

King of hypocrites?

Double talking

When you promise not to do something, you shouldn't do it — especially after criticizing others.

State Rep. Chris King is looking like a promise-breaking hypocrite these days. The freshman Democrat representing Bucks County's 140th Legislative District was highly critical of the guy he deposed last year, exstate Rep. Matt Wright, for spending taxpayer money on so-called public information commercials that amount to little more than TV face time.

In fact, during his first bid for public office, a losing effort in 2002, King publicly demanded that Wright, a Republican, use campaign funds to repay taxpayers the \$40,000 he spent on the commercials. King, a Democrat, promised: "If elected, I will serve the best interest of our community by never using taxpayer dollars to air television ads; I will pay for them out of my own political campaign."

Five years later, King is backpedaling ferociously. Having spent \$34,000 in taxpayer money to put his face on TV some 1,200 times, the new state rep offered an old argument in his defense.

"You will only see me run a public service announcement if there is information about a program that I believe to be in the vital interest of my constituents," King said.

Isn't that what they all say? Certainly, that was Wright's argument. So, having scorched his predecessor for wasting tax money for political benefit, King uses the same tired excuse to rationalize doing the very same thing.

It's not as if lawmakers don't have other means to get the word out about state programs. Pretty much every member of the Legislature puts out taxpayerfunded "newsletters" that give constituents news they've already read in the newspaper.

If they want to make a big deal about some state program, they should use their freebie mailings to do it. And if their argument is that the mailings aren't as effective as TV, then save taxpayers money and stop doing the mailings.

What's particularly disappointing is that King has been a champion of reform in Harrisburg. He's tried hard to empty the swamp.

But he stumbled badly on this issue and should make amends by not doing public information commercials — as he promised. He also should do what he asked Wright to do: Pay back taxpayers!