

United Methodist Advocacy in Pennsylvania

May 31, 2019

I suppose that most folks think of the month of May in a positive light. The month begins with spring at its peak and it ends with Memorial Day, the beginning of the summertime attitude. It is a time of increase activity and good feelings.

However, the state legislature was out of sync with the May frame-of-mind. Routine legislation was certainly accomplished. But, there was also a sense of being mired. I think there was a lack of corporate discipline and the leadership in the legislature seemed to be more frustrated with their own caucuses, than the opposing party.

Next month, June, will be reserved primarily for budgetary considerations. Perhaps that task will get lawmakers focused and cooperating.

The state Independent Fiscal Office projects that the state will take in about \$800 million more than expected, when the fiscal year concludes at the end of June. Though, some of that amount will likely be needed for previously unfunded expenses, lawmakers are already thinking about that money. Some are saying that this is a sign that taxes should be cut. Others are suggesting that there are programs that need to be expanded. And still others want to put the money in a Rainy Day fund, to be used for an emergency or lean times. Oh well...forget focused and cooperating.

May is also a significant time in Pennsylvania's political process, because it is primary election month. 2019 is not a year for state-level elections. However, four state special elections needed to be conducted because of office-holder resignations. See one of the items below for details.

I am disappointed to report that I needed to cancel the United Methodist Advocacy faith and politics conference scheduled for May 18. Registration was lagging. According to some feedback, May was a highly scheduled month on the calendar—we will evaluate and explore the possibility of trying again.

The first of the items below regards changing the legal age limit to marry in Pennsylvania. Theoretically, there is no minimum age to marry in our state. I have voiced United Methodist Advocacy support for this bill with the state House Judiciary Committee.

Following are important issues for the faith community from this past month:

- **House Committee Moves on Marriage Age Limit**
- **Occupational Licensing and Criminal Records**
- **PA get REAL ID Designation**
- **Census Commission Seeks \$12.8M**
- **Down Syndrome Abortion Bill**
- **Pennsylvania Births Drop**
- **Request for PA Troops at Border**
- **Fantasy Sport Gambling After One Year**
- **Gaming Board Expands Sports Betting Venues**
- **Republican Candidates Win Four Special Elections**
- **Senators on Statewide Poverty Listening Tour**
- **Fetterman Ends Marijuana Listening Tour**
- **Governor: Pennsylvania Must Protect LGBTQ Citizens**
- **143 Day**
- **Rally in Support of Hate Crimes Legislation**
- **Legislator and Agency Head Promote Higher Minimum Wage**
- **Suicide and Minimum Wage**
- **Suicide Prevention Task Force**
- **Foster Care Awareness Month**
- **Rally in Support of Gun Rights**
- **Gun Law Jurisdiction**
- **Pennsylvania Fails on Chesapeake Bay Commitment**
- **Pennsylvania Sues Opioid Maker**

House Committee Moves on Marriage Age Limit

On May 14, the state House Judiciary Committee unanimously moved House Bill 360 for consideration in the full House. The measure would make 18-years-old the minimum age to obtain a marriage license, with no exceptions. Current exceptions allow marriage licenses to be issued to individuals under 18.

The bill address coercive marriages of vulnerable minors.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Jesse Topper (R-Bedford), a United Methodist, would remove the exceptions allowing a license for individuals under 18 where a custodial parent or guardian personally gives consent. It also removes the provision requiring that a judge decide if a marriage is in the best interest of the applicant when the individual is under 16.

Rep. Topper said he sponsored the bill after learning about the work of Unchained at Last, a national advocacy group seeking to end “forced and child” marriages. “We have really here a child protection bill,” he said.

Occupational Licensing and Criminal Records

On May 22, A bipartisan group of Senate and House lawmakers introduced bills to set new standards for occupational boards when considering licenses for applicants with criminal records.

Companion bills were introduced in both chambers. The purpose of Senate Bill 637 and House Bill 1477 is to remove barriers for ex-offenders.

The Senate bill was sponsored by Sens. John DiSanto (R-Dauphin) and Judy Schwank (D-Berks). The House bill was sponsored by Reps. Sheryl Delozier (R-Dauphin) and Jordan Harris (D-Philadelphia).

