reports to You*

44TH DISTRICT • WINTER 2004

Dear Constituents:

As we begin a new year, I'd like to update you on some important initiatives that we have been working on in the General Assembly and provide you with information on upcoming action.

I am committed to bringing more jobs to this area while strengthening our environment. I will also be working with my colleagues to find a way to reform our property tax system to reduce skyrocketing increases and make it more fair and less burdensome.

I welcome your input and recommendations and look forward to hearing from you. If you have questions, concerns, or need help with state programs or services, please call any of my district offices located on the back page of this newsletter. We are offering expanded hours in Montgomery and Chester Counties – our new office hours are listed on the back of this newsletter. You can also log onto my website at [www.senatorrafferty.com](http://www.senatorrafferty.com). My staff and I look forward to serving you, so please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions, concerns or input. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John A. Rafferty".

### Keeping Doctors in PA

**T**he rising cost of medical malpractice insurance is threatening the availability of quality medical care in Pennsylvania. Skyrocketing malpractice insurance premiums are forcing some doctors, especially those in high-risk specialties, to close their practices or move to other states.

Responding to this problem, the Legislature has taken steps to maintain and improve access to quality health care. In the past two years, the Legislature has enacted tough patient safety measures to reduce

the number of medical errors, as well as legislation to prevent frivolous lawsuits and curb excessive jury awards.

The Senate is considering action to place a cap on non-economic damages, better known as "pain and suffering" awards. Without reasonable "caps," doctors and hospitals face the possibility of huge jury awards that could put them out of business. I have cosponsored legislation that would put the question to the voters for their decision.



Senator Rafferty participates in Governor Rendell's bill signing ceremony of Senate Bill 877 at the Embreeville State Police Barracks.

## Expanding Senior Drug Benefits

The General Assembly passed legislation that expands prescription drug benefits to an expected 125,000 additional senior citizens.

The measure increases income eligibility limits for the state's popular Pharmaceutical Assistance Contract for the Elderly programs, commonly known as PACE and PACENET. Over the years, periodic Social Security cost-of-living adjustments have pushed seniors' incomes just over eligibility limits, causing them to lose needed benefits.

The new eligibility requirements and features are:

### **PACE**

#### **Income Limits**

Single: Limit increased from \$14,000 to \$14,500

Married Couple: Limit increased from \$17,200 to \$17,700

#### **Deductible**

Still NO deductible for PACE Program

#### **Co-pays**

\$6 for generic drugs and \$9 for brand name drugs.

### **PACENET**

#### **Higher Income Limits**

Single: Limit increased from \$17,000 to \$23,500

Married Couple: Limit increased from \$20,200 to \$31,500

#### **Deductible**

Changed from lump-sum \$500 deductible per year to just \$40 per month.

#### **Co-pays**

\$8 for generic drugs and \$15 for brand name drugs.

*To enroll in PACE or PACENET, just fill out an application and submit it with proof of age, residency and income. The same simple application form is used for both PACE and PACENET and is available through my offices or online at [www.aging.state.pa.us](http://www.aging.state.pa.us).*

## Proposed Budget Holds Line on Taxes CALLS FOR NEW FEES, MORE BORROWING

In February, Governor Rendell proposed a \$22.7 billion spending plan for Pennsylvania that would increase state spending by 6 percent. While it does not raise taxes, the proposal does include significant new trash taxes and other fees that would affect all consumers, and could hurt job-creators, particularly small manufacturing companies. It also calls for significant borrowing to fund new programs to protect the environment and create jobs.

While I strongly support state efforts to help job-creators, improve our environment and make our schools better, I am concerned about how much we should borrow to pay for these programs. I believe that government has a basic responsibility to be fiscally prudent when it comes to spending. Therefore, I believe we need to review all proposals for increased spending very carefully, and look closely at how the proposed fees will impact consumers and job-creators.

I favor many of the Governor's proposed environmental initiatives,

including his plan to provide greater funding for farmland preservation and the clean-up of hazardous waste sites. Our highly-successful Growing Greener program and Key '93 recreation program are excellent examples of how we were able to borrow responsibly to improve the quality of life for all Pennsylvanians.

As budget negotiations continue, I remain committed to holding down spending, ensuring that we do not incur too much debt, and examining proposed programs and services to ensure that we are getting the best return on state tax dollars. Last year, I voted against the tax increase. I felt it placed too much of a burden on working Pennsylvanians. I remain committed to keeping taxes low, and holding the line on major spending increases, particularly as our economy continues to improve.

I believe the Governor's proposed budget is a good starting point to work from, as we work together to develop a spending plan that will help to move our State forward.



Senator Rafferty views the new Lower Providence Township Police Department bikes that were purchased with a state grant from Senator Rafferty.

