



Don White

STATE SENATOR



Reports to the People

41ST SENATORIAL DISTRICT • SPRING 2007

Dear Friend,

In this edition of Report to the People, we will look at the rule changes and reforms adopted by the Senate for the 2007-08 Legislative Session. I will also discuss my new committee assignments and some of the bills that I am reintroducing for the new session. We will also look at some recent state investments in infrastructure projects around the 41st Senatorial District.

As always, if you have questions about any state issue, call my Indiana Office at 724-357-0151/toll free 866-357-0151, my Kittanning Office at 724-543-3026/toll free 866-366-9448 (1-866-DON-WHITE), or my Murrysville Office at 724-327-2422/toll free 866-736-9448 (1-866-SEN-WHITE).

Regards,
Don White

Banking & Insurance Committee Facing Major Issues in 2007

With the opening of the 2007-08 Legislative Session, Senator Don White takes over a new role as Chairman of the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee where he will be working on a number of major issues this year.

The recent news of the proposed merger of Highmark and Independence Blue Cross spurred Senator White to introduce legislation to give the state greater oversight regarding the union of non-profit health care insurance providers.

Senator White said the long-term ramifications of a mega-merger of the two largest health care insurers in Pennsylvania could impact the quality and availability of health care

coverage in the Commonwealth.

“Primarily, we have to be concerned this merger could create a single, multi-billion dollar, mega-entity which would crush what little competition remains in Pennsylvania’s health care insurance market,” Senator White continued. “Right now, the last thing we need in the Commonwealth is further limitation on the competitiveness in the health care insurance market. There are real concerns that costs will skyrocket, quality of care will decrease and the insured will be stuck with the bill.”

The Banking and Insurance Committee is also studying the Cover All Pennsylvanians universal health care plan proposed by Governor

Rendell as part of his 2007-08 state budget package.

“Governor Rendell presented the outline of what appears to be a very aggressive health care initiative. Although his presentation highlighted a ‘feel good’ measure, it also raised many questions, as very few details were shared,” Senator White said.

“However, I believe we can use the Governor’s proposal as a starting point, a basis upon which we can begin our review and open our debate on how to improve the quality of health care for our citizens and, just as importantly, how to pay for those improvements without placing a heavier burden on Pennsylvania’s working families,” Senator White continued.

Senator Don White, left, in his role as Chairman of the state Senate Banking and Insurance Committee, testified on the proposed Highmark-Independence Blue Cross merger at an April 9 public hearing by the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee (with panelists Governor Ed Rendell and U.S. Senators Arlen Specter and Robert Casey) in Philadelphia.





Armstrong County Projects Receive \$1 Million in State Funding

Two major Armstrong County projects each received \$500,000 in state funding. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) competitive grants were awarded to Armstrong County on behalf of Brady's Bend Township and North Buffalo Township.

Brady's Bend Township will use the \$500,000 to cover most of the construction costs to provide water service to 24 households in the Village of Roseville that currently rely

on individual wells, springs, and cisterns for their water supply. The project involves the construction of a water line to Roseville from the Petroleum Valley Regional Water Authority's distribution system. Construction is expected to be completed in the fall of 2007.

"Years of extensive mining have had a detrimental effect on the wells and springs used by those residents," Senator Don White said. "Testing clearly shows the water quality is

Senator Don White recently presented a \$500,000 state grant to the Village of Roseville.

compromised and poses a serious health threat. In addition, two homes were completely destroyed by fire in the past 10 years due to lack of water service in that area."

The total project cost is estimated at \$601,800. In addition to the CDBG funding, Senator White previously secured a \$100,000 Safe Water Grant through the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to engineer the project and to pay a portion of the construction costs.

North Buffalo Township will use the CDBG money to provide sanitary sewer service to 47 households in the Skinall area. The extension will connect to neighboring Cadogan Township's existing sewage treatment plant, while the lines will be owned and maintained by North Buffalo Township. Total project costs are estimated at \$791,000, with construction expected to be completed by early spring 2008.

Senator White Reappointed to PENNVEST Board

Senator Don White was recently reappointed to serve as one of the state Senate's two representatives on the PENNVEST Board of Directors.

"I am honored by this opportunity to again serve on the PENNVEST Board," Senator White said. "PENNVEST financing has been a key catalyst in promoting several major water and sewer projects in the 41st District which, when completed, are expected to boost our local economy and create job opportunities."

