

CAWP

Summary of Legislation

November 2008

House Leadership Elections

The PA House of Representatives held Democratic and Republican caucus leadership elections on November 18 for the 2009-10 session. Newly elected legislators were eligible to vote, departing members were not. The Democrats, by virtue of their apparent 104-99 majority, chose Rep. Keith McCall as their nominee for Speaker of the House. McCall will be elected by the full House on January 6. Former Majority Leader Bill DeWeese chose not to run for re-election to that spot, dropping down to the Whip position. Representative Todd Eachus from Luzerne County will be the new Majority Leader. Two former Republican Speakers, John Perzel and Dennis O'Brien, were not elected to leadership positions in their caucus, and will likely take Committee Chairs, though that is not yet certain for either. Committee chairs will be announced later.

House Democrats 2009-10 Leadership team

Speaker: Keith McCall (Monroe)
Majority Leader: Todd Eachus (Luzerne)
Caucus Chairman: Mark Cohen (Philadelphia)
Appropriations Chair: Dwight Evans (Philadelphia)
Whip: Bill DeWeese (Greene)
Policy Chair: Mike Sturla (Lancaster)
Caucus Administrator: Ron Buxton (Dauphin)
Caucus Secretary: Jennifer Mann (Lehigh)

House Republicans 2009-10 Leadership team

Minority Leader: Sam Smith (Jefferson)
Caucus Chairman: Sandy Major (Susquehanna)
Appropriations Chair: Mario Civera (Delaware)
Whip: Mike Turzai (Allegheny)
Policy Chair: Stan Saylor (York)
Caucus Administrator: Merle Phillips (Northumberland)
Caucus Secretary: Jerry Stern (Blair)

Senate Leadership Elections

Senate leadership elections for the 2009-10 session took place on November 20. Very few changes were made, mostly in the Democrat Caucus, and the two Appropriations Chairs, which were left vacant by the retirements of Sens. Gib Armstrong and Vincent Fumo.

Senate Democrats

Minority Leader: Bob Mellow (Lackawanna)
Appropriations Chairman: Jay Costa (Allegheny)
Whip: Mike O'Pake (Berks)
Caucus Chairman: Vince Hughes (Philadelphia)
Caucus Secretary: Sean Logan (Allegheny)
Policy Chair: Rich Kasunic (Fayette)
Caucus Administrator: Christine Tartaglione (Philadelphia)

Senate Republicans

President Pro Tempore: Joe Scarnati (Jefferson)
Majority Leader: Dominic Pileggi (Delaware)
Appropriations Chairman: Jake Corman (Centre)
Whip: Jane Orie (Allegheny)
Caucus Chairman: Mike Waugh (York)
Caucus Secretary: Rob Robbins (Mercer)
Policy Chair appointed by leader
Caucus Administrator appointed by leader

Lt. Gov. Catherine Baker Knoll Succumbs to Cancer

In a sad counter to a big month for state and national Democrats, the grande dame of Pennsylvania politics, **Lt. Gov. Catherine Baker Knoll** passed away suddenly this month, while undergoing treatments for endocrine cancer. The 78-year old Knoll, who came from humble roots in McKees Rocks to win several statewide races, serving two terms as State Treasurer prior to her elections with **Gov. Ed Rendell**, died November 12, just a week after the landslide election night victory for her party. Her passing leaves a void in the party and in the Senate, which she presided over in her capacity as Lt. Governor. According to the state Constitution, Baker Knoll will be succeeded by Republican **Sen. Joe Scarnati**, who serves as President Pro Tempore of the Senate. Scarnati will hold both the Lt. Governor's seat, as well as his own Senate seat, due to a unique quirk in the succession rules, as Sen. Bob Jubelirer did when Tom Ridge joined the Bush Administration and Lt. Gov. Mark Schweiker became Governor.

