



# Rep. Matt Baker

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## State House Approves Bill to Address Abortion Clinic Atrocities

Upon learning of the alleged horrors that took place at the Women's Medical Society in West Philadelphia over the course of nearly 40 years, as chairman of the House Health Committee, I knew action was needed to ensure the safety of women across the state.

Among the charges against the head of the clinic, Dr. Kermit Gosnell, are eight counts of murder including seven newborns and one woman. No woman should have to endure the horrifying conditions and type of treatment that was alleged to have taken place in that clinic.

That's why I decided to introduce legislation to hold abortion facilities to the same high standards as other freestanding ambulatory surgical centers if they provide surgical abortions. These standards would include certain fire and safety regulations, personnel and equipment requirements, and quality assurance procedures.

It was revealed through court proceedings that the horrors in Philadelphia were allowed to take place due to the failing of the state Department of Health to inspect abortion facilities. In fact, between 1993 and 2010, no such inspections were ever conducted. That is unacceptable.

My legislation will ensure commonsense practices are adhered to by grouping abortion facilities with the 212 ambulatory surgery centers in the Commonwealth that are regulated by the state. Abortion centers are performing serious surgical procedures and should be regulated in order to make sure those women who go to these clinics are treated by trained personnel in a safe and sanitary manner.

The state House approved my legislation by a vote of 148 to 43. The legislation is currently before the state Senate for consideration.



I wish to thank the more than 1,000 people who attended my annual senior expo. It was a great day and I enjoyed meeting and talking with numerous seniors who attended the event. I also want to express my appreciation to the dozens of agencies and organizations that participated and provided great information to all the seniors. I am already looking forward to next year!

2010 Pennsylvania State Laurel Queen Lillian Newton and her mother, Beth Newton, joined Rep. Matt Baker at his 2011 Senior Expo. ➔



⤵ Rep. Matt Baker enjoyed talking with Virginia and Archie Lain during the expo. Mr. Lain is 101 years old!



## Bill Would Improve Diabetic Care for School Students

Unfortunately, in the United States today, the average school nurse is responsible for 2.2 schools, and the Public School Code only requires a school nurse-to-student ratio of 1:1,500.

As someone who has several family members with diabetes, I understand the challenges of managing this particular disease and the difficulty for parents in relying on others to care for their child when they are not around. Many parents would like the reassurance of knowing that, in the absence of the school nurse, another employee in their child's school has the training necessary to spot the signs of diabetic trouble and deliver treatment if it becomes necessary.

Because our school nurses are so strained, I have authored legislation seeking to improve health outcomes for those school students who have diabetes.

Specifically, House Bill 1338 would provide the option for school districts to designate a school employee who is not a licensed health care provider to assist a diabetic student, when a nurse is not available, with monitoring blood glucose and administering treatment. That person would receive annual training in regard to diabetic management and treatment.

The school nurse would, of course, continue to be the first person of contact for treatment or an emergency. However, sometimes, due to the expanse of school campuses and the volume of students a school nurse is responsible for, he or she may not be available when a diabetic emergency occurs. My legislation will help improve the odds that diabetic students receive the help they need when they need it.

House Bill 1338 has passed the House Human Services Committee and is now before the full House for consideration.

## House Approves Natural Gas Pipeline Safety Bill

In an effort to ensure greater safety pertaining to the state's natural gas pipelines, I authored legislation granting regulatory oversight of the gathering lines to the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) in coordination with the U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration.

With the influx of Marcellus Shale drilling across the state, the federal government has expressed an interest to coordinate oversight of natural gas pipelines within the Commonwealth. This bill will help make sure that appropriate safety measures are adhered to and our citizenry and the environment are protected as much as possible.

This type of authority is not a new concept. In fact, out of the current 31 natural gas producing states, including Pennsylvania, 29 have statutory authority to regulate gas gathering lines.