PENNVEST provides grants and low-interest loans to fund sewer, storm water and drinking water projects throughout the Commonwealth. These projects not only contribute to improving Pennsylvania's environment and the health of its people, they also provide opportunities for economic growth and additional jobs for Pennsylvania's workers.

PENNVEST has provided \$55,130,452 in financing for projects in the 41st District since Senator White was appointed to the board at the end of 2004.

ARMSTRONG COUNTY

Kittanning Municipal Authority, September 2005, \$1,990,000 (\$772,548 grant, \$1,217,452 loan) to install 4,200 linear feet of sanitary sewers and 944 linear feet of storm sewer as part of the borough's

sewer separation effort.

Worthington-West Franklin Joint Municipal Authority, November 2005, \$2,925,000 (\$1,025,344 grant, \$1,899,656 loan) to install 45,000 feet of sanitary sewer lines to expand sewer service to Craigsville and Laird's Crossing in West Franklin Township.

Kittanning Municipal Authority, October 2006, \$5,261,340 (\$929,153 grant, \$4,332,187 loan) to install 10,433 linear feet of sanitary sewers and 800 linear feet of storm sewer as part of the borough's sewer separation effort.

Pine Township, October 2006, \$5,296,333 (\$1,201,999 grant, \$4,094,334 loan) to install 19,300 linear feet of sanitary sewers, 2 pump stations, 5,000 linear feet of force main and a 60,000 gallon-per-day treatment plant to serve the villages of Templeton and Mahoning.

BUTLER COUNTY

Saxonburg Area Authority, November 2005, \$34,458,252 loan for the design and construction of 269,829 linear feet of gravity and forced main lines, 44,296 linear feet of interceptor lines, five pump stations, and a new 2,052,000 gallon-per-day wastewater treatment plant.

CLEARFIELD COUNTY

Burnside Borough, May 2006, \$2.9 million (\$1,660,250 grant, \$1,239,750 loan) to install 20,000 feet of sanitary

sewer lines, a pump station and build a 40,000 gallon-per-day sewage treatment plant.

INDIANA COUNTY

Indiana County Municipal Services Authority, March 2005, \$11,714,350 loan to construct the new Crooked Creek water treatment plant, two storage tanks and over fifteen miles of water distribution lines that will provide a regional water supply by interconnecting with five smaller systems and eliminating two other systems that are unable to provide adequate quality and quantities of water.

Municipal Authority of Westmoreland County, May 2006, \$682,036 (\$318,384 grant, \$363,652 loan) to install 19,000 feet of water lines and fire hydrants in Nowrytown, Conemaugh Township, Indiana County.

WESTMORELAND COUNTY

Municipal Authority of Westmoreland County, March 2006, \$1,617,500 loan to construct 33,640 linear feet of water lines in Mamont Road, Hilty Road, Peachtree Court, Saltsburg Road, Christy Road, Eagles Lane and Lasher Court areas of Murrysville and the Dry Dam Road area of Penn Township.

Finding Funding for Highway Projects

The following is an excerpt from a letter to the editor that Senator Don White recently sent to media outlets in the 41st Senatorial District.

To the editor:

In my new role as Vice Chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee I intend to be very active in identifying the funding sources necessary to make the improvements the traveling public wants, expects and deserves.

Nowhere is the importance of highway improvements more evident than the 41st Senatorial District. We have made progress over the past six years. The opening of the Route 28 A-15 Bypass around Kittanning, the widening of Route 119 and the on-going Route 22 Renew projects are significant steps in the right direction. However, our needs remain significant. Without additional highway dollars, long sought improvements to the Routes 422, 28, 219 and 119 corridors will never advance.

A recent study indicated Pennsylvania is lagging way behind on the necessary funding for essential highway maintenance and transit operations. The price tag, just to get back to where we need to be, is \$1.8 billion annually. In the past gas tax increases were traditionally used to generate funding for transportation projects. The last gas tax increase in Pennsylvania was 1997. A decade later, we find ourselves with stagnant Federal funding and less purchasing power for projects than ever before. To raise \$1.8 billion through the gas tax would require a 30 cent-per-gallon increase. Such an increase is simply unrealistic. However, there are other options.

One possibility we need to explore is allowing public-private partnerships (PPP) in Pennsylvania. A private company leases a highway for several decades and accepts responsibility for maintenance and opera-

tion. The Commonwealth is paid a very large up-front sum for the lease, while the private entity collects the revenue generated from highway tolls.

