

State Representative RYAN MACKENZIE

187TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

SUMMER 2024

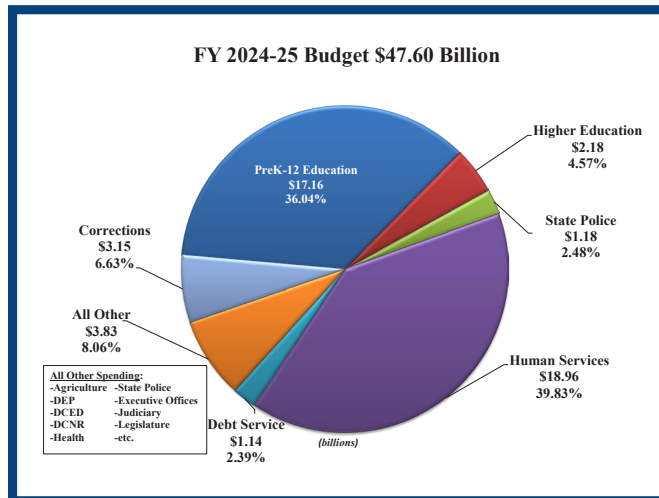


Dear Friends,

As a state representative, one of my top priorities is to advocate for the fiscal responsibility of our state finances. The General Assembly is constitutionally mandated to pass a balanced budget by June 30 of each year. While the 2024–25 state budget signed into law in early July contains some laudable initiatives, the overspending and dipping into our reserves fails to meet our Constitution's standards, which led to my decision to vote "no." This newsletter includes some of the key elements of the budget, along with information on other legislation of interest.

Sincerely,

State Rep. Ryan Mackenzie



BREAKING DOWN THE 2024-25 BUDGET

NO TAXPAYER RELIEF

While there were no new taxes, this \$47.6 billion budget fails to provide relief for Pennsylvanians who are desperately struggling to stay afloat amid continuing inflation and high prices. In an effort to provide this much-needed relief, I introduced the Pennsylvania Families Tax Relief bill package earlier this session that

would deliver over \$2 billion in possible tax relief to state residents. The Senate also passed measures with bipartisan support to eliminate the Gross Receipts Tax on energy bills and reduce the Personal Income Tax, but they were not included in the final budget due to the opposition of House Democrats. This omission is a missed opportunity to ease the current financial burden on our residents.

OVERSPENDING AND RELIANCE ON RESERVE FUNDS

The 2024–25 state budget totals \$47.6 billion, which is a \$2.7 billion, or 6%, increase over the prior fiscal year and relies on our reserve funds to become balanced. This is a risky financial maneuver that sets us up for potential tax increases or state program cuts in the near future.

A recent report by the Independent Fiscal Office (IFO) on General Fund revenues and expenditures would seem to confirm those concerns. The IFO predicts the surplus will likely be depleted next year, when the projected budget deficit reaches \$3.3 billion.

CHANGES TO EDUCATION FUNDING

The budget includes a \$1.3 billion increase in PreK-12 education and a number of other programs also received additional funding. The two tax credit programs, which provide scholarships to help families send their children to schools that best meet their needs, received an additional \$75 million, bringing total funding to \$630 million.

Despite the overall increase in education funding, our local schools are not receiving their fair share. The schools in our district receive a very low amount of total funding per student when compared to other districts statewide. This lower amount of state funding creates a greater reliance on property taxes and therefore places a heavier burden on local property tax payers.

ADDITIONAL POLICY CHANGES

During the budget season, the General Assembly considered several pieces of legislation in addition to the budget that were ultimately signed into law. Some of these new policies are listed below.

- **Act 77 of 2024** institutes new reforms to the operation of Pharmacy Benefits Managers (PBMs). This will help cut costs for consumers, increase transparency and accountability into the PBM process, and support local pharmacies.
- **Act 88 of 2024** makes it easier for property owners to get squatters out of their properties by providing more certainty and clarity for homeowners, landlords, and law enforcement officers who must deal with squatters.
- **Act 89 of 2024** seeks to attract more post-secondary students to state schools through the Grow PA Scholarship Grant Program, which offers grants of up to \$5,000 per year for in-state students who attend college in Pennsylvania, pursue a degree in a high-demand industry, and agree to live and work in that industry in the Commonwealth after graduation.

State Representative

RYAN MACKENZIE

187th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



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All offices open weekdays 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

MACKENZIE RECOGNIZES FIRST RESPONDERS



Highway Renamed to Remember Fallen Firefighters

I had the privilege of attending the recent ceremony to rename a portion of Route 143 in Lehigh County in remembrance of Assistant Fire Chief Zachary Paris and Firefighter Marvin Gruber of the New Tripoli Fire Company. They tragically died in the line of duty while fighting a house fire. The 7-mile stretch of road was aptly named "Heroes Highway" in their honor. I was happy to help pass the bill in the House to ensure Zachary and Marvin are forever remembered as the heroes they were.

Mackenzie's Bill Signed into Law to Continue Honoring Fallen First Responders

First responders risk their own safety every day to ensure our communities are protected. Legislation I authored was signed into law earlier this year creating a program in Pennsylvania to recognize those first responders who made the ultimate sacrifice while performing their duties.

Act 11 of 2024 created the Keystone First Responder Award to honor public servants who were either killed or suffered a career-ending injury in the line of duty from 2021 forward. The time frame for the new law conforms with the state's line-of-duty death benefit sign-on period, which requires the benefit application be made within three years of the person's death.

Those eligible for the award include law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical services personnel, coroners, 911 dispatchers, and other first responders.

A committee will work to provide a list of potential recipients to the governor, who will present the award annually at the end of September.

By honoring fallen first responders with this award, we will remember their bravery and dedication, ensuring their supreme sacrifice is not forgotten for generations to come. I am proud to be the act's prime sponsor.