This is just one legislative measure that will help increase the safety of Marcellus Shale drilling and production in Pennsylvania. My legislation will allow the PUC to regulate natural gas pipelines without having to deem them a public utility. Therefore, the power of eminent domain is not extended. This legislation does nothing more than bring the Commonwealth in line with how other natural gas producing states are handling regulatory oversight in conjunction with the federal government.

House Bill 344, which was unanimously approved by the House and currently awaits consideration in the Senate, would also provide for the hiring of additional safety inspectors to conduct the inspections.



### Committee Moves Health Care Freedom Act to the Floor

Rep. Baker speaks as chairman at the House Health Committee hearing in March on his legislation, known as the Health Care Freedom Act, which would protect the rights of individuals to purchase private health insurance and prohibit government from enacting or adopting any law or rule that penalizes or fines any individual, employer or health care provider for participating in any health care system of their choice. The committee passed the legislation, which is currently before the full House for consideration.

### Community Leadership Program Makes its Way to the Capitol

The Tioga County Development Corporation's Community Leadership Program traveled to Harrisburg on March 1 for its program's sixth session on government. The day was sponsored by Rep. Baker, Sen. Joe Scarnati and Dominion Transmission. Pictured in the first row from left are: Robert J. Blair, TCD president/CEO; William Post, First Citizens National Bank; Melissa Belz, ParentBeard LLC; Robin Flynn, Laurel Health System; and Joey Heckler, Northwest Savings Bank and CLP co-chair; second row from left are: Brett Kennedy, Kennedy Home Center and CLP co-chair; Christie Blackwell, TCDC leadership coordinator; Peggy Cressman, HMAC (Wellsboro); Rebecca Charles, Northcentral AHEC; and Alex Miller, Mansfield University; and third row from left are Herb Frank, Mansfield University; Tracey Fousnought, Laurel Health System; Brett Huzey, HMAC (Lawrenceville); and Katie Mays, Citizens and Northern Bank.



# Caregiver Reimbursements Would Be Increased Under New Legislation

The Pennsylvania's Family Caregiver Support Act was established 1990 to assist individuals who bear the primary responsibility for the at-home care of functionally dependent older adults, some of whom have chronic dementia.

In order to make sure these dedicated individuals have what they need to take proper care of those in their charge, I authored legislation that would increase their reimbursements from the state.

Specifically, House Bill 210 increases from \$200 per month to \$600 per month the maximum amount available to a qualified caregiver for expenses incurred in purchasing services and supplies. It also raises from \$2,000 to \$6,000 the maximum reimbursement amount available for home modifications or assistive device expenses. In both cases, the household income must be under 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

The bill was also amended in committee to include unrelated parties such as neighbors or friends, bringing the legislation in line with the National Family Caregivers Support Act, which includes non-family members as caregivers and takes into account those people who do not have family in their immediate area.

Financial support for House Bill 210 comes from state Lottery revenues and federal funding derived from the Older Americans Act of 1965.

The bill was approved by the House Aging and Older Adult Services Committee, and currently awaits consideration by the full House.



Rep. Baker participated in a press conference at the state Capitol in May to promote his bill to increase reimbursements for individuals who bear the primary responsibility for the at-home care of functionally dependent older adults.



## Castle Doctrine Signed into Law

Legislation reinforcing a person's right to defend himself or herself in the face of an intruder was recently signed into law.

Known as the "Castle Doctrine," the new law creates the presumption that an attacker or intruder intends to do great bodily harm and therefore force, including deadly force, may be used to protect oneself, one's family and others in the face of an attack while at home or in an occupied vehicle. The presumption also applies if a person is trying to unlawfully remove an occupant, against the occupant's will, from a home or vehicle.

The presumption would not apply if the person entering a home is:

- Another resident of the home.
- A law enforcement officer.
- A parent, grandparent or other guardian removing a child from the home or vehicle.

In addition, the presumption would not apply if a person was using their home or vehicle to further criminal activity. The law also offers specific protection against civil liability for the lawful use of force in self-defense.