The measures would limit the 30 state occupational licensing boards to considering only convictions directly related to their particular occupation when making a determination to approve or deny a license application. Either bill would change current law that permits denial of a license on the basis of “moral character” or drug crime. Furthermore, boards would have to consider the nature of the offense, an applicant's rehabilitation record and time elapsed since a crime.

Sen. DiSanto noted, “More than 1 in 5 jobs require a government license and too often, qualified applicants are denied the right to work because of an old or irrelevant criminal record.” Rep. Harris said his bill would help reduce Pennsylvania's 60 percent criminal recidivism rate by helping ex-offenders find jobs.

PA gets REAL ID Designation

On May 20, the PA Department of Transportation announced that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has indicated the commonwealth is in full compliance with the federal REAL ID Act of 2005.

This is the final step in a long process that began when Pennsylvania originally resisted the REAL ID Act. State lawmakers were concerned with matters of privacy and costs.

Because it will be impossible to access federal facilities and fly commercially without REAL ID, the state relinquished. In 2017 the General Assembly passed Act 3, offering Pennsylvania residents the option to acquire a REAL ID card.

The state has been working for nearly two years on producing a suitable card. The cards became available on March 1, this year. A regular drivers license or state ID can be converted to a REAL ID-compliant card. The process requires an individual to show a social security card, a birth certificate and other forms proving name and residence. More than 138,000 REAL IDs have been issued by PennDOT since they became available.

After October 1, 2020 access to federal facilities and commercial aircraft will be restricted to REAL ID only.

Census Commission Seeks \$12.8M

On May 20, the Pennsylvania Census 2020 Complete Count Commission made a funding request of the state budget for \$12.8 million in Fiscal Year 2019-20, to help fund efforts to get an accurate population count by the 2020 U.S. Census. The \$12.8 million sum reflects an amount equal to \$1 for each of Pennsylvania's 12.8 million residents.

The commission was created by Gov. Tom Wolf to work with the U.S. Census Bureau to produce an accurate count, especially for members of traditionally “hard to count” populations, such as racial and ethnic minorities, college students, undocumented immigrants and rural residents.

Pennsylvania receives more than \$26 billion in federal aid annually, including human services, Medicaid, education, disease prevention, school lunches, heating assistance and transportation. Census data is used to distribute that money. Census data is also used to determine congressional district apportionment and will determine whether Pennsylvania will lose any of its 18 congressional districts.

“For every person we miss, every community we undercount and for all the groups we ignore, that will have a tremendous impact on the federal program funding, critical data for business owners and building an improved Pennsylvania,” said Micha Sims, a commission member who helped develop the \$12.8 million funding proposal.

Down Syndrome Abortion Bill

On May 14, the state House voted 117-76 to approve House Bill 321, that would prohibit the abortion of a child due to a diagnosis of possible Down syndrome.

Currently, a woman can obtain an abortion prior to 24 weeks gestational age for any reason, except if the sole reason is to select the sex of the child. HB321 seeks to expand that exception to prohibit aborting a child due solely to a diagnosis that the unborn child has Down syndrome.

Physicians who violate the prohibition would commit a third-degree felony and be guilty of "unprofessional conduct," with the physician's medical license subject to suspension or revocation. The bill would not penalize a woman given the diagnosis, should an abortion be performed, nor would it affect the woman from obtaining an abortion in cases of rape, incest or personal endangerment.

Opponents say the bill unnecessarily interferes with the doctor-patient relationship and it places an undo burden on families that have to raise a child with Down syndrome.

The General Assembly's Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) suggesting HB321 would be unconstitutional. But, supporters of the bill say the LRB's opinion does not constitute a binding legal opinion, as it were, the bureau prepared the legislation and didn't raise a constitutionality question when doing so.

HB321 now heads to the state Senate where it faces an uncertain future. Similar legislation approved by the House last session saw no further floor action in the Senate before the end of the session in November 2018. Even if the bill would win Senate approval, Gov. Tom Wolf has indicated he would veto the legislation should it get to his desk.

Pennsylvania Births Drop

The birth rate in Pennsylvania is dropping, as is the rate in the whole nation. It is the fourth year the number of births has fallen, the lowest since 1986, according to a provisional report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, released May 15.

In the U.S., in 2018 there were 2 percent fewer births than in 2017. Furthermore, births to teenagers reached a record low, with births to mothers ages 15 through 19 at 179,607, down 8 percent.

