

LOU'S NEWS

State Rep. **LOU SCHMITT**

79th Legislative District | Vol. X | Final Edition



A fond farewell...



For seven years, I had the privilege of serving and representing my hometown, my friends, my family and my neighbors in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. I owe that to you for putting your faith in me to make your voice heard.

If the younger Lou Schmitt growing up in the Dutch Hill neighborhood of Altoona was told he'd one day be a state representative, he would not have believed such a thing. My route to public office was not one paved in gold, but, in true Altoona fashion, hard work, determination, and support from friends and family. I want to thank everyone who helped me on my journey, especially my wife, Helen, and our daughters, Heather and Lauren.

As I reflect on my time in office, I strove to do what is right for the people of Blair County and the entire Commonwealth. Each vote I cast, I did with our neighbors in the 79th Legislative District in mind.

While the chapter of my time as your state representative comes to an end, a new chapter is about to begin. As you know, I will soon take a seat on the Blair County Court of Common Pleas bench. I am looking forward to continuing to serve our community in this new role.

As I end this note, I will leave you with a line penned by a man who continues to inspire me: Winston Churchill. ***“Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”***

KEEPING BLAIR COUNTY TOGETHER

When the state Legislature was working on new congressional maps in 2022 – a process done every 10 years – one proposal was to split Blair County between two congressional districts. To me, and folks at home, this was an unacceptable option.

As a member of the House State Government Committee, I was a very vocal advocate to save Blair County from the ill-advised plan. Dividing our county was not in the best interest of residents. I was happy and proud that, in the end, Blair County was kept united.

It was also during that time that the Legislative Reapportionment Commission put the whole of Allegheny Township into our 79th



Legislative District. For too long, Allegheny Township had been severed between two state legislative districts. Now it joins Logan Township, Tunnelhill Borough and Altoona to form the 79th Legislative District.

FIGHTING FOR ALS PATIENTS



When I came to Harrisburg, I did not expect to be a guy fighting to stop a funding decrease. But during the 2023 budget hearings, I discovered a wrong that had to be corrected. Gov. Josh Shapiro proposed slashing funding for victims of ALS, more commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease, by 40%.

In the scheme of a budget that totaled nearly \$46 billion, the \$600,000 cut didn't amount to a whole bunch, but it meant a lot to those with ALS. That lost funding would have meant those with ALS would not have been able to get much-needed equipment, including tools to keep them mobile. This was clearly an example of looking at a line-item on a spreadsheet without knowing the impact an action would have.

As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, I fought hard, going toe-to-toe with the Shapiro Administration, to stop that funding decrease. In a rare instance of a single voice being louder than the governor's office, the funding was restored and there have been no attempts to decrease funding since.

LAW PROTECTS POLICE FROM ASSAULTS

Pennsylvania police officers gained a new level of protection if assaulted with bodily fluids when my **House Bill 103** was signed into law. I drafted the bill after Blair County police officers reached out about continually being under the barrage of bodily fluid assaults with no recourse.

For example, when officers are spit on when making an arrest, it is generally done to cause harm by, at the very least, making them think they could have just been infected with a disease. Typically, when officers are assaulted with spit or bodily fluids, they must undergo medical testing to see if they contracted a virus, such as HIV. Such assaults take police officers off the street, preventing them from fully doing their jobs and protecting people in their communities.

Act 99 of 2022 makes it a criminal offense to assault a police officer with bodily fluids, such as saliva. The law outlines an assault must be deliberate, rather than a case of accidental spitting that could occur during a heated exchange.

I'm very pleased criminals will no longer be able to spit in the face of law enforcement with impunity.

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AROUND THE DISTRICT, *and* THE CAPITOL



You never know who you'll bump into. Most of the time it's constituents; others it's the Easter Bunny at the Altoona Kiwanis Club's annual pancake breakfast.



It was truly a privilege to take part in the Altoona Memorial Day parade with my grandsons, Ted and Sebastian, to honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms.



I had a great time talking to Williamsburg Junior High School students about my job as state representative.



What a treat it was to hear the Altoona Area Junior High School chamber orchestra and vocal ensemble as they graced the Capitol with their talents!



It was my pleasure to welcome to the state Capitol the PIAA state champion girls' basketball team from Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School.