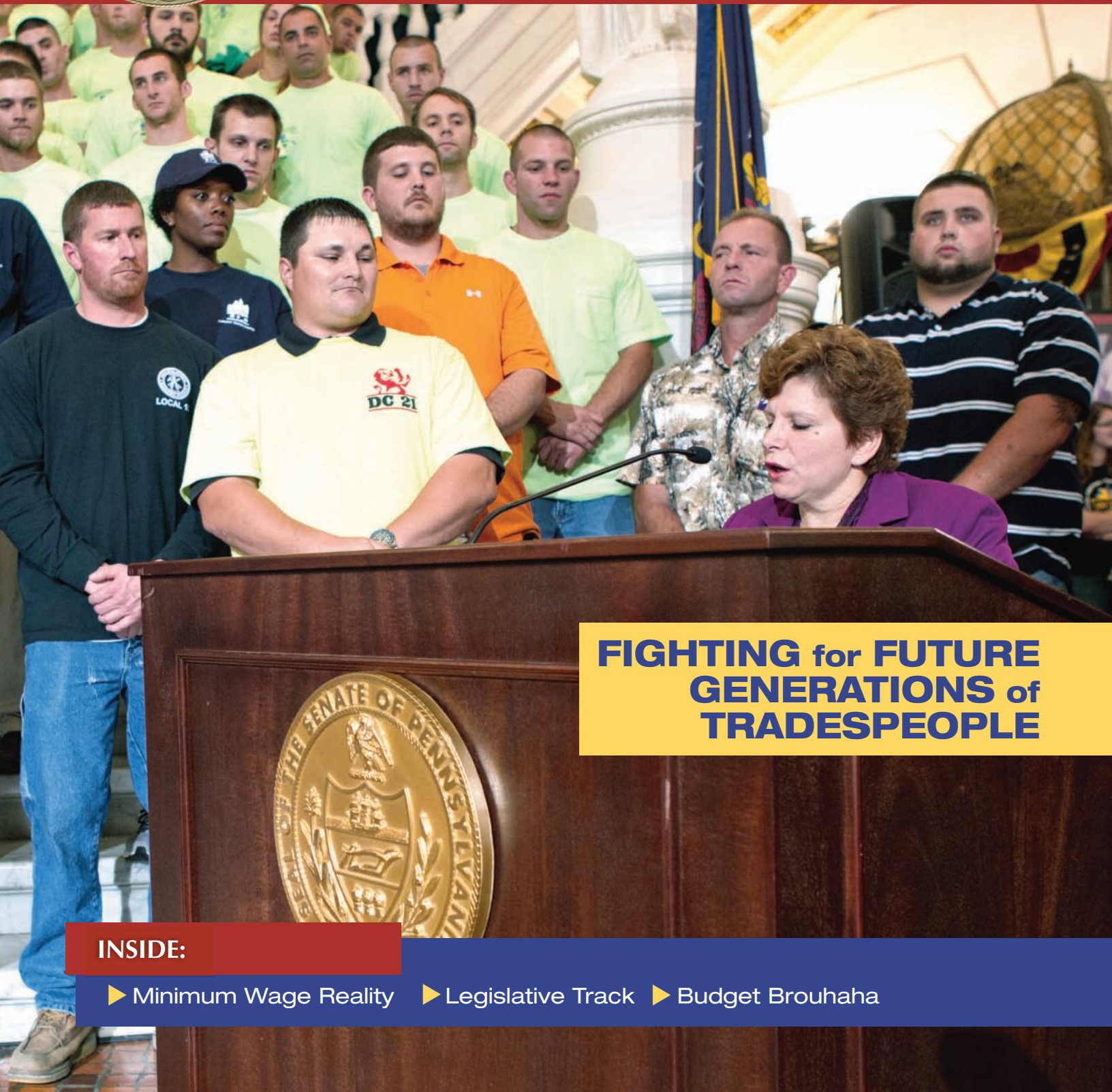




State Senator CHRISTINE M.  
**TARTAGLIONE**

*Update to the Residents of the 2nd Senatorial District*



**FIGHTING for FUTURE GENERATIONS of TRADESPEOPLE**

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## A Message from Senator Tartaglione

*Hello!*

*Albert Einstein once said insanity is “doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” In Harrisburg, our current model of state governance has acted like a living example of that definition.*

*It is so remarkable that this newsletter might read a little like the one I mailed to you this past December.*

*Even though the traditional economic indicators, such as unemployment, have recently improved, problems still exist, and the state’s immediate financial future seems to be on the brink of a crash. Critical funding has been cut for economic development and job growth, and the earlier promise to restore the \$1 billion that was cut from school district budgets in 2011 has not been fulfilled.*

*I continue to lead the good fight to increase Pennsylvania’s minimum wage but am up against opponents who do not believe the historical evidence of how this increase benefits our economy.*

*There is good news to report and share in this newsletter, so please read on about some of the legislative achievements that are now in the books thanks to your help and support. Also, a day in October for people to learn about the experience of disabled persons is ahead. Details follow.*

*Tina*

### ON THE COVER:

## ▶ Pennsylvania’s Apprentices

Across the U.S., individuals working in the building and construction trades are creating, maintaining and improving our country’s infrastructure to make sure our nation remains competitive with other nations. They are the iron and sheet metal workers, plasterers and cement masons, electricians, welders, insulators, asbestos workers, bricklayers and more, and many of them are participants in union apprenticeship programs, as well, whether serving as the actual apprentices or participating as the trainers and teachers of tomorrow’s trades workers.