Pennsylvania mirrors the national trend, though slightly less pronounced—statistically in the middle of the 50 states.

Last year, Wyoming had the largest dip, while Maine, New Jersey and Missouri were the only three states to show an increase in the number of births.

Request for PA Troops at Border

On May 23, in a letter to Governor Tom Wolf, five Republican U.S. congressmen urged sending Pennsylvania National Guard troops to assist the Trump administration's efforts on the U.S.-Mexico border.

U.S. Reps. John Joyce, Guy Reschenthaler, Lloyd Smucker, Scott Perry and Mike Kelly said additional manpower is needed to address what they called the "security and humanitarian crisis" on the southern border. Shortfalls in resources and personnel have prompted the Department of Homeland Security to periodically request the military's help on the border.

"It is our position that Pennsylvania should lend to the President as many National Guard Troops as possible until the crisis is resolved," the congressmen wrote.

But, Gov. Wolf has “no plans” to send troops, said his spokesman J.J. Abbott. “There is no crisis at the border that the federal government cannot handle,” Mr. Abbott said. “This is hyperbole to further a political agenda that seeks to demonize peaceful asylum seekers, many of whom are children, elderly and women.”

Fantasy Sports Gambling After One Year

In May, the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board released totals from the first full year of regulated gambling on fantasy sports games.

The 12-month total for dollars played was \$22,542,688. This generated \$3.38 million in tax revenue for the state. According to a press release, tax revenue is derived through a 15% assessment on the adjusted revenue reported by the Fantasy Contest Operators and is deposited into the Commonwealth General Fund.

Gaming Board Expands Sports Betting Venues.

On May 15, the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board approved Mohegan Sun Pocono Casino, Luzerne County, for a sports betting certificate—this is betting on actual sports events, not fantasy sports. Mohegan is the eighth, out of 12 casinos in Pennsylvania, to be approved for a sports betting plan. The casino will need to meet certain conditions and go through a test period before the official launch.

Six casinos are currently offering in-house sports betting.

The Board also approved a license renewal for Parx Casino in Bucks County. Parx officials have offered in-house sports betting since January and are preparing to offer internet sports betting in June.

Republican Candidates Win Four Special Elections

During the May 21 primary elections, four special elections to fill empty offices were decided in favor of Republicans.

In the state 33rd Senatorial District, to replace Sen. Rich Alloway (R-Franklin), Doug Mastriano defeated Democrat Sarah Hammond. Mastriano is a retired U.S. Army colonel. Hammond is director of Community Development in Spring Grove Borough.

In the state 41st Senatorial District, to replace Sen. Don White (R-Indiana), Joe Pittman defeated Democrat Susan Boser. Pittman was Sen. White’s Chief of Staff. Boser is an Indiana University professor.

Once the victors are sworn into office the state Senate GOP will have a majority of 28 members, to the Democrats’ 22 members.

In the state 11th House of Representatives District, to replace Brian Ellis (R-Butler), Marci Mustello defeated Samuel Doctor.

In the state’s U.S. 12th Congressional District, to replace U.S. Rep. Tom Marino, state Rep. Fred Keller (R-Snyder) defeated Marc Friedenber.

The state GOP said the victories will strengthen the party’s efforts to advance their policies, while Democrats thanked their candidates for their commitment to run in what are fairly safe Republican districts.

Senators on State-Wide Poverty Listening Tour

On May 23, State Senator Art Haywood (D-Montgomery/Philadelphia), joined by State Senator Vincent Hughes (D-Philadelphia/Montgomery) began a statewide poverty listening tour in Lock Haven.

During the 5-stop tour, elected officials aim to hear about the effects of poverty across Pennsylvania. This is the first tour of its kind in recent history. The stops on the tour will include the Northeast, Central, Southeast, Northwest, and Western regions. Residents in city, small town, and rural areas are invited to share their experiences of living in poverty. “We have to continue to examine and find solutions to poverty and economic insecurity across the Commonwealth,” said Sen. Hughes.

Following the listening tour, a report of the findings will be compiled and shared with the public.

Fetterman Ends Marijuana Listening Tour

On May 19, Lt. Gov. John Fetterman concluded his statewide listening tour on the topic of legalizing marijuana. He was joined by lawmakers at the Temple University student center, in front of an audience of about 25 people.

