



Senator Dave Burke
26th Ohio Senate District

GUEST COLUMN

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FROM OUR STATE SENATOR: *DAVE BURKE*

Senate takes action to protect consumers, help keep college affordable for students

One of my priorities as your state senator is keeping you updated on what is happening at the Statehouse. As I travel throughout the 26th Senate District and meet with constituents, I am often asked about the issues and bills being discussed in the Senate and their impact on our communities as well as the state as a whole. With that in mind, I wanted to take this opportunity to highlight some of the legislation that my colleagues and I in the Senate have approved in recent weeks.

As part of the state budget passed earlier this year, the Legislature created the Local Government Innovation Fund Program (LGIF). This program is tasked with providing loans and grants to local government projects across Ohio, with an emphasis on those that promote efficiency, shared services, co-production and mergers.

Lawmakers recently voted to approve a bill that makes several changes to the LGIF. These include modifications to the application process for loans and grants, the amount of funds that can be awarded and the manner in which awards are to be divided between larger and smaller government entities. As we continue to look for ways to streamline government at all levels, these changes will help the LGIF better fulfill its mission.

We also took action to help better protect Ohio consumers with the passage of Senate Bill 223. This bill gives the Ohio Attorney General the ability to better investigate and prosecute instances of “cyber fraud,” in which a criminal uses electronic means such as the internet or telephone to commit scams, fraud and other economic crimes. These crimes are becoming more and more sophisticated, and by granting law enforcement the authority to issue subpoenas for phone records and payment information, we can hold those responsible for committing cyber fraud accountable.

Additionally, we passed legislation to help make a college education more affordable for many Ohioans. House Bill 167 authorizes an Ohio income tax deduction for federal Pell Grant and Ohio College Opportunity Grant recipients for room and board expenses. Previously, a deduction could only be taken for costs associated with tuition, fees and books, and this change will hopefully enable more individuals to attain their goal of a college education.

Finally, I wanted to mention that legislation I introduced that would require the POW/MIA flag to be displayed along the U.S. and state flags at rest stops on the Ohio Turnpike and interstate freeways has been passed by the Senate. While we will never be able to fully express our gratitude to those who have served our country, I feel that this is a small way we can show how much Ohio cherishes the sacrifice these veterans made for our freedom.

Serving as your state senator is an important responsibility and one I take seriously. Please feel free to contact my office if you have questions or concerns about any of the matters we are discussing at the Statehouse. I can be reached at (614) 466-8049, via e-mail at SD26@senate.state.oh.us or by writing me, State Senator Dave Burke, 1 Capitol Square, 1st Floor, Columbus, OH 43215.

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Senator Burke represents the 26th Ohio Senate District, which encompasses all of Crawford, Logan, Marion, Sandusky, Union and Wyandot counties as well as portions of Ottawa and Seneca counties. For more information, please visit www.ohiosenate.gov/dave-burke.