2008 Elections: House D's, Senate R's Retain Control, Several More Incumbents Lose

With all but a few votes reported statewide, it appears that the PA General Assembly will remain split, as House Democrats captured a net of two seats to increase their margin to 104-99. Several races were razor thin, and could change with the final few votes, or through challenges, as happened in 2006. The two most closely watched races in the state ended up being anti-climactic. **House Democrat Leader Bill DeWeese**, who fired nearly a dozen staffers last year in the "Bonusgate" scandal, weathered another storm in his home district, actually losing his home Greene County, but riding on votes from Fayette to win an improbable 16th term. On the other side of the state, another former Speaker, John Perzel, survived a tough challenge despite Barack Obama's massive victory in Philadelphia. One more member of the House Democrat leadership, **Dan Surra**, lost by nearly 1600 votes. If these numbers hold, and the Democrats increase their majority, they will choose a new (or perhaps an old) Speaker to replace Dennis O'Brien, who has served as Speaker as a Republican in 2007-08 despite a Democratic majority. It seems likely Democrats will choose one of their own this time, be it the current leader DeWeese, or Whip Keith McCall or Appropriations Chairman Dwight Evans of Philadelphia. Republicans and Democrats hold caucus reorganization elections in November, with the Speaker being officially elected by the full House on Swearing-In Day, January 7.

In the Senate, in another night that was otherwise glorious for Democrats across the country, state Senate D's had another poor showing. They lost all of the contested races in seats held by Republicans, including losing to the recently deceased Republican **Sen. Jim Rhoades** in Schuylkill County, and lost the open Beaver County seat formerly held by Jerry LaValle, in a district that Democrats hold a nearly 2-1 registration advantage. Senate R's will go into 2009 with a 29-20 majority, and **new Lt. Gov. Joe Scarnati will** call a special election to fill the Rhoades seat, which in the absence of the Obama wave, will likely remain Republican. This will provide a challenge for Gov. Rendell's agenda in 2009, his final term as Governor, since Rendell campaigned and contributed to candidates against some sitting Republicans as well as in the open seats that Republicans won. With the prospect of a possible \$2.5 Billion budget deficit looming, it will be a tense first half of 2009 to be sure. Senate caucuses reorganize November 20-21.

In Congress, long-time Erie Republican Phil English conceded defeat to Democrat Kathy Dahlkemper, while Democrats John Murtha and Paul Kanjorski won re-election, despite polling that indicated otherwise. Republican Glenn Thompson held the 5th district seat vacated by John Peterson, in a walk.

Statewide, Auditor General Jack Wagner received one of the highest overall vote totals, and winning margins, in PA history. Attorney General Tom Corbett also was reelected, but by smaller margins. Democrat Rob McCord was elected State Treasurer. At least two of them may be in the race for Governor in 2010.

2008 General Elections: Who's Not Returning, with Successors Elected

<u>Representative</u>	<u>House Democrats Not Returning in 2009</u>	
	<u>Dist.</u>	
Vince Biancucci (Beaver)	15	Jim Christiana
Sean Ramaley (Beaver)	16	Rob Matzie
Lisa Bennington (Allegheny)	21	Dom Costa
Tom Petrone (Allegheny)	27	Daniel J. Deasy, Jr.
Tom Tangretti (Westmoreland)	57	Tim Krieger

Edward Wojnarowski (Cambria)	71	Bryan Barbin
Tom Yewcic (Cambria)	72	Frank Burns
Dan Surra	75	Matthew Gabler
Frank Andrews Shimkus (Lackawanna)	113	Kevin Murphy
Chris King (Bucks)	142	Frank Farry
Daylin Leach (Montgomery)	149	Tim Briggs
Harold James (Phila)	186	Kenyatta Johnson
Thomas W. Blackwell, IV (Phila)	190	Vanessa Brown

