worked with Senator Frank O'Connell to preserve a rail line through the county that a company wanted to dismantle. He also worked to obtain funds to promote tourism in Monroe County, so that the Pocono Mountain Vacation Bureau consistently receives among the highest amounts of state dollars of the more than 50 agencies in Pennsylvania each year. He was a leader in establishing the Pocono Mountain Industrial Park, started the Monroe County Litter Control Program and a signage control committee to preserve the natural beauty of the Poconos.

Joe’s legislative accomplishments included authoring the Human Relations Act of 1991 that prevents discrimination in areas such as housing, employment and education, authoring a law to allow people 30 days to return defective hearing aids for a full refund, and a law to allow 14- and 15-year-olds to work at ski facilities, which was of great importance to the Poconos. In addition, he started the influential House Bipartisan Anti-Gambling Coalition.

As chairman and leading Democrat on the House Transportation Committee, he worked to ensure transportation needs on the new Pennsylvania Turnpike. He wrote a law that regulates the transportation of solid waste, with a ban on “back hauling” of garbage in trucks that transport food, and the teen driver licensing law that provides for increased instruction for young drivers.

Working for Monroe County, Joe initiated the Route 209 project that is now beginning final design and right-of-way acquisition, obtained funding for all traffic control devices on Route 611 from Stroud Township to Mount Pocono for 15 years, and personally pushed PennDOT to have a church at the intersection of Shafer Schoolhouse Road and Business Route 209 in most cases preserved to correct the dangerous intersection.

And from his post on the Education Committee, he initiated School Performance Grants to reward schools that improve in areas such as the graduation rate and percentage of students who go on to higher education. He also helped to develop charter schools and the Early Intervention Education Program.

Mr. Speaker, Joe Battisto was a devoted and enthusiastic legislator. He cared deeply about the impact that the actions of state government have on the lives of ordinary people, and he carefully studied every issue. I could always count on Joe to give me a thoughtful analysis of any issue affecting the people of Monroe County, and I knew that their interests were always uppermost in his mind.

Unlike some politicians who try to justify their positions with one-sided spin, Joe Battisto took the time to explain the pros and cons of every issue to demonstrate his reasoning. Students and senior citizens alike left a discussion with Joe Battisto with a deeper appreciation for the complexity of state issues.

Joe and his wife, Virginia, have four children and five grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to call to the attention of the House of Representatives the long history of Joe Battisto’s service to the people of Monroe County and all of Pennsylvania, and I join his friends and neighbors in wishing him and his wife all the best.