



Pennsylvania Statewide

A Governor Appointed Leadership Organization of People with Disabilities

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Governor Rendell Signs Landmark Visitability Legislation

New tax credit will increase access to homes of family, friends and neighbors for people with disabilities

HARRISBURG, PA, October 30, 2006 – The Pennsylvania Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) today praised Governor Rendell and the Legislature for making Pennsylvania the first state in the nation with a tax credit for people who make their homes accessible to visitors with disabilities.

During a ceremony at the Kingsley Center in Pittsburgh on Saturday, Oct. 28 Governor Rendell signed into law Senate Bill 1158 which creates the Residential Visitability Design Tax Credit Act. The legislation, sponsored by Sens. James Ferlo (D-Allegheny) and James Rhoades (R-Schuylkill), unanimously passed the Pennsylvania Senate and House.

“This is a tremendous victory for all Pennsylvanians,” John Tague Jr., Chairman of the PASILC said. “Everyone who was involved in helping to get this legislation passed should be proud, but the hard work is just beginning. We need to urge the thousands of local elected officials in every county, municipality and school district to enact the tax credit in their community. In addition, we must educate homeowners about the opportunity to remove barriers to access in their homes.”

Visitability is a growing movement to renovate or build new single-family homes to make them accessible to a person with a disability who uses a wheelchair. The Residential Visitability Design Tax Credit Act gives counties, municipalities and school districts the opportunity to each offer a special local tax credit of up to \$2,500 to people who renovate or build new homes with visitability design features. If enacted by each taxing body, a homeowner could be

eligible for up to a \$7,500 tax credit on the cost of the visitability design.

“The creation of this tax credit demonstrates the importance of removing barriers to access in homes and the enormous potential for the partnership between the home building industry, especially the Builders Association of Metropolitan Pittsburgh, and the disability community,” Milton Henderson, Chair of the SILC Housing Committee said.

To be eligible for the tax credit a new or renovated home must have a floor with no-step entry, doorways and hallways wide enough for wheelchair access, at least one accessible powder room with reinforced walls to support grab bars and light switches within reach of a person using a wheelchair.

"This means seniors, people who are in wheelchairs and people who are not able to get around the way most people are used to getting around will be able to enjoy a better quality of life because obstacles in their own homes will be removed," Governor Rendell said in a news release.

ABOUT PA SILC

The Pennsylvania Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) is a non-profit, consumer-controlled, Governor appointed leadership organization. SILC uses its collective power and legal mandate to develop and secure public policies that ensure civil rights by supporting the independent living philosophy, and technical assistance to the network of 18 Centers For Independent Living in Pennsylvania. For more information about the PA SILC call 717-364-1732 or log on to www.pasilc.org.