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FEATURED

## Ask Gov. Wolf for a break, lawmakers tell firefighters about online raffles

By Frank Andruscavage Staff Writer  
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A crowd at the Llewellyn Fire Company listens Thursday to a panel of state lawmakers talk about issues with the Small Gas  
LINDSEY SHUEY / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

LLEWELLYN — State legislators told Schuylkill County volunteer firefighters to band with their brothers across the commonwealth in petitioning Gov. Tom Wolf to allow online raffle fundraisers while his restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic are in place.

State Sen. David G. Argall, R-29, of Rush Township, and Reps. Mike Tobash, R-125, of Pottsville, Jerry Knowles, R-124, of Rush Township, and Russ Diamond, R-102, of Annville, along with representative-elect Joe Kerwin, R-125, of Lykens, met with about 50 volunteer firefighters and concerned citizens Thursday night at the Llewellyn Fire Company.

At the meeting, they discussed violations volunteer organizations may unwittingly be committing in conducting online raffle drawings.

Doug Buffington of the Orwin Fire Company organized the meeting after learning volunteer fire companies in both Schuylkill and Dauphin counties were receiving "cease and desist" letters because of violations of the Small Games of Chance law.

"This has become our only way of making money when we can't run any other fundraisers and now they're telling us to stop," he said.

SGOC licensing allows qualified organizations to run fundraisers such as raffle drawings, but does not allow payment to be made by credit or debit card, which are essential for making online raffles work.

Argall said that House Bill 2764, sponsored by Republican Rep. Michael Reese, of Westmoreland County, would suspend a portion of the SGOC license regulations and allow for online raffles while limits on capacity in public places and other pandemic-related restrictions remain in place.

However, with legislative sessions in Harrisburg coming to an end for 2020, the odds of having that legislation passed is not good, they said.

Argall said the problem exists everywhere in the commonwealth.

"This is not just Schuylkill County; it is a statewide problem," he said.

Diamond urged volunteers to band together and petition Wolf, a Democrat, to suspend the SGOC regulations.

"You guys have a lot more pull since you're on the front lines of public safety," Diamond said.

He said the governor has the authority to suspend the rules under his COVID-19 disaster declaration emergency.

Petitioning the governor is the best route considering the small legislative session window.

"Right now, the governor has the power and you have the pull," Diamond said.

For the time being, the Orwin Fire Company, like others in Schuylkill County, have or will stop online raffles.

### **Frank Andruscavage**

Frank has been a police reporter for The Republican-Herald since 2002 [\*\*Read More...\*\*](#)