Within Pennsylvania, the building and construction trades industry is keeping the state vibrant and economically relevant by rebuilding our crumbling roads and bridges, improving the flow of commerce, modernizing our cities and helping to increase the safety and structural integrity of our communities.

Apprentices play a significant role in these efforts, as they are learning the skills that will maintain the trades industry and continue its important work for the future of the state.

Thanks to union apprenticeship programs, people who want to work in the trades can be hired and paid as apprentices, gain credit hours for their work and obtain free training and education courses in their area of choice.

Not only are these programs excellent opportunities for people seeking career changes, but also they are ideal for young adults trying to decide on a career path.

When Pennsylvania’s trades workers complete union apprenticeship programs, they possess the hands-on experience and knowledge required to earn high-paying, family-sustaining wages.

To all adolescents in high school and young adults entering the workforce in PA, I encourage you to learn more about the building and construction trades. Find out how pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs could provide promising career opportunities to help shape your future. ■



## ► Minimum Wage Reality

On the television show, “Rising Star,” musicians are judged by the public in real time. If one musician’s approval rating beats another’s during a performance, that person moves to the next round. I believe proposals to increase Pennsylvania’s minimum wage would be law today if they could receive similar rock star-like consideration by the public.

That’s not yet happening in the commonwealth. Instead of going up as it is in every neighboring state and elsewhere, the minimum wage in Pennsylvania is staying put because Republican leaders and the governor continue to block proposals from being considered in committee, which is where my proposals – and many others – linger.

My Senate Bill 1300 would incrementally increase the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour by 2016 and then tie it to inflation, thereby eliminating the need to have this debate anymore. My proposal would also increase the penalties for employers who fail to follow the new law, when it takes effect.

For workers who rely on tips to fund their paychecks, my Senate Bill 1099 would make the tipped minimum wage equal to 70 percent of the regular minimum. Waitresses and others depend more and more on their customers to support their standard of living, while their employers pay them just \$2.83 an hour and charge more than \$6 for a pint of beer.

New York has agreed to up its minimum to \$9 an hour by the end of next year. New Jersey has directed its base hourly rate, which is now at \$8.25, to be tied to the Consumer Price Index. Delaware’s minimum will be \$8.25 an hour next June. Maryland will reach \$10.10 by July 2018. And, while not significant, Ohio is now paying its minimum wage earners \$7.85 an hour.



Continuing her fight to increase PA’s minimum wage, Sen. Tartaglione participated in a Raise the Wage Coalition press conference.

Photos courtesy of Marcel Bassett



Pennsylvania? Makes me sad to say it – \$7.25 an hour. In other words, the people who work in fast food can barely afford to buy dinner where they work after one hard hour of work. Waiters and waitresses can barely buy a drink.

Study after study delivers overwhelmingly good evidence why the minimum wage should be increased in Pennsylvania, and those studies strongly discount claims that doing so will lead to financial Armageddon.

Where states have increased the minimum wage, total employment has increased.

“Of the 13 states that increased their minimum wage in early 2014, all but one (New Jersey) are seeing employment gains,” the Center for Economic and Policy Research said this summer. “The experience of the 13 states that already increased their minimum wage in 2014 paints a very positive picture ... (for) low-wage workers.”

According to the latest poll of “small business owners with employees” that was paid for by the American Sustainable Business Council, 61 percent of respondents said they now favor raising the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 and then adjusting it annually according to the cost of living.

I’ve been fighting to increase PA’s minimum wage. You can read my arguments in my weekly “Labor Report,” which is online or can be emailed to you every Friday. I’ve also been public with my battle, having appeared at the following events:

- **March 18 – Raise the Wage Coalition press conference at the Capitol**
- **March 27 – National bus tour to Raise the Wage**
- **May 8 – Raise the Wage Coalition press conference at the Gallery Mall in Philly and**
- **June 3 – Raise the Wage Coalition rally at the Capitol.**

## ▶ Legislative Track

Pennsylvania allows doctors to fill the prescriptions they write for injured employees who are receiving workers' compensation. The practice helps those who are limited in their abilities – or unable – to make an additional trip to the pharmacy. This is especially true in Philly where not everyone has access to immediate transportation.

These fundamental reasons are why I have been the lone voice, so far, against a bill that would limit physicians in filling a “script” in their office.

House Bill 1846 would limit the drug reimbursement rate for physicians to 110 percent of the “average wholesale price,” or AWP. It would also hold physicians to dispensing just an initial 7-day supply of Schedule II and Schedule III drugs containing hydrocodone,

and an initial 20-day supply of any other drug. If an injured employee on workers' comp requires surgery, he or she could get an additional 15-day supply of drugs on the date of surgery.

