



Margaret Rose Henry

State Senator - Second District

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Friends and neighbors,

In 1994, I became the first woman of color elected to the Delaware State Senate. I had never been a politician before—my career had been spent in nonprofits that focused on the needs of children, women, seniors, and working families. I had been shaped by my childhood in Rayne, Louisiana, a town where the median family income is less than half of Delaware's. I was shaped by my experience as a black woman in the workforce and as a divorced mother raising two children. I was shaped by what I saw average people go through when society left them behind.

I came to public service because I had seen firsthand what it meant to be in poverty. I knew what it was to live on the margins of society. I wanted to be a fighter for people who couldn't make their voices heard. It's never been easy, but I've been steadfast in the fight for women's rights, affordable housing, coverage for mental health and prescription drugs, child support, compassionate drug policy and tax policy that supports the working class. I've fought against domestic violence, child abuse, and criminal justice policy that has decimated entire communities. I continue to fight for a school system that provides truly equal opportunity to all children, including thousands in Wilmington who have been failed by society time and again.

Many of these fights began before I came to the Senate. Each of them will continue after I leave. But after 23 years, I have decided that it's time for me to allow others to carry these causes forward. For that reason, I will not be seeking re-election in 2018.

This was a decision I reached with enormous difficulty. I've spent my life working on behalf of other people, and I've treasured that work. But, since joining the Senate I've become a grandmother, and my time with my family becomes more precious with each passing year. And I've seen the growth of a generation of leaders who give me hope for a brighter future. It's time to allow them to lead.

A final note to my constituents and neighbors: I'm not leaving yet. I plan to use each day left in my term serving my district and fighting for the causes I hold dear. I will be here for you as long as I am your senator, and well after. I am grateful beyond words for your support and friendship over the years.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Rose Henry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sen. Margaret Rose Henry
Senate Majority Leader – 2nd District

Legislative Updates

SB 24 - Passed

While we continue to debate the full legalization of marijuana, I sponsored a bill that made some very important and urgent updates to our medical marijuana rules. Primarily, SB 24 removed the provision that required a prescribing physician to also be a licensed psychiatrist in order to write a prescription for a patient suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).



PTSD is not limited to veterans, but as many as one in five veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from PTSD, and advocates say that veteran suicides now far outnumber deaths in combat. There's no cure for PTSD, but patients point to medical marijuana as a safe, effective, non-addictive alternative to powerful drug cocktails that can have extreme side effects or serve as a gateway to opiates. The bill passed unanimously in the Senate, overwhelmingly in the House, and was signed into law by Gov. Carney in mid-July. I am hopeful that our veterans and other Delawareans suffering from PTSD will have an easier time accessing treatment now and I thank my colleagues in the General Assembly as well as Gov. Carney for helping me get this law enacted.

SB 102 - Passed

In August, Gov. Carney signed another bill I sponsored – Senate Bill 102. SB 102 builds on amazing work by groups like the Beau Biden Foundation for the Protection of Children – who have already made Delaware best in the US in terms of adults trained to detect abuse, per capita – by providing a unified training to public and charter school employees on non-academic issues facing students. These educators are more active in their students' lives than almost anybody else, excluding parents. Ensuring that these school employees can spot signs of bullying, dating violence, abuse at home, and other trauma will help keep our kids safe.

SB 81 - Pending

On average, an incarcerated parent with a child support order faces nearly \$20,000 in child support debt on the day they are released, almost double the average for inmates on their first day in prison. That mounting debt seriously undermines the incarcerated parent's ability to transition back into a working member of society once released. This oversight in our law does n't help the incarcerated parent, the custodial relative, or the child, and drives recidivism in our prisons.

I sponsored a bill last May to establish a fair compromise on the issue. SB 81 would suspend payments for parents with a child support order that are incarcerated or involuntarily committed longer than 180 days and can prove that they do not have the means to make payments. Instead, it orders them to make a minimum payment, as calculated by the Family Court. Payments on the original debt resume within a month of release. This rule will not apply to any inmate that is guilty of domestic violence towards the custodial relative or child or is incarcerated for failure to comply with an order to pay child support.

Currently, parents that find themselves in this situation are not making full payments anyway – they can't – and their debt builds and builds and, eventually, is dropped on them on their first day back in society. That can and should be addressed if we want to build healthy communities, encourage strong family bonds, and help former inmates rejoin the workforce and stay out of prison. I think this bill does that in a fair and productive way and I look forward to working with my colleagues in the House and Senate to get this bill passed next session.



Community Updates

Community Shout Out

I want to say thank you to M/Cpl. Tracey Duffy, who works tirelessly for families in our community. She reached out to me about the speed bumps in Edgemoor Gardens, which she said were falling apart and no longer did enough to keep kids in that neighborhood safe. Thanks to her concern and her resolve to take action, we managed to convince DelDOT to repair those speed bumps. Work is expected to begin soon.

Safe Routes to Schools

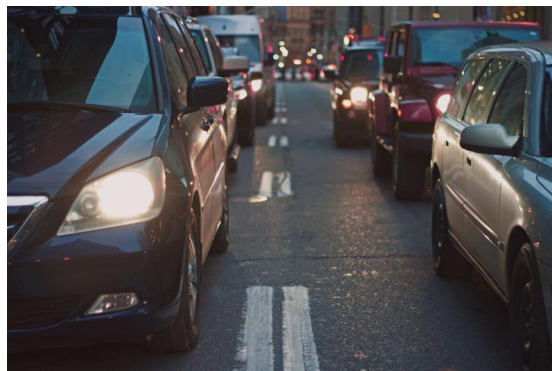
Rep. Johnson and I worked together to secure \$50,000 for Eisenberg Elementary and McCullough Middle's Safe Routes to School Programs. These programs will make improvements to the transportation infrastructure around both schools to encourage more children to walk and bicycle to school, and to make it safer for those who already do. Key projects are likely to include the addition of bike racks at both schools, and a safer pedestrian crossing of Memorial Drive.

Route 9 Library and Innovation Center

After years of hard work, residents in New Castle's Route 9 Corridor celebrated the opening of a brand new, state-of-the-art library in September. The library features so many opportunities for Delawareans young and old to learn, meet, and grow. Besides just being a place where locals can borrow a book or find some quiet space, the library also features wi-fi, computers, media rooms, meeting spaces, classrooms, and a whole host of other modern features that were inspired by some of the world's best libraries. Make no mistake, this \$30 million facility is one of the best in the region and I am thrilled to see such an addition to the neighborhoods that surround it.

DelDOT Updates

- Repairs to the 141-I95 interchange are continuing, with a target completion date set for June of 2018.
- The Wilmington Riverwalk, which winds a path along the Christina river, will be extended across the river and link to the Jack A. Markell trail thanks to a new walking and biking bridge set to be completed next summer. The bridge can be seen from I-95. Additional plans to connect Southbridge to the trail are in the design phase.



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