Previously, a person under attack in his or her own home had to retreat before taking action of self-defense.

## Designer Drugs Known as 'Bath Salts' or 'Blizzard' Placed on State's Controlled Substance List

I am pleased to report that the governor has signed into law legislation to ban the sale of street drugs commonly referred to as "bath salts" or "blizzard."

Now known as Act 7 of 2011, the new law adds the chemical compounds that make up bath salts to the state's controlled substance list, along with Salvia Divinorium, Salvinorin A, Divinorin A, synthetic marijuana and psychedelic phenethylamines (referred to as C2).

Sold primarily in some tobacco shops, hemp stores and other non-traditional locations, bath salts are part of a new group of designer drugs that can cause higher blood pressure, increased heart rate, psychosis and a tendency to engage in violent behavior.

Compounds found in these new bath salts have already been banned in Europe, as well as several states throughout the country.

Criminal activity and violent behavior are on the rise in connection with the use of these drugs. I am hopeful the new law will help reduce access to these dangerously addictive drugs and provide law enforcement with the backing it needs to do its job.





## Deadline to Apply for Property Tax/ Rent Rebate Program Extended

The deadline to apply for the state's Property Tax/Rent Rebate program has been extended from June 30 to Dec. 31.

Eligible participants can receive a rebate of up to \$650 based on their rent or property taxes paid in 2010. The program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians who are 65 years or older, widows and widowers 50 years or older, and those 18 years or older with disabilities.

Eligibility income limits are set at the following levels, excluding 50 percent of Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, and Railroad Retirement Tier 1 benefits:

- \$0 to \$8,000, maximum \$650 rebate (homeowners and renters)
- \$8,001 to \$15,000, maximum \$500 rebate (homeowners and renters)
- \$15,001 to \$18,000, maximum \$300 rebate (homeowners only)
- \$18,001 to \$35,000, maximum \$250 rebate (homeowners only)

Residents are reminded to provide all the necessary income, property tax or rental information required to process claims quickly and accurately.

Property Tax/Rent Rebate claim forms are available by contacting my offices at (570) 724-1390 in Wellsboro or (570) 297-3045 in Troy, or by visiting my website at [RepBaker.com](http://RepBaker.com).



## Residents Encouraged to Check Treasury Department's Bureau of Unclaimed Property

Area residents are encouraged to check the Pennsylvania Treasury Department's Bureau of Unclaimed Property for any financial asset that has been left inactive for a period of about five years.

According to the Pennsylvania Treasury Department, millions of dollars in unclaimed property comes into the bureau each year. The most common types of unclaimed property are dormant bank accounts, stocks and dividends, uncashed payroll checks, uncollected utility deposits, unredeemed gift certificates and items in safe deposit boxes.

The Treasury is only required to advertise the names of people, businesses, or organizations owed property valued in excess of \$250.

Treasury Department officials are cautioning individuals to be wary of services or "finders" who charge fees to help locate unclaimed property. Finders often charge the maximum amount allowed by law, up to 15 percent of the property's value, for making use of the same online databases that individuals can use free of charge.

For additional information on unclaimed property, visit my website at [RepBaker.com](http://RepBaker.com) or call the Bureau of Unclaimed Property toll free at 1-800-222-2046.

## District Office Services

*My district offices are here to help you. Services my staff and I provide include:*

- ◆ Assistance with PennDOT paperwork (lost cards, changes, corrections, special registration plates, vanity plates, parking placards for disabled persons, applications for driver's license and vehicle renewals)
- ◆ PACE and PACENET applications for seniors
- ◆ Property Tax and Rent Rebate applications
- ◆ Voter registration forms and absentee ballot applications
- ◆ Provide state tax forms
- ◆ State maps and state park information
- ◆ Copies of legislation
- ◆ Tours of the State Capitol
- ◆ Referrals to agencies to resolve state-related matters

If you need help with any of the above or with any other state-related matter, please do not hesitate to call.



## Representative Matt Baker... Serving the 68th Legislative District

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