

CHILD SEX ABUSE

A chance 'to seek justice'

Teplitz to offer legislation, mirroring a House bill, that would extend the statute of limitations for child sex abuse victims.

BY JAN MURPHY
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HARRISBURG • Rep. Mark Rozzi went to the Capitol on Wednesday to talk about justice for child abuse victims after a restless night of repeatedly reliving the nightmare of sexual abuse he suffered as a boy at the hands of a Roman Catholic priest.

The 42-year-old Berks County Democrat said he would like to close that chapter of his life that he was unable to talk publicly about until four years ago but that until he feels justice is served, he can't.

Pennsylvania allows child sex abuse victims until age 30 to bring civil claims against their abusers.

But victims operate on their own time schedule as to when they are ready to open up about the abuse they experienced, Rozzi said. Often, he said, it is not until they aged out of the opportunity to seek justice through civil litigation.

"We just want to be given a chance to have our voices heard in a court of law and to expose the perpetrator," Rozzi said. "I think the community has a right to know that these men and women are still out there."

He participated in a news conference to announce that legislation will be introduced by Sen. Rob Teplitz, D-Dauphin County, that mirrors legislation already introduced in the House by Rep. Mike McGeehan, D-Philadelphia.

An attempt was made in the spring in the House to address the issue, but it never was put to a vote by the full House.

Teplitz's bill, like the House bills, would open a two-year window for child sexual abuse victims to file civil lawsuits or revive prior civil suits that were dis-



MARK PYNES, PennLive, 2012

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SEN. ROB TEPLITZ, D-Dauphin County

missed against their abuser.

It also would raise the age limit, giving child sex abuse victims until age 50 to file a civil suit against their abusers, bringing it in line with the state's age limit of adult victims for bringing criminal charges in these cases.

The legislation also eliminates the sovereign-immunity defense that protects public officials and institutions in these cases.

"Our bills would give victims of sexual abuse an opportunity to speak up and seek justice," Teplitz said. "There's no guarantee as to what would happen in the courtroom when they file that civil suit, but we are giving them that opportunity to have that day in court."

However, Rep. Ron Marsico, R-Lower Paxton Twp., chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, maintains it's unconstitutional.

Earlier this year, Marsico said, "While it might feel satisfying to pass a bill that includes a window, any such

provision would simply give false hopes to a victim whose civil claim has been barred by the existing statute of limitations because it would later be declared unconstitutional by the courts."

Rozzi doesn't accept that argument. He called it a smoke-screen. He said that is a matter for the courts to decide.

The Insurance Federation of Pennsylvania also opposes the legislation, saying it exposes potential suspects and institutions to financial liability for allegations for which they might have little supporting evidence. Besides that, the federation also says it is unfair to insurers to change deadlines after they've expired.

The Pennsylvania Catholic Conference also stands in opposition. It points out that allowing lawsuits to be filed for sexual abuse cases 30 to 50 years after the fact "wouldn't put one perpetrator in jail."

The conference's spokeswoman, Amy Hill, said the Senate is considering sweeping reforms recommended by the Task Force for Child Protection to help protect children from sexual abuse.

While that same task force did not address the statute-of-limitations, Hill said it did point out that the task force acknowledged that changes to the statute of limitations could create "the potential for staleness of evidence and possible constitutional concerns."

Rozzi becomes infuriated by his church's arguments against opening a window for civil charges to be filed in cases of past sexual abuse.

"If the church would have done what it was originally supposed to do when they knew the priests were sexually abused children and exposed them to the police department instead of moving them around, those priests would be in jail and we would not be in this position ... this is the only recourse we have," he said.

CAPITOL ROUNDUP

21 couples file challenge to gay-marriage law

HARRISBURG • Twenty-one same-sex couples filed suit Wednesday seeking to overturn the state's gay-marriage ban on the grounds that it's unconstitutional.

The state Commonwealth Court lawsuit parallels a separate challenge to the law filed two months ago in federal court by the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania.

All of the plaintiff couples in the state action were married with licenses from a Montgomery County court clerk who began issuing them after Democratic state Attorney General Kathleen Kane concluded the law was unconstitutional and said she refused to defend it in federal court.

Both challenges argue that the law, which defines marriage as the union of "one man and one woman," violates the U.S. Constitution, but Wednesday's filing claims that it also violates the state constitution.

Bills to shrink Legislature advance

HARRISBURG • After seeing his proposal to amend the state Constitution to shrink both chambers of the General Assembly pass the House only to die in the Senate last session, state House Speaker Sam Smith is trying again, using a different approach.

Rather than having one bill call for shrinking both chambers, Smith, R-Jefferson County, has introduced two bills, one dealing with the House and another addressing the Senate. He hopes this might improve their

chances of getting Senate consideration.

Both won the House State Government Committee's approval Tuesday after a lengthy debate on the pros and cons of cutting the chambers' size by a quarter. Now the bills are in a position to be considered by the full House this fall.

House Bill 1716 would amend the Constitu-

tion to reduce the size of the Senate to 38 seats, from 50. House Bill 1234 would cut the House to 153 seats from the current 203. The changes would not take effect until after the 2020 reapportionment.