## Law Provides Grants, Loans to Volunteer Firefighters

**O**ur volunteer emergency responders have a difficult job, and their responsibilities and challenges grew in the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks.

As a strong supporter of our local firefighters and ambulance personnel, I was pleased to vote for a new law that will offer much-needed funding to Pennsylvania's volunteer fire and ambulance departments.

Under the new law, volunteer fire departments and emergency medical services (EMS) squads were eligible to apply for \$25 million in state grants.

Grants range from \$2,500 to \$15,000 for volunteer fire companies and \$2,500 to \$10,000 for volunteer ambulance services. They can be used for construction or renovation of facilities, as well as the repair or pur-

chase of equipment, debt reduction, and training and certification of members.

The Pennsylvania Senate has also approved legislation, which I cosponsored, to authorize \$50 million in loans to volunteer firefighting and emergency services. The loans will be funded by a bond issue approved by voter referendum in 2002. Almost 75 percent of voters favored the measure.

The program has made more than \$275 million in loans available to the Commonwealth's volunteer emergency services community since its creation in 1976.

The high cost of equipment and training has created serious financial difficulties for many fire and EMS providers. I urge us all to remember how important our volunteers are and please consider helping them in any way you can.

**Senator Rafferty discusses funding issues with Jeff Kocher of the Coatesville Fire Company.**



## Legislature Passes Tougher DUI law

**T**he General Assembly recently passed a law to lower the legal blood alcohol content (BAC) limit from .10 to .08 and to pass a three-tier penalty system for those caught driving under the influence.

Under the new law, penalties within each of the three BAC tiers also increase based on repeat offenses. The measure also pro-

vides more timely and direct avenues for treatment for drivers who are diagnosed with serious addiction problems and addresses situations where insurance companies fail to provide certain coverage for treatment.

The legislation also removes a loophole that would have allowed some repeat DUI offenders to avoid having to use an ignition interlock

system in their vehicles by accepting an extra year of regular license suspension.

Not only will this new law help to save lives and stop drunk drivers, it will also prevent the loss of federal transportation funds. Pennsylvania stood to lose two percent of its federal transportation funding if it did not adopt the .08 BAC limit by October 1, 2003.

I believe the new law will make our roads safer and crack down on repeat offenders, who pose the greatest threats to drivers.



## Bringing More Health Care Dollars to PA

**A** new law I sponsored will strengthen enforcement of the state's Tobacco Settlement Agreement and ensure that cigarette manufacturers pay their fair share into Pennsylvania's Tobacco Fund.

The measure is important to bringing more health care dollars to Pennsylvania because it will ensure that the Commonwealth continues to receive all the funds it is entitled to under the



Tobacco Settlement Agreement Act of 2000.

It provides Pennsylvania with approximately \$11 billion as a result of a national tobacco settlement between states and cigarette manu-

factures and establishes a fund to be used for health-related programs.

We need to enforce all the provisions of the law, to ensure that all manufacturers are contributing to our fund.

The law will require non-partic-

ipating cigarette manufacturers to show that they have created a properly funded escrow account before they could sell cigarettes in Pennsylvania.

The National Association of Attorneys General estimates that the loss of tobacco settlement revenue due to such non-compliance is more than \$450 million for the April 2003 tobacco payment across the country.

Our tobacco fund pays for a wide range of health-related services, from in-home care for seniors to prescription drug assistance and health insurance for low-income Pennsylvanians. So it's important that we receive every dollar to which we are entitled.



## Rafferty Calls for Tougher Landfill Standards

**R**esponding to complaints and concerns from residents living near landfills, I have introduced a legislative package that would strengthen enforcement efforts at landfills and penalize operators who repeatedly violate those standards.

While landfills are currently regulated by the State Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), stronger guidelines are needed to protect the environment and quality of life in surrounding communities. My package would set higher standards for landfill operators to meet before they could receive a permit to expand, make it easier to suspend permits if violations occur, and crack down on those operators who break the law.

Area residents have legitimate concerns about how landfills will impact their lives and their properties, including odors, blowing trash, dust, noise and truck traffic. In too many cases, landfill operators

receive complaints because of violations, but they don't follow through in correcting them. DEP

steps in, but all too often the operator responds with a temporary fix, only to have the problem recur. This is frustrating for those affected, and should not be tolerated. Landfills that operate this way should be heavily fined and made to correct the problems.

Our goal is to ensure that landfill operators do not violate state standards and that those living near them do not have

to repeatedly deal with problems like odor, noise and litter that can greatly affect their quality of life.



Senator Rafferty reads to Audubon Elementary School students.

