



COURIER TIMES
OPINION

BUCKS COUNTY COURIER TIMES

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OUR VIEW

State drags feet on Real ID law

Among the many efforts to enhance national security following the 2001 terror attacks in New York and Washington was passage by Congress in 2005 of the Real ID Act. Since the driver's license is a kind of de facto national identification card, one of the provisions of the law required every state to change its driver's licenses to incorporate enhanced security features as a way to reduce counterfeiting.

Many states initially balked at what they viewed as federal intrusion on their territory (that is, setting the criteria for issuance of a driver's license). After some changes to the original law and the granting of extensions to states to give them more time to comply, most of the states are now on board with the federal guidelines. Pennsylvania remains a holdout, along with eight other states.

What that means for residents of the commonwealth is that, after June 6, Pennsylvanians who use their driver's license as their sole means of identification will not be able to enter federal buildings and military installations. It gets much worse. Should the state continue refusing to update its driver's licenses to the new standard, beginning Jan. 22 next year Transportation Security Administration (TSA) screeners at U.S. airports will no longer accept a Pennsylvania driver's license as valid identification. Travelers will have to show a passport. No passport? No flight.

Federal officials told Pennsylvania last October that it would get no more extensions to comply with the law because it has made no effort to do so. The Wolf administration was given an additional six months in January, but there will be no more reprieves.

Eleven passenger and cargo airlines, among them American, Delta, United, Southwest, Lufthansa, FedEx and UPS, together wrote a letter to the state Legislature urging it to pass the necessary compliance legislation. The letter said continued failure to comply will cost state residents \$1 billion to acquire passports, and will also hurt delivery services whose drivers will no longer be able to make deliveries to federal and military facilities. Some smaller airlines are even talking about leaving the state entirely.

For the many people who fly only once or twice a year — for a vacation or to attend a family function — getting a passport will be something of a hassle, and it will be expensive for a larger family. That's ironic, since one reason the Legislature voted not to participate in Real ID in 2012 was because critics viewed it as an "unfunded mandate." PennDOT has no estimate of the cost to replace every driver's license, but absent compliance with the federal law, anyone without a passport who wants to fly is going to end up paying anyway.

The state Senate passed legislation to repeal the 2012 "nonparticipation act" last month. If and when the House OKs the measure and Gov. Wolf signs it, the state will then have until 2020 to fully comply with the law.

Pennsylvania lawmakers really have no choice on this. They can save residents a whole lot of future headaches if they get with the Real ID program ASAP.



A nightmare on our doorstep: Deep cuts, painful impact

By **STATE REP. TINA DAVIS**

I have been deeply troubled by the first budget presented by President Trump, which puts the Community Development Block Grant and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Community Services Block Grant programs on the chopping block. The Courier Times article from March 21 detailed just how devastating these cuts would be for our community.

The losses to our region — \$1.7 million to Bucks County, a half a million to Bristol Township from the Community Development Grant, another \$700,000 in HOME Investment Partnership program and \$727,000 from Health and Human Services block grant — are staggering on the surface, but numbers do not even begin to tell the story.

Before being elected to the state House in 2010, I served as a member of the Bristol Township Council. I witnessed firsthand the difference that these programs made in the lives of many of our residents. Senior citizens, who had worked all of their lives and never asked for a thing in return, trying to make ends meet on a fixed income were able to get help replacing old heaters, or a leaky roof. It allowed them to make repairs that they couldn't otherwise afford so that they could stay

GUEST OPINION

in their homes. Young families, just starting their lives together but might not have had a great credit history yet, were able to purchase starter homes or use money from the program to fix up an existing home that they had only been able to afford because it needed repairs.

These programs not only help the families directly involved but our community at large. They keep people in their homes and the value of the neighborhoods intact. Without this program, many seniors could be forced to sell their home for a depressed value, or that young family just starting out may not have the down payment to purchase that foreclosure or fixer-upper on your street. In both cases

the properties could fall prey to a fly-by-night boarding house owner who wants to pack it with weekly renters.

As a state representative, I know the value that the Bucks County Opportunity Council and Family Services Association hold to our community. My staff and I work with those two organizations

on an almost daily basis. We have single parent households, working full time but struggling to make ends meet, threatened with losing their electric or heat, or maybe fell behind on their rent and just need help getting caught up to get their feet back under them. The Opportunity Council helps these families to keep the lights on, the children warm and most importantly, off the street.

Family Services provides a multitude of services to all age groups. They are a major part of the Housing Continuum of Care along with the Opportunity Council and they operate the Lower

WRITING US

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Letters need: a signature, address and daytime phone number for verification.

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I wake up in a cold sweat when the nightmare comes to me of looking a young, struggling mother and her two little children, who had come to me for help because they are living in their car, in the eye and tell them there is nothing that I can do.

Bucks Homeless Shelter. Many people do not understand that most of the shelter houses children and their mothers for the most part. They not only house them but have professionals who work with them to help them access services, get to school, and help with finding employment. The goal is to get these families back on their feet and into a stable environment. There is currently a six- to eight-week waiting list to get into the shelter. What will happen to all of these children if these budget cuts come to fruition?

