



## **News for Immediate Release**

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### **Governor Corbett, along with Legislators and Education and Business Leaders, Discuss Passport for Learning Block Grant Program**

**Harrisburg** – Governor Tom Corbett, joined by members of the General Assembly, along with education and business leaders, talked today about reinvesting proceeds from the sale of the state liquor store system into an educational block grant for Pennsylvania's schools.

This Passport for Learning Block Grant is in addition to Corbett's proposed \$90 million increase in the upcoming budget's Basic Education Funding line item. This year's proposed \$5.5 billion state investment is the highest in state history.

"Let's get Pennsylvania out of this outdated system of selling alcohol once and for all, and reinvest the proceeds into Pennsylvania's future - our children," Corbett said. "Selling liquor is not a core function of government; education is."

The governor is proposing to use the \$1 billion in proceeds from the sale of the state's liquor system to create the Passport for Learning Block Grant, to be divided among Pennsylvania's school districts over four years.

The Passport for Learning will offer funds in four, student-focused, initiatives: school safety, "Ready by 3," individualized learning programs, and science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs.

Enhancing access to STEM course work and programs is critical to preparing today's students for the jobs of tomorrow. Public schools could invest in programs that support STEM in grades 6-12, including career exploration activities, opportunities for technical skill attainment and partnerships with postsecondary education and training programs.

"Government not only needs to provide for an education for our young people, it needs to provide a quality education that gets them ready for the careers of this new century," Corbett said. "More money into STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics – addresses the needs of our growing economy but also, more importantly, the needs of every young person to have a bright future in a vibrant state."

"STEM-related jobs are critical to the future of Pennsylvania's economy," Secretary of Education Ron Tomalis said. "Governor Corbett's \$1 billion, four-year investment in high-quality STEM course work and programs will provide Pennsylvania's

students the opportunity to obtain the necessary academic credentials and skill set to be successful after high school. This significant investment affirms the Governor's commitment to ensuring a bright future is in reach for students."

Two other areas of the Passport for Learning focus on elementary education and making sure Pennsylvania children start their educational path on solid footing in the subjects of reading and math.

"Ready by 3" is an initiative the governor believes is critical to a solid academic foundation early in a student's education. The focus is to ensure that students are performing at grade level by third grade, based on the Pennsylvania Common Core Academic Standards. Schools could invest in quality kindergarten programs and enrichment programs that promote academic achievement in elementary reading and math.

Recognizing that students learn differently and at their own pace, Corbett's proposal also includes an initiative for a self-paced, customized learning plan that would be based on a student's proficiency in academic standards. Schools could use grant funds to finance start-up costs to implement Competency-Based Education programs that move away from seat-time requirements to a model that is based on a student's mastery of specific course content.

The fourth element of the Passport for Learning will help school districts and parents feel safer about the environment where their children spend the greater part of the day. Children cannot succeed where they don't feel safe.

In January, Governor Corbett met with school superintendents, teachers and security personnel to listen to their thoughts about and suggestions for improving school safety.

"With different needs across the state, each district should determine where investments should be made," Corbett said.

Funds could be used for school safety and security efforts, including training for employees, enhanced security measures and partnerships with local law enforcement.

The governor was joined today by Sen. Randy Vulackovich, (R-Allegheny); Sen. John Eichelberger, (R-Blair); Sen. Mike Waugh, (R-York); Sen. Bob Mensch (R-Montgomery); Sen. Scott Hutchinson (R-Venango) Rep. Mike Turzai, (R-Allegheny); Rep. Seth Grove, (R-York); Rep. Ryan Aument, (R-Lancaster); Rep. Rosemarie Swanger, (R-Lebanon); Rep. Rick Saccone, (R-Allegheny); Rep. Stephen Bloom, (R-Cumberland); Rep. Brian Ellis, (R-Butler); Rep. Sue Helm, (R-Dauphin); Rep. Tarah Toohil, (R-Luzerne); Rep. Stan Saylor, (R-York); Rep. Dan Moul, (R-Adams); Rep. Becky Corbin (R-Chester); Rep. John Lawrence (R-Chester); Rep. Hal English (R-Allegheny); Rep. Eli Evankovich, (R-Westmoreland); Rep. John Taylor, (R-Philadelphia); Rep. Mike Regan, (R-York); Rep. Jim Christiana, (R-Beaver); Rep.

Glenn Grell, (R-Cumberland); Rep. Scot Petri, (R-Bucks); Rep. Sheryl Delozier, (R-Cumberland); and Rep. David Reed, (R-Indiana).

Corbett was also joined by dozens of education leaders from all across the state, including Brian Earley, president of the Hazelton School District school board and Barbara Geistwhite, member, Cumberland Valley School District, who both spoke at the event.

For more information, visit [www.pa.gov](http://www.pa.gov).

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