Fetterman noted how Philadelphia has been very proactive in working toward decriminalizing marijuana. He observed that similar communities, that expect adult recreational use to become law, hadn't turned out as much for these events. "I think in communities where it's a foregone conclusion and people are majority for it, we noticed our attendance numbers dropped off versus other counties," he said.

The Lt. Gov. was joined by state Senator Sharif Street (D-Philadelphia) and Philadelphia House Democrats Danilo Burgos and Chris Rabb. Street has introduced legislation to legalize marijuana.

Governor: Pennsylvania Must Protect LGBTQ Citizens

On May 21, in a press release, Governor Tom Wolf and the Pennsylvania Commission on LGBTQ Affairs reaffirmed support for the LGBTQ community, denounced violence and urged approval of pending bills to provide LGBTQ citizens additional protections from hate crimes and discrimination.

"Despite the progress we have made towards equality, Pennsylvania remains glaringly behind our neighbors on equality and protections for LGBTQ citizens," Governor Wolf said. "Now more than ever, we must ensure protections for LGBTQ citizens... We owe it to our citizens to provide them the protections that ensure their safety."

143 Day

Governor Tom Wolf proclaimed May 23 to be "143 Day in Pennsylvania." May 23 is the 143rd day of the year. However the real meaning of the term relates to Fred Rogers. The day is meant to be a homage to him.

143 represents the phrase "I love you." One letter in "I," four in "love," and three in "you." This was a code used by Mr. Rogers.

The proclamation was coupled with a statewide campaign challenging Pennsylvanians to do one kind thing for a neighbor. The statewide day of kindness, publicized via a social media campaign and an online "kindness generator," was meant to serve as an antidote to the news cycle and "all the negativity that we surround ourselves with," said Carrie Fischer Lepore, the state's deputy secretary of marketing, tourism, and film.

Rally in Support of Hate Crimes Legislation

On May 6, lawmakers and citizens gathered in the main rotunda of the state Capitol to support action on Senate Bill 96 and House Bill 635, expanding the offense of ethnic intimidation.

The bills would amend the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes to include malicious intention against the actual or perceived ancestry, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender or gender identity of another individual or group of individuals.

Rep. Kevin Boyle (D-Philadelphia), prime sponsor of House Bill 635, stated, "We are here today to combat the growing epidemic of hate crimes."

Rep. Thomas Murt (R-Montgomery), the lead Republican sponsor of House Bill 635, noted that the bill includes gender identity as a hate crime. He said, "In 2019, here in the 21st century, Pennsylvania's lack of hate crime protection based on gender is embarrassing... It's time to pass this bill and afford respect, dignity and protection to all Pennsylvanians regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity."

Sen. Larry Farnese (D-Philadelphia), prime sponsor of Senate Bill 96, said, "Targeting and intimidating a member because they are part of a group is akin to targeting the entire group."

Sherri Landis, executive director of the ARC of Pennsylvania, commented, "For a long time, people with disabilities have been invisible when it comes to reporting about crime." She said, "The passage of House Bill 635 is a step in the right direction to ensure people with intellectual, developmental and physical disabilities will be heard and taken seriously when reporting any crime."

Michele Foster, president of Hadassah Greater Philadelphia, said she has been asked why hate crime is different than other crimes. Foster argued, “All crime and assault is terrible, but a hate crime is an attack that instills fear in your entire community.”

Legislator and Agency Secretary Promote Higher Minimum Wage

On May 23, Rep. Patty Kim (D-Dauphin) and Human Services Secretary Teresa Miller held a brief news conference outside the Elementary Coffee Company in Harrisburg to urge passage of legislation increasing the minimum wage in the commonwealth from the current \$7.25 per hour to \$15 per hour. Rep. Kim noted that the owner of the Elementary Coffee Company, Andrea Grove, pays her workers above the current minimum wage and supports the proposed increase to \$15.00.

Rep. Kim told reporters she “strongly believes we will see a change in the minimum wage.”

Sec. Miller observed, “At the end of the day, people shouldn’t be working full time and still have to be on our public assistance programs.” Pointing out her three-year-old daughter attends an early learning center, Sec. Miller said that “40 to 50 percent of folks who are helping our kids develop and grow are on our public assistance programs, and that’s a shame and should not be the case.”

