

Representative Kate Harper

Pennsylvania House District 61



Summary

Legislative Biography

As State Representative of the 61st Legislative District, Kate M. Harper is focused on preserving the environment, improving transportation infrastructure and protecting public safety.

Kate was appointed to a second term as chairman of the House Local Government Committee for the 2017-18 legislative session. She brings a wealth of experience to this position, having served as a township supervisor for more than a decade in Lower Gwynedd Township. She also continues to serve as a solicitor to local governments. Kate previously served as chairman of the House Children and Youth and the Ethics committees.

Kate also was appointed to the Local Government Commission, a bipartisan legislative service agency focused on research and legislation that will enable local governments to be more effective and efficient in providing services.

This session, she also will continue her service on the House Transportation Committee, working to ensure the safety and efficiency of our highways, bridges and mass transit systems.

In the 2015-16 Legislative Session, Kate sponsored legislation to help local government entities cope with a tough economy by expanding their investment options. Act 10 of 2016 authorizes local government entities to invest in common, high-quality money market instruments, such as repurchase agreements, commercial paper, negotiable certificates of deposit and bankers' acceptances.

During the 2013-14 session, Kate's legislation to help make counseling and other mental health services more accessible to veterans and their family members was signed into law. The idea for the legislation came from a doctor in Blue Bell who was not permitted, under prior state law, to volunteer to provide free mental health services to military personnel and their families through the national "Give an Hour" program because the services are provided outside of a clinic setting.

She also authored legislation to help communities deal with flooding concerns by authorizing new or existing municipal authorities to undertake storm water planning, management and implementation. Through her work as Local Government Committee chairman, an identical bill introduced in the Senate ultimately became law.

Kate continues to be a leader for the environment. She played a key role in the writing of impact fee legislation (Act 13 of 2012) to direct a portion of funding generated from natural gas drilling in the Commonwealth to statewide environmental programs, including the Hazardous Sites Cleanup Fund and Environmental Stewardship Fund. She has been a vocal proponent of preserving and enhancing the state’s Growing Greener program, first by extending the fee on trash sent to landfills (Act 90 of 2002) to support environmental initiatives and then by serving as the prime architect of the Growing Greener II initiative (Act 1 of 2005), which, after overwhelming approval by Pennsylvania’s voters in a referendum made \$625 million in funding available for farmland preservation, open space and parks, and environmental projects. The tipping fee on trash dumped at landfills pays back the bonds. Kate has also been a vocal defender and protector of the Keystone Recreation, Parks and Conservation Fund, which supports open space, historic preservation and improvements to state parks and forests.

[Legislative Biography, [Accessed 7.30.18](#)]

ALEC membership/ties

- Confirmed a legislator with ALEC ties by Keystone Progress

ALEC model legislation authored/sponsored

Bill Title/Number	ALEC Model Bill	Sponsored/Authorred
HB 1349 (2011)	Regulatory Flexibility Act	Voted Yea
HB 934 (2011)	Voter ID Act	Voted Yea
HB 1950 Act 13 (2011)	Joint and Several Liability Act	Voted Yea
SB 1131 (2011)	Joint and Several Liability Act	Voted Yea

In 2011, Representative Kate Harper supported a bill to change state rulemaking by creating procedures to make it harder to impose regulations affecting small business. In 2011, Representative Kate Harper supported HB 1349, the Regulatory Flexibility Act. According to the Center for Media and Democracy, HB 1349 is similar to the ALEC “Regulatory Flexibility Act” model bill. This ALEC model legislation promotes deregulation "by creating procedures to analyze the availability of more flexible regulatory approaches for small business." It requires that agencies review all regulations to make sure they do not impose a disproportionate burden on small business. It also allows small businesses to seek judicial review of agency actions that don't comply with this law [Center for Media and

Democracy, [Regulatory Flexibility Act Exposed](#); HB [1349](#), Bill passed unanimously in House, [6/21/2012](#) and Senate, [6/19/2012](#)]