Lawmaker calls for website on school spending

HARRISBURG • Citing the charges filed against officials associated with the Pennsylvania Cyber Charter Schools as a call for action, Rep. Jim Christiana, R-Beaver County, wants public schools to be more transparent about how they handle taxpayer dollars.

Christiana is proposing legislation that would create a SchoolWatch website that would allow the public to sift through district and building-level data detailing revenues and expenditures.

"We need to implement this database to open our school district budgets to the penetrating eyes of the public," he said at a Capitol news conference Tuesday. "Because when school officials know when people are watching, wasteful spending will be exposed, prevented and hopefully stopped. It could change the behaviors of school officials."

The indictment of the Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School's founder and former CEO, Nick Trombetta, on charges of siphoning \$8 million from the school prompted Christiana to call on his legislative colleagues to make passage of this legislation a priority. Trombetta has pleaded not guilty.

The site would provide information for schools in a uniform way to make it easy for the public to use and be able to compare schools and districts.

Gingrich named chairwoman of gaming panel

HARRISBURG • It's her first appointment to chair a state House committee, and Rep. Maureen Gingrich, R-Cleona, said she is up to the task of taking over the leadership post on the House Gaming Oversight Committee.

House Speaker Sam Smith announced her appointment Tuesday, along with naming Rep. Nicholas Micozzie,

R-Delaware County, as chairman of the House Transportation Committee and Rep. Tina Pickett, R-Bradford County, as chairwoman of the House Insurance Committee. Pickett had been chairman of the Gaming Oversight Committee.

The Gaming Oversight Committee monitors the state's gambling industry, which includes 12 operating casinos that generated more than \$1.4 billion in tax revenue last year. It vets legislation related to gambling before it reaches the House floor.

— Compiled by Jan Murphy and The Associated Press

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Gerald Turner, General Manager of the McCafferty Auto Group located at 6320 Carlisle Pike in Mechanicsburg, PA 17050 has announced a sale on Saturday, September 28th at 9:30 AM. During this sale, a select pre-owned vehicle will be sold for as low as \$999. Plus, 32 vehicles priced under \$9,900 will be available.

This sale is being brought back by popular demand during this difficult economic climate. Cars will be clearly marked, so come early for the best selection. This is a one-of-a-kind, ONE DAY ONLY sale designed to get the local community driving again.

"We're helping the local economy in 2013 by helping those people that just can't

afford a new car right now," says Turner.

McCafferty Auto Group's pre-owned inventory levels need to be reduced to make room for the arrival of new models. As a result, both McCafferty Ford and McCafferty Kia are selling these additional pre-owned vehicles to the public at drastic discounts in an attempt to help their core customers get back on the road.

In addition to this huge variety of pre-owned vehicles, McCafferty Auto Group features new Ford and Kia vehicles. Gerald Turner believes reviving the economy starts at home, and changing things locally will lead to changing things nationally. In addition to McCafferty Auto Group's extra inventory, additional vehicles have been acquired at incredible

prices from various banks, repossession companies, auto auctions, credit unions, lease companies, and rental companies for this sale. The sale will make select pre-owned vehicles available for as low as \$999, prices not normally offered to the general public. According to Gerald Turner, "We want to give our customers a reason to believe in the local economy again. Someone has to look out for their best interests."

Customers are encouraged to arrive as early as 9:00 AM to inspect the entire inventory and find the car that is right for them. Every vehicle will be cleaned and fully prepared for instant delivery. At 9:30 AM, Mr. Turner and his team will mark the special sale price on each and every vehicle.

Because customers are feeling the credit crunch right now, Turner has given the dealerships' financing managers the resources necessary to have every customer's credit application accepted. McCafferty Auto Group has \$10,000,000 in lending power, the result of many years of strong relationships with the area's leading lenders. This means that customers with a "less than perfect" credit history can have the opportunity to drive home a quality pre-owned car, truck, or SUV home by lunch time on Saturday.

This special ONE DAY ONLY

sale will be held at McCafferty Ford and Kia, Carlisle Pike, Mechanicsburg, PA on September 28th at 9:30 AM. Pre-owned vehicles will be sold for as low as \$999, with 32 vehicles priced under \$9,900.

Customers are encouraged to arrive as early as 9:00 AM for the start of inspection. Incredible sale prices, starting as low as \$999, will be posted no later than 9:30 AM. All vehicles will be sold on a first-come, first-served basis. McCafferty Auto Group is expecting a high volume of customers for this sale, so be sure to reserve your spot early. Customers wishing to trade-in a vehicle are asked to bring their title or payment book for immediate delivery. McCafferty Auto Group will even pay off your trade-in in full, no matter how much you still owe on it.†

Most of these surplus pre-owned vehicles will get sent directly to auto auctions for

liquidation. So, if anyone has been thinking about purchasing a quality, clean, dependable pre-owned car, truck, van or sport utility vehicle, do not miss this special ONE DAY ONLY sale.

For more information about this sale and directions to the dealerships, please visit www.preownedonthepike.com or call: 888-262-0289.



One day only, Saturday, September 28th. *See dealer for details. Prior sales excluded. Cannot be combined with other offers. †Vehicle subject to inspection. Less wear and tear. Negative equity carries forward. *\$999 vehicle: 1997 Chrysler Concorde LXi. Stk: MF3946A. 106k Miles.