

# Government Transparency Needed Now More Than Ever

By State Rep. Joe Emrick

BANGOR - Pennsylvanians deserve to know what their government is doing and why. By law, state agencies are required to respond to Right-to-Know (RTK) inquiries from the media and public, in order to ensure access to government information. However, when Gov. Tom Wolf shut down state government in mid-March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, he also ordered state agencies to cease compliance with this law.

Now more than ever, it is critical that our government be more transparent, not less. That's why every member of the House and Senate, regardless of party affiliation, voted unanimously in support of House Bill 2463 to

ensure state agencies respond to RTK requests during active emergency declarations.

The bill is now awaiting the governor's signature to become law, but he has indicated he will veto it. Perplexingly, the governor claimed during a press conference this week that he was in favor of transparency and openness, saying: "If I were a legislator, I would have voted for it too."

With little to no explanation as to why he is going veto the bill, Gov. Wolf has nevertheless pledged to do so, in the face of a unanimous Legislature and a public that demands answers.

The last time a bill passed unanimously through the General Assembly only to be vetoed by a governor was in 1978 by Gov. Milton Shapp.

What does it say to our citizens and business owners when the state's top executive is taking drastic measures that are impacting lives and livelihoods across the Commonwealth, but he refuses to share the information that led to those decisions? The governor must be accountable to our citizens at all times and especially in times of emergency. We call on him to sign House Bill 2463 into law, in order to promote full transparency of our state government and its actions.



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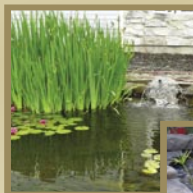
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## Ken Field

Owner of Slate Belt Energy Services

Exclusively in the Blue Valley Times

### Life in an Oven

One of our customers called last week and said the air conditioner wasn't working. When we arrived, the system was working at maximum capacity but the house was about 85° inside. That's when we got the rest of the story. They turned the air conditioner up to 85° when they went away for vacation. I don't think the savings could have been substantial but they were trying to do what they thought was right. Their house is made of 2 layers of brick and there is not much space in the attic for insulation because it is a 3 story house finished all the way to the top. I do recall that after we originally installed their system it took a few days to remove the humidity and get the temperature down because it was mid-summer in the year we installed it. The person taking care of their home while they were away recently came by a couple times a day to feed the cat and since it was 85° in there they opened the windows to cool it off. That allowed humidity from outside to enter. The last week or so has been very hot and when you put a brick in the oven, it will get hot. That's why people used to put a rock by the fireplace all evening and then put it under their covers when they went to bed. So picture 4 walls of 8" thick brick 3 stories high baking in the heat and sun for a week and all the wood and furniture inside absorbing humidity and heat and then you want to drop the inside temperature by 15°. Yeah, it's going to take a while. In a brick house the air conditioner is always fighting against the sun and heat but at night, the sun goes down and the air conditioner can actually cool more of the wall thickness. That is called the flywheel effect. That residual cooling will help fight off the heat tomorrow. I still haven't quite gotten the homeowners to understand that whole concept but since we have been discussing the problem for 4 days, the problem no longer exists. An air conditioning system MUST first remove the humidity, and then it can start lowering the temperature. You can't have steam without hot water and you can't have cool air from a properly sized AC unit without removing the humidity. The operation of a properly sized air conditioner is a marathon not a sprint. I don't recommend changing the temperature of the air conditioner in summer.

Ken Field is the owner of Field's Service, Inc. and Slate Belt Energy Services. He has over 40 years of experience in heating, air conditioning and is certificated by RESNET and BPI in various areas of energy conservation. He can be reached at 610-599-8832 or at [www.SlateBeltEnergy.com](http://www.SlateBeltEnergy.com)

## Fire Co. Grants

Continued from page 1

where forest and brush fires are common," said Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn. "These funds will benefit 109 volunteer fire companies throughout the state.

"To appreciate the value of well-equipped and highly trained wildfire fighters, one only has to look outside Pennsylvania to the horrific fires that sometimes plague other states."

Fire Commissioner Bruce Trego praised volunteer fire companies' service to communities close to home, as well as those members who often join Bureau of Forestry crews battling wildfires far beyond Pennsylvania's borders.

"The dangers associated with wildfires continue to pose a growing threat to our state's forests and rural communities," Trego said. "Grant programs like these are vital tools for state government to ensure volunteer firefighters get the equipment and the training they need to perform their jobs as professionally and safely as possible."

Both Trego and Dunn noted the readiness of volunteer fire companies is demonstrated every spring and summer when they answer assistance calls coming from other states, while also responding regularly to local woodland and brush fires. They noted the wildfire grants help enable smaller companies to concentrate more on public safety and training while easing their fiscal constraints.

In 2019, more than \$617,800 was awarded to 133 volunteer fire companies. The grant program, offered through DCNR and paid through federal grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, has awarded more than \$14.5 million since it began in 1982.

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## Seeds

Continued from page 1

Recent packages have been filled with unlabeled seeds.

Consumers who receive unsolicited seeds are asked to retain the seeds and packaging. If opened, double bag and seal the seeds. Do not plant them or discard loose seeds.

Report the package to the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) confidential Antismuggling Hotline, 800-877-3835 or email SITC.Mail@aphis.usda.gov. USDA will provide further instructions.

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's seed program licenses seed distributors, and analyzes and certifies seeds to help ensure that seeds are free of pathogens, invasive plants and noxious weeds.

For more information on Pennsylvania's efforts to protect and promote agriculture in Pennsylvania, visit [agriculture.pa.gov](http://agriculture.pa.gov).



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