In 2011, Representative Kate Harper supported Pennsylvania's Voter ID Law. In 2011, Representative Kate Harper supported a bill to require voters to present photo ID in order to vote. According to Andy Hoover, legislative director of the ACLU of Pennsylvania, "A vote for this bill is a vote to disenfranchise U.S. citizens. Research indicates that as much as 11 percent of U.S. citizens do not have government-issued photo identification. But they have the right to vote. Why is the state House afraid of the voters?" A 2006 survey by the Brennan Center at New York University School of Law found that 11 percent of U.S. citizens do not have the type of identification required by House Bill 934. The NYU survey found that those without ID are disproportionately citizens over the age of 65, citizens who are African-Americans, and citizens who earn less than \$35,000 annually. State Senator Daylin Leach told North Penn Live that "the bill will disenfranchise 700,000 currently eligible voters. Eleven percent of voters nationwide do not have the sort of photo ID that would be required to vote", he said. Supporters of HB 934 indicated no credible evidence of voter impersonation fraud. [ACLU Pennsylvania, [6/23/2011](#); North Penn Live; [3/16/2012](#); HB [934](#), Bill passed in the House 134-88, [3/14/2012](#), and passed in the Senate 26-23, [3/7/2012](#)]

In 2011, Representative Kate Harper sponsored a bill that preempts local zoning authority from banning fracking. Rep. Harper sponsored HB 1950, (ACT 13), which preempted local laws that banned fracking. According to Desmogblog, Act 13 would have stripped away local zoning laws, eliminated the legal concept of a Home Rule Charter, limited private property rights, and in the process, completely disempowered town, city, municipal and county governments, particularly when it comes to shale gas development. Act 13 – pejoratively referred to as "the Nation's Worst Corporate Giveaway" by *AlterNet* reporter Steven Rosenfeld – would have ended local democracy as we know it in Pennsylvania. Act 13 also reflects the writing of the ALEC model bill: "Granting the Authority of Rural Counties to Transition to Decentralized Land Use Regulation." After the bill's enactment, the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court ruled PA Act 13 unconstitutional on July 26th, 2012. [Desmogblog, [7/27/2012](#); Center for Media and Democracy; [Granting the Authority of Rural Counties to Transition to Decentralized Land Use Regulation Exposed](#); HB [1950](#), Bill passed in the House 101-90, [2/8/2012](#), and in the Senate 31-19, [2/7/2012](#)]

In 2011, Representative Kate Harper supported a bill that provides that each defendant is liable only for damages in direct proportion to that defendant's fault. In 2011, Representative Harper voted for SB 1131, which, according to the Center for Media and Democracy, is similar to the ALEC "Joint and Several Liability Act" model bill. This ALEC model legislation is designed to eliminate joint and several liability meaning that corporations would no longer be jointly liable for injuries caused by the products they manufacture or sell, along the chain of distribution. The bill would allow joint liability only if the companies deliberately conspired to commit a tort or injury against an American. Thus, this so-called model bill would reduce the liability of companies that sell a product that injures an American, by abolishing the legal doctrine of "joint" liability. This type of model legislation that eliminates joint liability except in unusual cases gives a significant advantage to corporations. In a comparative negligence state, like Wisconsin, a plaintiff could be 20% at fault and four defendants could each be 16% at fault but escape liability. [Center for Media and Democracy, [Joint and Several Liability Act Exposed](#); SB [1131](#), Bill passed 116-83 in House, [6/27/2011](#) and 32-18 in the Senate, [6/21/2011](#)]

Additional Hits

In 2014, Kate Harper sponsored a bill that criminalizes the possession of a car with secret compartments. In 2014, Rep. Kate Harper sponsored HB 1537 that would make it illegal to have a car with secret compartments. If the bill becomes law, anyone caught with such compartments could be charged with a first-degree misdemeanor and have their vehicle seized by police — even if the compartments hold nothing but air." Jonathan Turley, a law professor at George Washington University, stated this type of legislation "is part of the expanding criminalization

of America where virtually any act can be charged as a crime by police.” In Pennsylvania, police do not need a warrant to search a vehicle for illegal substance; this bill would take that one step further, enabling police to press charges, even in the absence of illegal substances [HB 1537, Laid on table, 6.23.18; Philly, [5.14.14](#)]