Andrea Grove said, “Our business in general is based on equity, and I think if you are not thinking about your employees, you are really not taking that into account... When Elementary makes more, our employees make more, and that is how it should be.”

Suicide and Minimum Wage

An article in the April 30 edition of *The Washington Post* drew a relationship between suicide and the minimum wage.

Since 2000, the suicide rate in the United States has risen 35 percent, primarily because of the significant increase in such deaths among the white population. The article suggested a solution: pursue policies that improve the prospects of working-class Americans.

Researchers found that when the minimum wage in a state increased, or when states boosted a tax credit for working families, the suicide rate decreased. Raising the minimum wage and the earned-income tax credit (EITC) by 10 percent each could prevent about 1,230 suicides annually, according to a working paper circulated by the National Bureau of Economic Research this week.

Raising the minimum wage and increasing the tax credit help less-educated, low-wage workers who have been hit hardest by what are now known as “deaths of despair.”

A team of researchers from Berkeley identified states that had raised their minimum wage or EITC between 1999 and 2015. They also included states whose wages were affected by federal minimum-wage increases. The researchers then measured the change in the rate for such deaths before and after the policies took effect.

The number of suicides that weren’t related to drugs dropped noticeably. Among adults without a college education, increasing the EITC by 10 percent appears to have decreased non-drug suicides by about 5.5 percent. Raising the minimum wage by 10 percent reduced suicides by 3.6 percent.

A March study in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* also found that a one-dollar increase in the minimum wage was associated with a 1.9 percent decrease in suicides, and that the association was strongest between 2011 and 2016--the most recent year studied.

Suicide Prevention Task Force

On May 29, the Wolf administration announced the creation of a statewide Suicide Prevention Task Force to develop a suicide prevention plan and a long-term strategy to reduce suicide in the commonwealth.

The task force will include representatives from various state agencies and other stakeholders to develop a new suicide prevention plan. The purpose is to create long-term policy solutions and strategies to increase public awareness of resources for people in crisis or considering suicide, reducing stigma associated with suicide and mental illness, and reducing the suicide rate in Pennsylvania.

Teresa Miller, secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, said, “Suicide can affect people from all walks of life and all socioeconomic backgrounds... We are here today because we need to do more. We have an

obligation to provide resources and promote safe, supportive environments so people know there are places to turn to if they are in a crisis. Pennsylvania is in the process of updating its suicide prevention plan.”

Foster Care Awareness Month

On May 14, state Rep. Tarah Toohil (R-Luzerne) was joined by fellow lawmakers and advocates to promote Foster Care Awareness Month and House Bills 856, 1276, and 1326.

Rep. Toohil recognized May as Foster Care Awareness Month and highlight some of the good things that are happening as well as noting that changes are needed in the foster care system.

Speaker of the House Mike Turzai (R-Allegheny) said that foster youth aged 13 to 21 years old make up 33 percent of the foster population and are not getting the full support they need. He stressed the importance of providing foster youth with education to help them get family-sustaining jobs.

Rep. Bryan Cutler (R-Lancaster) said supporting and investing in foster kids results in good outcomes. He added that higher education and career and technical training is essential. He outlined HB 1276 and said it provides a support network for foster youth.

Rep. Karen Boback’s (R-Luzerne) noted that older foster kids are a “forgotten population” that have nowhere to go when they age out of the system. She pointed to HB 856 as an important step to providing financial support through subsidies and helping with transitioning for foster youth.

Rep. Toohil observed that of 8,000 transition-age youth, only 392 are taking college classes or career and technical training. She restated the need for the bills in supporting foster families and youth.

Rally in Support of Gun Rights

On May 6, Rep. Daryl Metcalfe (R-Butler) was joined by gun rights advocates and legislators to support the Second Amendment and oppose gun control legislation.

Kelly Ann Pidgeon, of Armed and Feminine LLC, pointed to guns as “the great equalizer” and highlighted several examples of rape and sexual assault statistics. She said, “Rendering women defenseless does not protect them.” She declared, “Educate, don’t legislate.”

Joshua Prince, chief counsel, of Firearms Industry Consulting Group, listed different examples of threats against gun rights and how they fought the infringement of rights through cases and settlements.