These two organizations, among others, work miracles on a daily basis with very limited funding. I wake up in a cold sweat when the nightmare comes to me of looking a young, struggling mother and her two little children, who had come to me for help because they are living in their car, in the eye and tell them there is nothing that I can do. There is nowhere I can call because these organizations had to close their doors. I'm sorry that your kids will sleep in the car again tonight, or without heat because you ran out of money for oil.

This is a scenario that should keep us all awake at night. Unfortunately it is the scenario that is now at our front doorstep.

Tina M. Davis, Bristol Township, is state representative for the 141st Legislative District.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Accept the facts; move forward

The Guest Opinion of April 10 stated that the climate has always changed. That is true; however, the current situation is vastly different than the changes that occurred eons ago.

Scientists who publish reports in journals that undergo rigorous review, nearly unanimously agree that human emissions of greenhouse gases are the primary cause of our current climate change.

Temperatures are rising and weather events such as storms and droughts are becoming more severe and more frequent. We already see one impact with glaciers and Arctic/Antarctic ice melting with resultant higher sea levels. The changes are happening much more rapidly than would occur naturally.

While skepticism is healthy and actually is an integral part of the scientific process, we are past the point of questioning the climate experts. Now is the time to take action before it is too late.

We must reduce the emission of greenhouse gases by moving toward nonfossil fuel-based energy sources. It is time to put a fee on carbon and return the funds that are generated back to all citizens in the form of a dividend check.

We can then decide to spend this money on more energy efficient transportation and homes or simply to offset higher costs.

This type of market-driven approach has been proposed by a conservative group, the Climate Leadership Council that includes George Schultz and James Baker III.

Renewable energy sources have become economically viable and the movement to these sources will generate far more jobs than remaining dependent upon fossil fuels.

Let's stop questioning facts and start to move forward to address the very serious issue of climate change.

Joe Palmer
Holland

End the abuse

I applaud the comments made in the April 14 Courier Times editorial concerning the office of the lieutenant governor of Pennsylvania. It should incite people to demand change, but alas most citizens are busy trying to manage their lives on a dwindling income that seems to be in constant jeopardy from one assault or another.

A follow-up piece on the anticipated lifetime pension that the lieutenant governor could receive upon completion of his four-year term would astonish most of us. Yet we seem powerless to do much of anything except wonder how it all came to this.

There are two things I would encourage the Courier Times to accomplish on behalf of readers: query the citizens using your online poll to establish if they would support the abolishing this mostly ceremonial political position and secondly, identify the representatives of the people who would introduce a bill to accomplish the elimination of this position.

There are 253 members in the General Assembly and I would wager you can't get any of them to sponsor legislation aimed at ending this abuse.

Jeff Minton
Middletown

Leveling the playing field

Gerrymandering of voting districts gives one political party the advantage over its rival by incorporating politically friendly neighborhoods into a district.

The 2010 Supreme Court's ruling in Citizens United regarding free speech further endangered our electoral system by lifting the restrictions on political expenditures by non-profit and for-profit corporations, labor unions and other associations, enabling them to solicit funds for chosen candidates from nearly untraceable donors.

And so Republicans in 2010, utilizing mapping programs and \$30 million, started gaining victories at all government levels. State legislatures were vital because they control redistricting. The three branches of government were designed with checks and balances.

No one person or political party should have total control. Elections from 2010 through 2016 disrupted this delicate balance.

Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick introduced House Resolution 145 calling for fairness on the congressional level regarding redistricting as well as other reforms. This would create a nonpartisan independent redistricting commission for states. It will start with the 2020 census if passed.

Democrats and Republicans both practice redistricting. They have to work as nonpartisans to control and make it fair for voters and candidates seeking election.

One political party should not have any advantage over its rival because of state legislatures' gerrymandering.

Edward Tuckman
Lower Makefield

Proud to be an American again

Syria is another mess left by the Obama administration.

Remember when President Barack Obama, Secretary of State John Kerry and National Security Adviser Susan Rice backed away from their "red line" and let the Russians into Syria, claiming the chemical weapons have been destroyed and mission accomplished?

As a result, there are millions of Syrian refugees, hundreds of thousands of Syrians killed, and chemical weapon attacks, while the Russians keep Assad in power.

Liberal Democrats are now asking, "What's the plan?"

Too bad they didn't ask President Obama the same question.

President Trump could have done what Obama did, turn away and let Syrians die. Instead he chose to "protect the innocent from chemical weapon attacks."

Sounds like a good plan to me. I think most Americans understand that allowing the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable. President Trump announced to the world that we intend to hold that position.

Proud to be an American again.

Barbara Carr
Upper Makefield

THE VENT

especially the left wing media.
Mary Brady, Lower Makefield

Acorn helped millions of poor folks with \$93 million in federal aid spread over 20 years. That's about one year of Trump's travel and protection costs. Sad.
Pete Turner, Holland

Does anyone think that the perfidy of the Obama administration would be exposed as it is now had Mrs. Clinton been elected? I don't think so, and Obama is still held as a paragon of virtue by the sycophants on the left.
Larry Danas, Langhorne

Chuck Ellis, term limits limit my right to vote as I see fit.
Donald Graham, Levittown

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