



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Gerald Hocker

- 38th DISTRICT -

NEWSLETTER

Dear Residents of the 38th Representative District,

It has been a very busy - and often difficult - year in the Delaware General Assembly.

We enacted new laws to help homeowners, protect children and assist our military personnel, which you'll find detailed on the back of this newsletter.

On the flip-side of the coin, state spending increased and the General Assembly passed some tax and fee increases to help support it. **I voted against both the spending plan and opposed all the proposed tax hikes as well as a further expansion of slot machine operations.**

As a small businessman, I know what it means to live on a budget. That's one of the reasons I'm thoroughly dissatisfied with the state's spending habits. Instead of looking for opportunities to cut expenses, I see budget writers looking for new sources of money - like higher taxes.

With the economy faltering, we will no doubt be facing another difficult year in the upcoming session. As I've done since you first placed your faith in me six years ago, I look forward to representing your interests in Dover as the General Assembly deals with these challenges.

I'm sending this newsletter to you at my own expense to keep you informed about what I'm doing on your behalf. If you have a question, I'm easily reached by phone or e-mail and I pride myself on promptly getting in touch with anyone who needs my attention. On the back page you'll find all my contact information, along with my home address and phone number.

Since 2002, it has been my honor to serve the people of the 38th District. If you have a question relating to state government, or think I may be able to assist you with a problem you're having with a state agency, don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Gerald Hocker

Your State Representative



Voting Against the Budget

I was very disappointed with the new \$3.348 billion state operating budget that was presented to the General Assembly.

The budget for Fiscal Year 2009, which began July 1, represented an increase of about 1.9 percent over the previous budget.

I was among more than a dozen of the General Assembly's 62 legislators who voted against the spending plan.

I agree with the statements made by my colleague State Rep. Deborah Hudson: "Delaware does not have a revenue problem. We have a spending problem."

Our state operating budget has grown from \$1.7 billion in 1996 to \$3.4 billion in 2008. Spending has doubled in just 12 years. Even this year, when state revenues were down, the budget still grew by \$62 million!

Instead of enacting tax and fee increases to support higher spending, I'd like to see us re-examine state government to look for areas to increase efficiency and reduce expenditures.

Protecting Our Children

Here are several new laws I supported to protect Delaware's kids:

Children's Toy Safety Act - HS 1 for HB 362 - The "Children's Toy Safety Act" prohibits the sale or distribution of toys that are potentially harmful or otherwise threaten the health of Delaware's children. The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services ("DHSS") will maintain a list of all unsafe toys, including those containing toxic substances and toys that have been recalled by the manufacturer. Violators face fines.

Health Care for Kids - HB 286 - This new law requires public schools and the Department of Health and Social Services to share data for the purpose of identifying and enrolling children in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). The program, which is partially funded with federal money, supplies affordable health care for children from low and middle income families.

Cracking Down on Crimes Against Kids - HS 1 for HB 421 - This new law, which I co-sponsored, increases the criminal penalties for unlawful sexual contact and dealing in child pornography.

Helmet Law - SB 174 - This expands Delaware's existing helmet law to require 16 and 17 year olds to wear a helmet when operating bicycles as well as motorized scooters and skateboards, which can attain speeds up to 35-40 m.p.h.



Helping Seniors

Several hundred seniors turned out for the 2008 Senior Expo that I, and several other Sussex County state representatives, sponsored earlier this year.

The expo gave seniors a one-stop informational resource, providing contacts and details about programs benefiting Sussex County residents, age 55 and over.

On another note, I co-sponsored a new law creating the Gold Alert program. Similar to the Amber Alert for abducted and missing children, the Gold Alert program will issue local, regional, or statewide alerts that will focus on missing senior citizens, suicidal individuals and persons with disabilities.

Assawoman Canal Dredging on Track

The dredging of the Assawoman Canal should soon be completed. Because of environmental concerns, the work can only be done between September 1 and Dec. 31. The final phase of the work is now underway and is expected to be done shortly. Many of our area's residents have long expressed an interest in removing the silt that has made this link between the Assawoman and Indian River bays all but impassable. I'm hopeful this project will not only return the canal to its original purpose, but that will also improve local water quality by improving circulation on both ends of the canal.



Law Should Aid Needy Sussex Families

Six years in the making, I was very glad to sponsor House Bill 392 and see it enacted into law. The measure establishes guidelines for volunteer dentists, hygienists and dental assistants. This legislation is expected to help facilitate dental care for low-income people in Sussex who might otherwise not have access to such treatment.

Big Turnout for Coffee Meeting

Dozens of district residents turned out for my recent coffee meeting. I hold the meetings periodically, and supply free coffee and donuts, to give folks in the district a chance to meet face-to-face and discuss whatever is on their minds. At this meeting, topics included police response time; the status of the Blue Water Wind off-shore wind farm project; and pending construction on the long-awaited Indian River Inlet Bridge.



Five New Laws to Help Homeowners

Homeowners Policies - SB 191 - This new law prevents insurance companies from canceling homeowners' policies in response to policyholders making reasonable claims. It further prevents policies from being terminated or rates being raised as a result of homeowners asking questions about their coverage.

Reverse Mortgages - HB 475 - Under this law, people who opt for "reverse mortgages" will receive counseling about their loan.

Mortgage Assistance - HB 507 - This measure increases a state fund that assists homeowners who are having trouble paying their mortgages.

Appropriate Oversight - HB 508 - This legislation provides for the licensing and regulation of mortgage loan originators.

Cracking Down on Criminals - SB 252 - The current housing loan crisis has given rise to an increase in scams targeting homeowners in distress. This law targets such con artists by regulating foreclosure consultants.



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