



# State Senator CHRISTINE M. **TARTAGLIONE**

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

**FIGHTING  
FOR PEOPLE**



Sen. Tartaglione worked with Philly School District reps plus Sens. Farnese, Hughes, Kitchen & Washington, Jan. 30, to promote some great Senate Democratic ideas that will help people and improve job creation.

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**DISTRICT OFFICES:** 1061 Bridge Street • Philadelphia, PA 19124 • (215) 533-0440 • Fax: (215) 560-2627  
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Senate of Pennsylvania: 1-800-364-1581 (TTY)

**WEBSITE:** [www.SenatorTartaglione.com](http://www.SenatorTartaglione.com)



## A Message from Senator Tartaglione

Welcome to the latest edition of my newsletter! In this edition, I'd like to update you on my ongoing efforts to increase the minimum wage for thousands of Philadelphians and workers statewide, plus highlight some of the opportunities I've had to work with you to make our community a better place to live.

Turning the page on a new year means it is time for state lawmakers and me to turn our sights on how we will invest crucial tax dollars in education, job creation and strengthening our social safety nets to make sure all Pennsylvanians have the opportunity to live the life of their dreams.

The governor recently released his budget proposal for 2014-15, and many of us have serious concerns about the gimmicks and priorities he outlined. We have a huge job in front of us in attempting to fill the gaps in spending that have been created by the policies of his administration. While he promised it wouldn't be like this, Pennsylvania is staring at a structural deficit of more than \$1 billion.

Everyone, unless you are a corporation or delve in the natural gas fields of the commonwealth, should be worried about this latest spending plan proposal. As he has done in the past, the governor is targeting basic and higher education, and social safety net programs to balance the 2014-15 budget. At the same time, he is continuing his work to cut business taxes for the most profitable businesses.

This all might be fine if his past actions delivered results, but they have not. The unfortunate reality is we are suffering more because of bad decisions.

Pennsylvania has dropped to 48th in the country in job creation. Our neighboring states are increasing their minimum wage rates. And, our children are not getting the education they need or want because of the severe cuts inflicted by the Corbett administration.

Because it is you I think about in my day-to-day work as a lawmaker, I continue to fight for a higher minimum wage, the enactment of Senate Democratic Caucus proposals for economic and community development, as well as improved assistance for our returning vets.

I hope 2014 has started well for you and your success and happiness continues throughout the year. Thank you for reading!

*Tina*

## Great Ideas for Unemployed Residents

The Senate Democratic Policy Committee and I worked with labor leaders and affected workers late last year to address the growing problem of Pennsylvania's new law that has adversely impacted too many unemployed workers.

Working in the Plumber's Union Hall, we received firsthand accounts of how Gov. Corbett's Act 6 of 2011 and Act 60 of 2012 have reduced eligibility for worker's compensation and placed caps on the amount of compensation that could be received by maximum-wage earners. In short, the change is hurting the people who need UC benefits to bridge the gap between jobs more than it is helping.

According to an analysis by the state's Independent Fiscal Office, the average reduction in total benefits to all workers seeking unemployment benefits under Act 60 is \$5,750. Those receiving the

maximum \$573/week benefit are receiving \$6,744 less.

Senate Bill 912 would take us back to a fairer and more equitable unemployment compensation formula for the working men and women of Philadelphia and the commonwealth. It would revert to the wage calculation formula we had in place that worked for decades.

The UC trust fund was depleted during the Great Recession and we need to make sure it exists as a vital safety net for people who lose their jobs. But we made the situation worse by attempting to solve the problem on the backs of those who need that support now.

Since this hearing, I have worked with Sen. Mike Stack to introduce Senate Bill 1214, which would help high-wage earners that have earned the maximum base year and high quarter wages gain unemployment benefits. Many of these individuals



Sen. Tartaglione worked with the Senate Democratic Policy Committee, Nov. 21, to hear how the Corbett administration's changes to the PA unemployment compensation system are hurting displaced workers who need those benefits.

qualified for unemployment before the enactment of Act 60.

My thanks to Sharon Dietrich of Community Legal Services and John Dodd of the Philadelphia Unemployment Project for coming to talk with the policy committee about this problem. Also, thanks to the laborers who made the trip and shared personal accounts of the unnecessary hardship they are living because of this bad change.



Sen. Tartaglione and Sen. Vince Hughes held a press conference Dec. 17 to urge the legislature and Gov. Corbett to approve her bills to increase Pennsylvania's minimum wage.