There are plenty of details to consider before we enter into any such agreement. However, the complexities of the leasing aspect are much less onerous on the public than a gas tax increase in today's environment.

In his 2007-08 Budget, Governor Rendell has proposed leasing the Pennsylvania Turnpike. If you accept the Governor's numbers, we could generate \$965 million in revenue per year for highway improvements. This equates to the amount of funding

which would be generated by a 15 cent-per-gallon increase in the gas tax. With proper management, we could generate a billion dollars in additional highway improvements annually without costing the motor-ing public one penny.

While none of the options are easy, the alternative is to do nothing. However, if Pennsylvania does nothing, we will only compound the problems we must face in the future. That is not only unacceptable, but unfair to our children and grandchildren. I'm committed to working with my colleagues to reach a common sense, proactive solution to this critical crisis.

Blairsville/Burrell Township Project Receives \$2.48 Million Grant

The Blairsville Municipal Authority, in cooperation and partnership with the Burrell Township Sewer Authority, will receive a state grant totaling nearly \$2.5 million to expand sewage service to accommodate growth in those areas.

Funding totaling \$2,488,956, provided by the Department of Community and Economic Development's PENNWORKS Program, will go toward expanding the existing sewage treatment plant by constructing an additional module that will accommodate growth in the Blairsville Borough and Burrell Township regions of Indiana County. The sewer plant expansion is projected to serve 2,400 households/businesses and facilitate 150 to 200 jobs.

"The on-going improvements to Routes 22 and 119 are making this area very attractive for development," said Senator Don White. "The success of the Corporate Campus, which is located in this area and benefits from

being a Keystone Opportunity Improvement Zone, shows these investments provide real benefits in the form of new businesses and jobs. This substantial state investment toward upgrading the sewage system will make the area even more ideal for economic growth. There are already proposals on the board for residential properties, a recreational facility and a hotel in that area. Expanding the sewage facility is essential for those projects to move forward."

The \$2.48 million is the third PENNWORKS grant awarded for projects in the Route 22 corridor area. The Burrell Township Sewer Authority received \$1.05 million in PENNWORKS funding last year to expand service into the Shearwood Terrace Area. Additionally, in 2006, Indiana County received \$1.8 million in PENNWORKS funding to expand water service in Burrell and West Wheatfield townships to accommodate economic growth along the Route 22 corridor.

RECOGNIZING HONORABLE SERVICE

An American Flag that flew over the U.S. Army's Camp Loyalty in Baghdad, Iraq in 2005 was presented to the Rossiter American Legion in December 2006 by Sgt. Justin White of Rossiter. Senator Don White, flanked by Indiana County Commissioner Rodney Ruddock (left) and State Representative Sam Smith (right), attended that event and offered to provide preservation of the flag for the Legion. Senator White arranged with Custom Laser Engraving to have the flag placed into a custom-made cherry case with a plaque for the Rossiter American Legion to put into their display case.



New Rules Open Senate Actions to Public Review

As some of its first actions of the 2007-08 Legislative Session, the state Senate adopted a new set of rules intended to make the legislative process more open to the public.

"I am encouraged by these reforms," said Senator Don White. "They show the Senate heard the voices of the voters when they demanded reform and change in state government. These rules show we are committed to a fresh approach in the way the General Assembly conducts business."

Under the new rules:

- Session times will be limited to between 8 a.m. and 11 p.m.
- Amendments will be posted to the Internet before being offered on the Senate Floor.
- The Senate will wait at least six hours before voting on an amended bill or a conference committee report.
- All roll call votes will be posted on the Internet as soon as possible after a vote, but always within 24 hours of a vote.
- Committee votes on bills will be posted on the Internet within 48 hours of the vote.
- The Senate's Legislative Journal – which includes the full text of all floor debates – will be posted on the Internet upon Senate approval of the Journal or within 45 days, whichever is earlier.
- An updated fiscal note will be prepared if a bill is amended after consideration by the Senate Appropriations Committee, if the amendment has a fiscal impact.

Senator White Hosts Trip to Harrisburg

Senator Don White offered local residents an opportunity to experience Pennsylvania history with a tour of the State Capitol in Harrisburg last December, as the building marks its 100th anniversary.

"I have the distinct honor to work

in the state Capitol, which was described as the most beautiful in the nation by President Theodore Roosevelt," Senator White said. "This trip gave local residents the opportunity to experience that beauty and grandeur for themselves."



Senator Don White and his wife Anne, to his right, hosted a trip to the State Capitol in Harrisburg.



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