

## **Undeterred: Despite obstructions, a pledge to persevere**

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In response to the Courier Times' Thumbs Down editorial of March 5, anyone who knows me from my over two decades of service to the community would know that I am not one "to throw in the towel." Both the article of Sunday, Feb. 28 and the editorial do not fully represent what was a 90-minute discussion with the editorial board in which I was asked about state issues and non-state issues members believe affect the community.

In terms of how bills advance, the majority party leader controls what bills are brought to the floor for a vote; likewise, committee chairs held by the majority control which bills are voted on in committee. The hard facts of Harrisburg are that minority members' bills are blocked and sometimes copied and re-introduced by a majority party member.

This was the case with House Bill 1460, which was a reform bill that would expand open and transparent government. It was introduced by a minority member with strong bipartisan support, only to not be brought to the floor for the vote. The bill was later duplicated by a majority member as House Bill 1880 and then brought to the floor for a vote.

Two bills I introduced almost a year ago to reform county government and save the taxpayers unnecessary expense have been held up in committee and show no signs of moving forward. Both are non-controversial bills and would face little to no opposition if brought to the floor for a vote.

Legislative success by a minority member apparently translates into a tougher candidate for the majority party to defeat in the next election. These are not excuses but the reality of some of the things wrong in Harrisburg. Perhaps my willingness to honestly discuss these types of problems led to the editor's reaction. What was written does not accurately represent the full context of the discussion and certainly is not representative of my work as your representative.

Saying that I stated I would not introduce a health care contribution bill is simply not accurate. The discussion revolved around whether my introduction of that bill would get blocked and whether I supported legislators contributing to health care, which I firmly do as we should be paying our fair share. This week I will be introducing a bill requiring mandatory contributions to health care from legislators. Hopefully, the majority party will bring this bill to the floor and pass this much needed reform.

The topic of a voluntary contribution to health care was not even discussed during our meeting. It is a good idea as a first step until we can get a meaningful Legislature-wide mandatory contribution system in place. As such, and until that system is in place, I will voluntarily match the mandatory Senate contribution through sending a personal check to the state monthly. Additionally, I have already retroactively paid the state in full for the equivalent contribution for my entire time in the Legislature.

As a legislator you must at times make difficult decisions. Quite often politicians and candidates take the easy way out to appease the public and press. For example, it would be easy to simply sign on to the constitutional convention online petition and would probably result in favorable press. However, as I explained in the editorial board meeting, the petition appears quite broad.

Through researching the matter it appears that limited constitutional conventions, in this case badly needed governmental reform, have a greater chance of being successful. I support a limited constitutional convention that works to address the much needed governmental reforms.

I have had the honor of representing the residents of the 142nd District for the past 14 months. It is a commitment to this community that I take very seriously. In spite of the need for reform in Harrisburg I can assure you that I remain undeterred and will continue to work hard and always put our community first.

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