## Channeling Scrooge in Minimum Wage Press Conference

About a week before Christmas, Sen. Vincent Hughes and I joined Philadelphia International Airport wheelchair attendant John Stewart; Evelyn Jenkins, a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers union and a former minimum wage earner; and Andrew Butler, a member of Fight for Philly and a banquet worker who also struggles to make ends meet with his minimum wage earnings.

There are many good and compelling reasons the minimum wage should be increased, and we've pushed this rationale for months. One of the biggest

reasons for the minimum wage press conference was to underscore how much harder it is for people who make \$7.25/hour to participate in gift giving during the holidays as most other non-minimum wage earners do.

For instance, were you aware it costs about \$50 to provide an average Christmas dinner, but a minimum wage worker has to put in an entire day at the job just to be able to pay for that but chances are good they will not even consider doing so due to the demands on their cash?

Also, if a minimum wage worker has a loved one who likes to read, he'll have to continue buying used paperbacks because buying the country's number one gift – a Kindle Fire tablet – costs about \$180. It would take 25 hours of minimum wage earnings to buy that gift.

Pennsylvania's failure to hike the minimum makes Ebenezer Scrooge blush, and I said as much during my press conference.

When Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol*, he said, "Darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it." Darkness is cheap. Our minimum wage workers don't like it and we need to do all we can to impress upon this legislature and governor to depart from the current course.

One of the best ways I know to change course is for the adoption of my Senate Bill 858, which would increase Pennsylvania's minimum wage to \$9/hour. It would also increase the minimum for workers who depend on tips to make up most of their income. That rate today is an incredibly low \$2.83/hour. With my proposal, the tipped minimum would rise to 70 percent of the regular base wage.

As Scrooge said, "If the courses be departed from, the ends will change." Let's take "Exit" 858 from the dark minimum wage highway and help people help themselves.



Sen. Tartaglione and constituents of the 2nd Senatorial District gathered Dec. 11 for a town hall meeting. Gizela Burnside (left) translated for Spanish-speaking residents.

## Working with You

It was great to meet everyone who came out to the Julia deBurgos School on Lehigh Avenue, December 11, for my latest town hall meeting.

We talked about the many frustrating realities of this administration, like the budget deficit, education funding, how the new transportation bill is expected to help improve commuting in the Delaware Valley, and the governor's cuts in social services.

It was good to hear your ideas to make Philadelphia an even better place to live.

We plan to do more town halls, so stay tuned for information and make it a point to attend a gathering. We like to meet in the evening so more people can talk to me about issues of the day.



The fight for an increase in the minimum wage continued Dec. 17 as Sen. Tartaglione underscored how difficult it is for workers earning \$7.25/hour to enjoy an average holiday.

## MAY I HELP?

### STATE APPLICATIONS

Driver's License • Notary Public  
Vehicle Registration/Renewal

### SENIOR CITIZENS' ASSISTANCE

PACE • Property Tax/Rent Rebate Form  
Senior Programs Pamphlet  
Reduced Auto Registration Form

### HELP FOR FAMILIES

CHIP Information • Child ID Record Cards  
College Financial Aid Information  
Fuel Assistance Information (Seasonal)

### VOTER

Registration Forms • Election Calendars  
Applications for Absentee Ballots



**STATE SENATOR  
CHRISTINE M. TARTAGLIONE**

Senate Box 203002  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3002

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suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder or brain injury.

This effort will involve virtually every department of government in making sure veterans and their families are understood and not underserved.

Pennsylvania is home to nearly 1 million veterans, more than 100,000 of them having served in Iraq or Afghanistan since 2001. The unemployment rate among recently returning veterans is above the rate of the civilian population, despite their military training.

◆ **21-Bill Salute  
for Veterans**

Our fighting men and women who are returning home following long overseas deployments continue to face unique challenges as they attempt to come back to live and work among us. We have to do more than just thank them for their service.

Senate Democrats and I are teaming up to do more than thank them for their devotion and dedication to keeping us free. We are working to encourage the legislature to adopt a package of 21 bills that would do everything from helping returning veterans with education, housing and jobs, to delivering initiatives that provide monetary assistance, counseling services and financial relief for families. One of

the bills is mine and it would require the state Department of Health to provide training for emergency service providers to help them recognize and treat veterans



**Labor Flexes Muscle**

*Members of many different unions filled the Capitol Rotunda Jan. 28 to warn the Corbett administration they have rights and will defend attempts to weaken them.*