House Republicans Not Retuning in 2009

Art Hershey (Chester)	13	Tom Houghton
David Steil (Bucks)	31	Steve Santarsiero
Jess Stairs (Westmoreland)	59	Mike Reese
Fred McIlhatten (Clarion)	63	Donna Oberlander
Bob Bastian (Somerset)	69	Carl Walker Metzgar
Jay Moyer (Montgomery)	70	Matthew Bradford
Steven Cappelli (Lycoming)	83	Richard Mirabito
Jerry Nailor (Cumberland)	88	Sheryl Delozier
Carole Rubely (Chester)	157	Paul J. Drucker
Ron Raymond (Delaware)	162	Nick Miccarelli
George Kenney (Phila)	170	Brendan Boyle
Carl Mantz (Berks)	187	Gary Day
Steve Nickol (York)	193	Will Tallman
Beverly Mackereth (York)	196	Seth Grove

Senate Democrats Not Returning in 2009

Vincent Fumo (Phila)	1	Farnese, Lawrence M. Jr.
Connie Williams (Montgomery)	17	Daylin Leach
Jerry LaValle (Beaver)	47	Elder Vogel

Senate Republicans Not Returning in 2009

Gib Armstrong (Lancaster)	13	Lloyd Smucker
Roger Madigan (Lycoming)	23	Gene Yaw
Jim Rhoades (Schuylkill)	29	SPECIAL
Terry Punt (Franklin)	33	Richard Alloway
Bob Regola (Westmoreland)	39	Kim Ward

Congress

Phil English (Erie)	3	Kathy Dahlkemper
John Peterson (Venango)	5	Glenn W. Thompson

Legislative Activity

Senate Banking and Insurance Committee Recommends Rejecting the Highmark Merger

The committee met November 20 to finalize its recommendations regarding the proposed merger of Highmark and Independence Blue Cross. **Chairman Donald White (R-Indiana)** provided an overview of the committee's actions since the proposed merger was announced in March, 2007, and its efforts to develop, consider and approve legislation to provide oversight for the proposal. **"The prevailing themes throughout this committee's review were that this proposed merger would further restrict if not completely eliminate any remaining competition in Pennsylvania's healthcare insurance marketplace while providing minimal, if any, tangible benefit to the policyholders and/or providers."**

A motion was made by Senator **Jake Corman (R-Centre)** to adopt **Recommendation #1**, recommending the Pennsylvania Insurance Department disapprove the proposed merger between Highmark and Independence Blue Cross. **The motion was approved, mostly on partly lines, with all Republicans and Sen. Lisa Boscola (D-Northampton) voting "yes" on the motion.** Democrats on the committee voiced strong objections to the Committee taking formal action in this manner, saying the Commissioner should not be dictated to, but should use his judgment based on the volumes of information received from the public and the General Assembly. A motion was made by **Senator Corman** and seconded by Senator Rafferty to adopt **Recommendation #2**, recommending if the Insurance Department should permit the proposed merger, what conditions should be placed upon the new company. **The motion was approved with the same votes.**

Governor Extends Pa Health Care Cost Containment Council

Governor Edward Rendell announced he has signed an executive order to extend **Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council (PHC4)** until June 30, 2009. Governor Rendell credited PHC4 for a decline of in-hospital patient mortality rates following coronary artery bypass graft and noted that overall hospital mortality rates continue to drop. He also spoke about another round of Agency budget cuts due to the economic situation.

Governor Rendell indicated that the only other option would be to let it lapse, but he opted to extend it because of the important function it serves. Rendell said that the budget is \$5.3 million, and they will be asked to cut their budget by 4.25%.

Governor Rendell said "if the Senate had passed one of the compromised health care bills we would have extended health care for over a decade." He noted that the executive order will extend PHC4 until June 30, 2009. The Governor stated "it is with great puzzlement why the Senate won't pass it." Governor Rendell took issue with Senate Republican leadership that plans to wait for the Obama Administration's plan on healthcare. He reiterated "Obama made it clear that it will take several years to pass a federal healthcare program." Governor Rendell said he is trying to get someone in the Obama transition team, or even the President-Elect himself, to contact Senator Pileggi to let him know the new administration is encouraging states to do transition bridges until the federal government can enact health care reform.

Upcoming Meetings of Interest

None

Session ends officially on November 30.

Copies of all bills of interest can be accessed via the Internet at:
<http://www.legis.state.pa.us/WU01/LI/BI/billroom.htm>.