

PARSE *newsletter*

DIRECTORY OF SERVICES

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REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENTS

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Thomas Buerkle: (724) 836-5412

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President's Message

Thomas B. Judge, President

Membership

I am pleased to report that as of October 23, 2019 PARSE has reached 25,000 members, a milestone for PARSE.

2019 Governing Board

Highlights from the Governing Board Meeting:

- FY2019-2020 Budget approved with no dues increase.
- The Governing Board approved a new 1-year dental contract with United Concordia. This contract has no cost increase to members.
- There were no changes made to the existing PARSE Bylaws.
- Vickie Bailey was elected to a full term (2 years) as PARSE State Secretary.
- Carol Moyer, Jack Quirk, Joe Moliterno, Kathy Beitchman and Tom Buerkle were reelected to 2-year terms as Regional Vice Presidents.
- I was reelected to a 2-year term as State President.
- The 2020 Governing Board meeting will be held at the Best Western Inn Harrisburg.
- The Governing voted to hold the 2021 and 2022 meetings at the Wyndham Hotel in Gettysburg. The 2022 meeting will be the 50th PARSE Governing Board Meeting.



Tom Judge

2020 Dues Invoices

- As noted earlier the option to pay dues on-line is a new feature this year. This is available only to chapters for whom the State Office performs dues collection. The link and member



Continued on page 2



number needed were included on the invoice.

- If you have not paid your 2020 dues, please do so at your earliest convenience. **It is important to submit your invoice with the bar-coded information to insure accurate processing. Please include both bar-coded invoices if sending a payment for the member and spouse/partner.**

SERS Meeting

The Pennsylvania State Employees Retirement System, or SERS, ended sharing the names and addresses of retirees with PARSE in 2008. As reported in our last newsletter, I met with SERS on April 22 and presented ways that SERS could provide mailing information to PARSE and enable us to share the PARSE message. Unfortunately, SERS again declined to provide PARSE the requested information.

Dental Insurance – United Concordia

As mentioned above the Governing Board approved a new contract with United Concordia for 1-year with no changes. PARSE had hoped to receive a 2-year contract with no changes, but we were reluctant to accept the proposed 2-year contract offered by United Concordia. In early 2020 PARSE in conjunction with PISI /AMBA will begin a process to solicit bids from multiple dental insurance providers to see if a longer-term contract without cost increase and changes can be negotiated.

Property Tax Legislation

The media has reported on legislation and proposals related to Property Tax relief, with many focusing on school taxes. The current taxes raise over \$14 billion and must be replaced by some other income source. Of the multiple bills being discussed, not all have been introduced.

HB13 from Rep. Frank Ryan eliminates the current school taxes and replaces them with a combination of new taxes. PARSE is concerned about a provision to tax retirement income, excluding social security payments, at 4.93%. Our Government Relations Advisor, John Baughman, and I scheduled several meetings with Rep. Ryan which were cancelled because of conflicts on Rep Ryan's part. We have another meeting scheduled for October 28th. While we do not believe that this bill will get support from the leadership in the House, we must be vigilant. The point PARSE will make with Rep. Ryan or any other legislator is that any replacement for school taxes must be equitable for all Pennsylvanians. HB13's tax on retirement income places a disproportionate cost on all retirees.

Government Relations Committee

The above information on property tax legislation is one reason why PARSE has a Government Relations Committee. This committee functions at two levels:

- The first is a state committee which is charged

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Capitol Hill Update

By John E. Baughman, Ph. D., | PARSE Government Relations Advisor

After a summer recess, the Pennsylvania General Assembly returned to Harrisburg to resume the second half of the 2019-2020 legislative session with a myriad of issues on their agenda.

This article will focus on legislation that changes the stability of the retirement fund and member benefits.

As early as 1992 the Legislature and the public turned their attention to the problems connected to property taxes: Funding public schools with only property taxes places an unfair burden on state residents, primarily senior citizens. In most cases, seniors are on fixed incomes. They have been paying on their homes for years or own their homes only to find in some cases they risk losing their homes because of property taxes.

A growing consensus believes there must be a more equitable method of school funding. The problem is that replacing property tax, a reliable and stable tax, will cost in the range of \$15 billion. To find a suitable alternative for property tax is no easy task because each suggested solution brings winners and losers.

Several legislators have submitted bills, each having its own plan, to replace the property tax. With 9 different proposals at last count, three of them are receiving the most attention:

SB 76, sponsored by Senator David Argall (R)-

This bill, introduced in several sessions, almost passed in the Senate in 2015. It was a tie vote and needed to be settled by the lieutenant governor casting the tie-breaking vote. Then Lt. Governor Mike Stack (D) voted against the bill. The provisions of this bill include:

- increasing the PIT (personal income tax) from 3.07% to 4.95%,
- increasing the sales tax to 7%, and
- expanding the sales tax to include additional items.

HB 1200, sponsored by Representatives Pam Snyder (D), Marcia Hahn (R), and Rosemary Brown (R) -

This bill increases the personal income tax (PIT) by 1.8% to reduce property tax. This will only reduce the property tax, not replace it. Sponsors hope this compromise bill, viewed as a more moderate attempt to relieve the burden of property tax, will gain support from more legislators.

HB 13 sponsored by Representative Francis Ryan (R) -

This controversial bill has met with a “frosty” reception. The major feature is a proposed tax on pensions. HB 13 has not formally been introduced to the floor of the House. Rep. Ryan believes that it needs support from seniors to have any chance of success. The major provisions include:

- a tax of 4.92% on retirement income,
- increasing the local sales tax an additional 2%,
- adding the categories of food and clothing to the sales tax, and
- increasing the personal income tax 1.85%.

