

DAVID G. ARGALL
29TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT

SCHUYLKILL & PORTIONS OF
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Representative Scott A. Petri
107 Ryan Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17111

Dear Representative *Scott A.* Petri:

Over the years, I have worked with many members of the House Urban Affairs Committee to eradicate blight in communities throughout Pennsylvania. By working together on a bipartisan basis, we have all seen several successes including land banks, conservatorship and Act 90 of 2010.

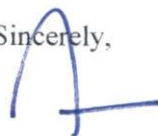
However, even with all these legislative victories, large and small municipalities across Pennsylvania still face major fiscal challenges when dealing with vacant and abandoned properties. Many times, the only solution is demolition. Funding is extremely limited, both on the county and municipal level.

In order to assist these communities, I introduced SB 486, which gives counties the option to enact up to a \$15 fee on deeds and mortgages recorded in their respective county, with proceeds funding a demolition program. In addition, Senator Brewster introduced SB 482, which would allow counties to add up to a 10 percent fee on all properties sold through the tax claim bureau. This money can be used for demolition or housing rehabilitation programs and can only be utilized in the county which enacts the fee. It is important to point out that these are options, not mandates. Both bills enjoyed overwhelming support in the Senate, and I am hoping for similar success in the House. SB 486 passed the Senate 49-0 on June 9, 2015 and SB482 passed 47-0 on November 23, 2015.

Last week, the Borough of Shenandoah in Schuylkill County, experienced a horrific fire. Eleven vacant homes were involved and the fire was ruled arson. I have included photos so you can see the damage. The borough will most likely bear the brunt of demolishing what remains of these homes. The cost estimate exceeds \$100,000. I can guarantee that Shenandoah, like many communities across Pennsylvania, does not have an extra \$100,000 in its budget. Shenandoah, like many other aging communities in the Commonwealth, has seen a major decline in population through the years, which you can see on the enclosed graph. Many other municipalities are in similar situations and my fear is that we will continue to see stories like this unless we address demolition funding. The spreadsheet shows how this legislation can make a significant difference in the district you represent.

I am asking for your consideration in bringing both SB 486 and SB 482 to a vote in the House Urban Affairs Committee. Our municipalities need our help with this problem. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



DAVID G. ARGALL
State Senator
29th District

Enclosures

I hope you're enjoying chairing the committee as much as I did - in both Chambers!

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Senate of Pennsylvania

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