

**DOYLE HEFFLEY, MEMBER
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House of Representatives

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg

AMERICAN LEGION BUILDING
3 WEST RIDGE STREET
LANSFORD, PA 18232
WEDNESDAY 10 A.M. TO 2 P.M.

WEATHERLY BOROUGH OFFICE
10 WILBUR ST.
WEATHERLY, PA 18255
FIRST THURSDAY 10 A.M. TO 2 P.M.

COMMITTEES:

APPROPRIATIONS
HUMAN SERVICES
TOURISM &

RECREATIONAL DEVELOPEMENT
TRANSPORTATION

December 10, 2020

To the Honorable Gov. Tom Wolf:

After listening to your December 10 press briefing, I became very concerned when you mentioned further lockdown measures. After seeing the damage that your previous shutdown orders have had on people and employers (both large and small businesses) in the spring, it is hard to imagine another unilateral order of similar magnitude would have a different outcome.

Our Commonwealth and its citizens are still struggling to recover from your first lockdown order. People are losing their jobs because businesses are losing revenue and shuttering under current occupancy limits – all while absorbing the added costs of mitigation efforts recommended by the CDC during this pandemic.

A substantial number of individuals that businesses were forced to lay off are still waiting to hear about their unemployment benefits because they have been unable to contact the Unemployment Compensation service centers since the beginning of this pandemic. The wide-ranging and needlessly complicated lockdown has caused immense stress to the people of Pennsylvania and the systems on which those citizens have been forced to rely.

The first set of stay-at-home orders was overly confusing, arbitrary and lacked proper input from the Legislature. The list of “essential businesses” did not follow the federal recommendations that other states used. The communication between your office and members of the General Assembly was extremely limited on these orders and it led to confusion with the public and no way for us, as representatives of the people, to explain why such orders were given. When a bipartisan majority of the House of Representatives tried to help businesses by relaxing restrictions on restaurants and giving schools the ability to decide whether to have sports and extracurricular events, you vetoed both bills. This was just another action showing your intent of using unilateral action instead of working with the rest of the General Assembly.

I am particularly concerned about the impact of additional shutdowns on Pennsylvania's Unemployment Compensation system. The lack of communication from your administration also put the Department of Labor and Industry in an impossible situation. It was tasked to help the millions of Pennsylvanians that would come to depend on unemployment benefits over the next few weeks and months. Every single state representative and senator has heard the calls from desperate constituents who cannot get in touch with the unemployment service centers – and many who have still not received a determination on their unemployment claim after months of waiting.

Many people are running out of money and food, and their bills are piling up. The department has worked to bring the backlog of claims down, but the response time is still far too long for those who are depending on the benefits. As seasonal unemployment claims naturally pick up, the last thing that people need is to be thrown back into an unemployment system that is incapable of handling the current workload.

I understand the current situation with COVID-19 is becoming more stressful on our health care system because of the increased case numbers. I hope you choose to work with the Legislature in figuring out a response to this situation. I urge you to not take it upon yourself to issue broad-based shutdowns of our businesses and peoples' livelihoods again. Please consider the long-reaching consequences of those actions on our citizens, businesses and our Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doyle Heffley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Doyle M. Heffley
State Representative
122nd Legislative District