# Rafferty Seeks Nominations for Good Citizenship Award

**V**olunteers play a vital role in our communities, taking time out of their busy lives to help others.

That's why I am proud to continue a special effort to identify and

recognize the outstanding accomplishments of volunteers here in the 44th Senatorial District.

I would like to enlist your help in nominating a volunteer for our Good Citizenship Award. These

"good citizens" will be recognized both in the district and at the State Capitol for their achievements.

Please fill out the form below and return to my office by June 1, 2004. Thank you for your help.

Volunteer's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 (must reside in 44th Senatorial District) Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
 Organization's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Organization's Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Organization's Phone # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Nominator \_\_\_\_\_  
 Nominator's Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

How long has the volunteer served with your organization? \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours per month does the volunteer serve? \_\_\_\_\_

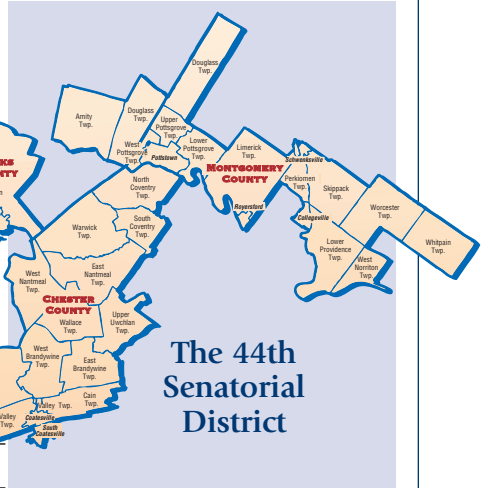
Why should your nominee be selected for the Good Citizenship Award?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer's title or position (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

A brief description of the services the volunteer provides the organization:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



The 44th Senatorial District

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**Senator John C. Rafferty**  
 Senate Box 203044  
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# State Senator John Rafferty

## 44TH DISTRICT LEGISLATIVE OFFICES

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Website:  
[www.senatorrafferty.com](http://www.senatorrafferty.com)



## EXTENDED OFFICE HOURS

To provide constituents with greater access to a wide range of services, I have extended office hours at several locations.

On Saturdays, my **Montgomery County** office will be open from **9 a.m. to 12 Noon**.

On Wednesdays, the **Chester County** office will be open from **9 a.m. to 7 p.m.**

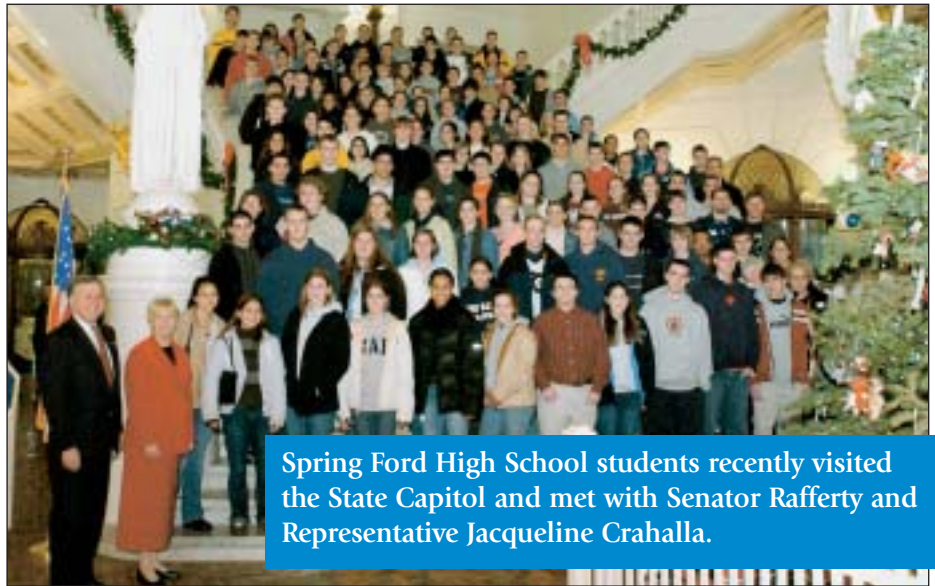
All **other office hours** are **9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.** – the locations are listed on this page.

## Vets Advisory Council

I was honored to be appointed by Senate leadership to serve on the Southeastern Veterans Center Advisory Council. This position will help me to join others in protecting and providing for veterans who need special care.

Our veterans made many sacrifices to protect our freedoms, and we should never forget their contributions.

It is a great honor for me to serve on this Advisory Council to ensure that the Veterans Center will continue to provide important, quality care for Commonwealth residents who served their nation proudly.



Spring Ford High School students recently visited the State Capitol and met with Senator Rafferty and Representative Jacqueline Crahalla.

# SENATOR JOHN RAFFERTY *Reports to You*

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*Or Current Resident*

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