Rep. Kristin Phillips-Hill (R-York) affirmed that there are instances of “hatred and bigotry” against the right to worship in the US. She quoted the section addressing religious freedom in the Constitution of Pennsylvania and stated that citizens should be able to worship without fear. However, she said that states with the strictest gun laws have not protected places of worship.

Eric Pratt, executive director, Gun Owners of America, commented that freedoms are under attack. He emphasized that gun rights “come from God” and cannot be restricted. Pratt expressed opposition to red flag orders, saying they either do not allow for due process or the due process is too expensive.

Maj Toure, of Black Guns Matter, remarked that gun control limits everyone and that supporting the disarmament of minorities is racist.

Rep. Metcalfe encouraged those present to stand up for freedom and ensure legislators serve the people, not violate laws. He noted that the House has impeachment power and explained that he has released a memo for a resolution calling for the impeachment of Pittsburgh Mayor William Peduto. The mayor is guilty of violating the constitution, he argued, and he urged members of the legislature to support the resolution.

Gun Law Jurisdiction

Harrisburg has begun to react to a challenge over jurisdiction of gun control laws, instigated by local firearms restrictions passed by Pittsburgh’s city council, early in April.

The state Senate Local Government Committee advanced Senate Bill 531, confirming that the state has overriding authority to regulate guns and making “null and void” local regulations. Prime sponsor Sen. Wayne Langerholc, Jr.

(R-Cambria) said, “The sad thing is that we shouldn’t be enacting this legislation, because it’s clear already that this is not permitted.”

Both Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto and Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney asked the committee not to advance the bill.

State Rep. Mark Keller (R-Perry) introduced House Bill 1066, similar to Langerholc’s. He says it is an effort to ensure current laws are properly enforced. The bill is currently in the House Judiciary Committee.

Gov. Tom Wolf, who supports further gun control, has promised to veto either bill.

On the other hand, some Democrats are preparing bills to give cities greater latitude to pass gun measures appropriate to their particular needs and circumstances. Rep. Dan Frankel (D-Allegheny) is preparing legislation to ease the prohibition on municipal gun regulations from state law.

Sen. Maria Collett (D-Montgomery) intends to introduce a bill that would give municipalities greater control over guns brought onto their properties.

Pennsylvania Fails on Chesapeake Bay Commitment

On May 28, Chesapeake Bay Foundation President William C. Baker reported that Pennsylvania has failed to uphold its promise to reduce pollution to surface and ground waters as determined by the Clean Water Blueprint.

The Clean Water Blueprint was established in 2010 with the intention of restoring the Chesapeake Bay. It includes pollution limits, watershed implementation plans, and two-year goals called milestones. Pennsylvania, five other states and the District of Columbia are members of the Blueprint partnership. Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia account for 85 percent of the watershed and are responsible for 90 percent of the pollution in the bay.

Baker warned that Pennsylvania’s failure will be the partnership’s failure. He said, “Since the commonwealth of Pennsylvania first issued its first two-year plan in 2009, it has repeatedly failed to meet its goals.” He also noted that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has failed to do its job of enforcing the blueprint.

Baker asserted that while all states have come up short, Pennsylvania stands out as falling far short. He explained that the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the other partners cannot let one state stand in the way of finishing the job of saving the bay. They might be forced to consider litigation.

Pennsylvania Sues Opioid Maker

On May 14, state Attorney General Josh Shapiro unveiled a lawsuit against Purdue Pharma, seeking damages. The lawsuit accuses Purdue, the maker of OxyContin, of flooding the state’s medical practitioners with sales representatives—called “detailers”—making deceptive and false claims.

Purdue vigorously denied the allegations.

The Attorney General said that the 121-page complaint was filed on May 2. The suit appeals to consumer protection and unfair trade practices laws, maintaining that the maker of OxyContin “created the opioid epidemic that is killing Pennsylvanians.” It says Purdue has sold 200 million doses of OxyContin to Pennsylvanians since 2007.

The state experienced 5,388 drug overdose deaths in 2017. Shapiro set the average economic loss per death at \$9.6 million. He cites the economic cost to the state at \$142 billion from 2012 through 2016. But, Shapiro said that the dollars barely begin to describe the cost.

Dai Morgan