The disagreement on all the proposals produces a dilemma in the Legislature about resolving the problem. To solve this, the House, Senate and the Governors’ Office have put together a property tax workgroup comprised of legislators and staff representing Democrats and Republicans as well as envoys selected by Governor Wolf. As of this writing they have met several times and the word is they are optimistic about arriving at a solution. More pessimistic pundits around the Capitol point out that it is a stretch to think that this group will find the answer in a few weeks if legislators have failed to reach a solution since 1992.

CHAPTER TREASURERS

MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

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- 1-27 Fulton**
Barbara Fischer: 717-294-3693
- 1-30 Lancaster, Lebanon**
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- 1-40 Mt. Nittany**
Mary Alice Miller: 814-349-5475
- 1-50 MUNS**
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- 2-10 Endless Mountains**
Dianne Burman: 570-756-2525
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Robert Berkey: 570-239-0908
- 2-50 Schuylkill, Carbon**
John Quirk: 570-628-2815
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- 3-40 Venango, Clarion, Mercer**
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- 5-50 Laurel Highlands**
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President's Message, *continued*

with developing information for others, reviewing any legislation, and preparing talking points for members when they meet with their elected officials.

- The second, and most important, part are members at the chapter level. Experience shows that, while the State Office and John Baughman can meet with officials, the input they receive at their local/district offices has greater weight on influencing their decisions.

I urge you to contact your local chapter and volunteer to be a voice for PARSE at your local level. The chapters will provide us with your contact information, and we will send you timely information on legislation of interest to PARSE members. Please share your email address so we can contact you quickly when needed.

You can go to the PARSE website, www.parseofpa.org, select the Legislative Activity tab (top left), and then select the Government Relations Advisor drop down box. You will find several information boxes from which you can download the PA House of Representatives and PA Senate directories.

I also call your attention to two articles in previous PARSE newsletter: In the Spring 2019 issue, we published an article on writing your legislator and, in the Summer 2019 newsletter, we printed information on visiting with your legislator. Download these articles at www.parseofpa.org under Advocacy for PARSE.

Financial Statement

Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2019

REVENUE

Total Operating Revenue \$314,687.34

EXPENSES

Total Expenses \$260,525.28

Net Income \$54,162.06

THANK YOU—AND CARRY ON!

By Craig Staller, Editor

Thank you to many of the chapters who include the State Office on your mailing lists. What stands out, as I review your publications, is that so many of you support your local charitable food programs, whether donating non-perishable food items at regular luncheon meetings or volunteering at local food banks and pantries.

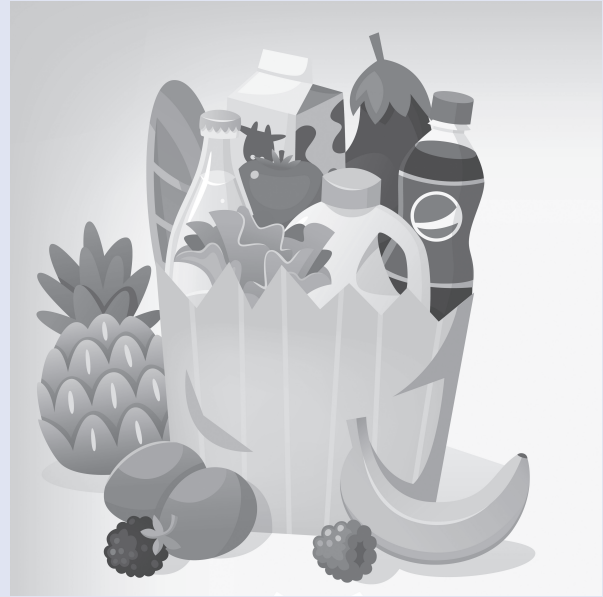
The information below about hunger in our Commonwealth and nation are from the Feeding America, www.feedingamerica.org. Feeding America is a national nonprofit network of food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and other community agencies.

In Pennsylvania:

- 1 in 8 people (1,534,710 people) struggled with hunger in 2017.
- 1 in 6 (437,340) of those are children.
- 36.2% of households receiving SNAP benefits have children. (SNAP, the government-funded program formerly known as food stamps, provides temporary help for people going through hard times.)

For senior citizens in our nation, hunger pains can be increasingly painful:

- 63% of senior households served by the Feeding America network are forced to choose between food and medical care.



- Households served by the network that include an adult age 50 and older are at an increased risk of having someone with a chronic health condition, including diabetes and high blood pressure—conditions that can be reduced by healthy food options.
- Only 42% of eligible seniors are enrolled and receiving SNAP benefits, which makes enrolling in assistance programs for SNAP much more important for seniors.

(Feeding America did not list Pennsylvania-specific numbers for senior citizens.)

Our support of local charitable food programs does make a positive difference!

People struggle with hunger in every county and congressional district in Pennsylvania. They could be our neighbors, children in our local schools, or senior citizens in our churches.

Thank you for working to alleviate hunger pains in Pennsylvania—and carry on!

***Remember to include your
bar-coded invoice with your
2020 dues payment!***

PARSE *Calendar of Events at State Office*

November 11, 2019:	Veterans Day, State Office Closed
November 12, 2019:	Executive Committee Meeting
November 28 & 19, 2019:	Thanksgiving Holiday, State Office Closed
December 25, 2019:	Christmas Holiday, State Office Closed
January 1, 2020:	New Year's Day, State Office Closed
January 14, 2019:	Executive Committee Meeting
January 20, 2019:	Martin Luther King Day, State Office Closed
February 17, 2019:	President's Day, State Office Closed
March 10, 2019:	Executive Committee Meeting

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