

REP. JEFF SPIEGELMAN RECAPS HIS FIRST LEGISLATIVE SESSION, SAYING IT'S BEEN AN HONOR TO SERVE

July 2013

Dear Editor,

It was just after 1:30 a.m. on July 1st when the final gavel was dropped on the 2013 legislative session in Dover and I can say that it was an absolute honor to have participated in my first legislative session. The bills we have debated, the people I have met and the constituents I have been able to serve have exceeded my expectations, and I am more than grateful for this opportunity to be in public service.

Before lawmakers adjourned, we approved the \$3.718 billion operating budget for the state and the \$477.1 million Bond Bill that will be used to fund capital improvements throughout Delaware, including school construction projects and transportation enhancements. The \$44.8 million measure, known as the Grant-In-Aid bill, provides state funding to assist nonprofit organizations in Delaware. This bill, from which senior centers, volunteer fire companies and a number of other worthy charitable organizations in the state will benefit, was also passed and signed into law.

This session was not without its fair share of controversial measures. Bills dealing with same-sex marriages, gender discrimination, gun control and the death penalty were all in the forefront of this General Assembly, making for a sometimes polarizing legislative session.

However, good public policy still ruled the day with lawmakers considering – and, in many cases, approving – a number of important initiatives aimed at improving the lives of individuals, families and small business owners in Delaware. I am pleased to have supported the following initiatives.

- **Reforming Delaware's Workers' Compensation System** – House Bill 175 has been enacted and will go a long way toward addressing the out-of-control workers' compensation premium costs that many of our small businesses have been facing over the past couple of years. Included in the bill are provisions that will tighten the controls on medical costs, as well as ensure that injured workers are returning to work as safely and efficiently as possible.
- **Allowing the sale of raw milk** – House Bill 150, which was defeated in the House, would have legalized the sale of unpasteurized, raw milk. The bill would have limited raw milk sales to the farm or property where the raw milk is produced. I supported this consumer-friendly bill, which I believe would have also helped our local farmers. Even though the legislation was defeated when it was debated in the House, the bill's sponsor has said he plans to re-introduce similar legislation when the General Assembly reconvenes next year.

- **Providing greater flexibility for charter schools** – House Bill 165 will strengthen Delaware’s charter school law by providing greater accountability and flexibility for the charter schools serving our communities, including MOT Charter School and Providence Creek Academy. One of the more important provisions of this new law allows for a performance fund to be established. Charter schools, especially those serving high-needs students, will be able to benefit from the financial incentives being offered through this new fund.
- **Criminalizing “clandestine laboratories” being used for the manufacture of drugs** – House Substitute 1 for House Bill 28, which has been signed into law, would make it a crime to operate a clandestine laboratory in order to manufacture a controlled substance, such as methamphetamine. Prior to the bill being enacted, prosecutors could only get a manufacturing conviction if they found the drug with the lab used to make the substance.
- **Supporting our veterans** – I am proud to have supported two bills – one of which I sponsored – to benefit Delaware’s veterans. As a member of the House Veterans Committee, I voted in favor of House Bill 85, which establishes the “Delaware Veterans Trust Fund” to provide financial assistance to veterans in the form of health care, housing needs, home repair and education. Touted as companion legislation, my first bill will allow Delawareans to donate a portion of their state income tax return to this new fund. I look forward to the Governor signing House Bill 140 into law in the near future.

For more information on any of these bills or other measures that came before Delaware legislators this year, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at Jeff.Spiegelman@state.de.us. Thank you again for the opportunity to serve your interests in our legislature, as well as the continued feedback on issues of concern to you and your family. Your input has been invaluable.

Sincerely,



Jeff Spiegelman
State Representative
11th District