Since a patient has to go back to the doctor multiple times for review of her or his injury and medication dosage, it doesn't make sense to force them to make an extra trip requiring additional physical and financial burdens.

The PA's Workers' Compensation Advisory Council would be required to conduct an annual study of the impact of the cost savings of drug dispensing for workers' compensation patients, if the bill becomes law.

HB 1846 was unanimously approved in the House and is awaiting further action in the Senate. ■



Sen. Tartaglione joins Gizela Lopez during the 2014 Congreso de Latinos Unidos in Philly.

Photo courtesy of Jose Hernandez



Sen. Tartaglione visited with the Berdecia All Stars at the Cora Beacon Center.

Photo courtesy of Marcel Bassett



On July 24, Sen. Tartaglione visited the Juniata Golf Club to work with the community and businesses to collect school donations. The items were happily handed out during community picnics in August.



Sen. Tartaglione met with Aker, April 3, to discuss a bill that would affect workers' comp for longshoremen who work at the shipyard should they become injured.



## Budget Brouhaha

**B**rouhaha,” in the dictionary, is “a noisy and overexcited reaction or response to something.” It’s just an irony that the word ends with “haha.” Both, however, were on display when the governor, after 10 full days of consideration, signed his \$29.1 billion 2014-2015 budget into law and line-item vetoed investments for several important community and business-development programs.

“The state budget process is not a game to be played,” Republican Senate leaders complained after the governor took action.

“Vital government programs should never be placed in jeopardy,” they poked.

“We are disappointed that the governor has not ... been able to work effectively with the Republican majorities in the House and Senate to address important fiscal issues impacting our state,” they jabbed.

I voted against PA’s new spending plan because it, once again, fails to help our school children, continues to deprive more than 500,000 state residents and veterans of health care insurance, and relies on one-

time wishful-thinking budget tricks that could leave Pennsylvania in a much worse financial condition this time next year.

If those one-time gimmicks fail to produce, some experts believe we could be left trying to figure out how to pay for a \$2.5 billion deficit in 2015.

The governor owns this budget and its \$1.5 billion-plus revenue deficit. It is not Gov. Ed Rendell’s fault, and he can’t pin this spending plan on President Obama. Gov. Corbett is responsible, and he is accountable for this budget fiasco.

The governor must finally yield and agree to expand Pennsylvania’s Medicaid program so that 500,000 residents and 23,000 veterans can finally be covered with health care insurance.

The new budget strips money from job creation and redevelopment programs, things I believe are vital in the state’s feeble efforts to generate new jobs.

Specifically, the governor’s budget deletes half of the Pennsylvania First line, which delivers opportunity grants,

customized job training and industrial sites investments; takes away nearly 50 percent from Keystone Communities programs like Main Street, Elm Street, and housing funds; and it mutes funds that are set aside to attract new businesses.

The governor defended his actions by saying the legislature failed to deliver pension reform. I understand his frustration but it is misplaced. The hybrid proposal he endorsed still doesn’t promise to improve the state’s pension situation. Still, the Senate approved the proposal and returned it to the GOP-led House.

We do need pension reform. We don’t need the kind of brow beating the governor hit our teachers and educators with as he attempted to explain his rationale for his very late budget decision. Our teachers make up the least supported labor group around, and they’ve been the target of the governor’s budget-balancing “strategy” during his tenure in Harrisburg. ■

## Whistle Blown

**S**eeing waste, fraud and/or abuse in action can be startling.

Wondering about how reporting it might jeopardize your future can feel daunting and overwhelming. These are some of the reasons why I supported two whistleblower protection bills this year that are now law.

House Bill 118, now known as Act 87 of 2014, amends Pennsylvania’s Whistleblower Law to include private businesses or entities that receive public funding for work or services. It also improves whistleblower confidentiality, allows

for enforcement by the Office of the Inspector General and increases penalties for those who are committing the waste, fraud and/or abuse.

The other measure, HB 185, amends the Whistleblower Law to cover employees of the General Assembly and its agencies and is now known as Act 88 of 2014.

I am happy about these new laws because we need people like you to blow the whistle on wasteful uses of public dollars. If you see it, you should have the full protection of the law and not fear for your job or your future. ■



Sen. Tartaglione meets and works with Laura Princiotta and Tanya Regli, on issues relating to SpArc Philadelphia, The Arc of Philadelphia, and The Arc of PA.



**STATE SENATOR  
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**OCTOBER 7**  
**Disabilities Day • Capitol Rotunda • 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.**

**▶ Event of Note**

Oct. 7 – In honor of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and with the help of volunteers from various organizations, including Magee Rehabilitation Hospital and Temple University's Institute on Disabilities, I will host my annual “Disabilities Day” event in the Capitol Rotunda from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m.

Participating organizations will provide equipment, such as canes, walkers, wheelchairs, noise-canceling headphones, arm restraints and vision-distorting goggles to state lawmakers, their staff and people who do not have disabilities so they can experience what it’s like for someone living with a physical disability.

Not only will these special devices help non-disabled individuals gain a new perspective of life with a disability, but also they will help increase awareness of everyday challenges people with disabilities face. This is important when legislation that could affect people with disabilities is proposed. ■

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