

Senate News Brief

from Senate Republicans

“Bob Thompson was the kind of intelligent, thoughtful, and understated leader that Pennsylvania needs and never has enough of. He confronted his personal medical challenges the same way he did the public policy problems facing us, with optimism and humor and a genuine belief in a better tomorrow. He had an innate sense of decency and integrity that we will really miss. He was a good friend, a devoted husband, a superb Senator, and a truly quality individual.”

Senate President Pro Tempore Robert Jubelirer (R-Blair), on the passing of
Sen. Robert Thompson (R-Chester) on Saturday.

Preview

WORK CONTINUES ON PROPERTY TAX REFORM

EFFORTS WILL CONTINUE THIS WEEK to put together compromise legislation to provide property tax relief. The Senate is also expected to begin the process to consider changes to Pennsylvania’s minimum wage law.

COMMITTEE TO HOLD HEARING ON MINE SAFETY LEGISLATION

THE SENATE ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY COMMITTEE, chaired by **Sen. Mary Jo White (R-Venango)**, will hold a public hearing Tuesday on proposed mine safety legislation.

The 217-page bill includes provisions proposed following the Quecreek mine incident in Somerset County.

Review

PASSING OF SEN. ROBERT THOMPSON

SEN. ROBERT THOMPSON (R-CHESTER), 68, passed away Saturday at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

Senator Thompson, who served as Majority Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, began his career in public service more than 30 years ago and went on to earn a reputation as an honest and dedicated representative of the people. His public service career began in 1970 as a member and Chairman of the West Goshen Township Board of Supervisors. From 1979 to 1986, he served on the Chester County Board of Commissioners, including four years as Chairman. Senator Thompson was elected to the state Senate in 1995.

SEN. REGOLA ANNOUNCES MEASURE TO PROTECT MARRIAGE IN PA

SEN. BOB REGOLA (R-WESTMORELAND) announced Jan. 24 that he is introducing a joint resolution calling for an amendment to the state constitution to define marriage as a covenant between one man and one woman.

Senator Regola and **Senate Majority Leader David Brightbill (R-Lebanon)** took part in a news conference in the Capitol Rotunda, joined by other legislators and a wide array of family advocates. Eighteen states have ratified similar constitutional amendments.

COMMITTEE SENDS PA CLEAN CARS PROGRAM ACT TO SENATE

THE SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE, chaired by **Sen. Roger Madigan (R-Bradford)**, approved legislation Jan. 24 to establish a low emission vehicle program standard consistent with the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

Senate Bill 1025, the Pennsylvania Clean Cars Program Act, is sponsored by Senator Madigan and **Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee Chair Mary Jo White (R-Venango)** and would prevent a Rendell Administration plan to impose California vehicle emission standards on Pennsylvania motorists. [For more on Senate Bill 1025, please see *In the Spotlight*, below.](#)

COMMITTEE ACTS ON BILLS TO COMBAT UNDERAGE DRINKING

THE SENATE LAW AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE approved three bills Jan. 25 aimed at curbing underage drinking and high-risk drinking. The three measures, sponsored by committee chair **Sen. John Rafferty (R-Montgomery)**, are part of a 14-bill package of legislation introduced last month.

The committee approved Senate Bill 620, which would revoke the driver's license of adults who furnish alcohol to minors; Senate Bill 969, which would mandate Responsible Alcohol Management Program (RAMP) training for bar/restaurant operators who incur underage drinking liquor code violations; and Senate Bill 1062, which would require the Liquor Control Board Bureau of Alcohol Education to report every two years to the General Assembly on levels of underage drinking and prevention efforts. The bills were sent to the full Senate for consideration. [For a partial list of bills in the package, please see *Fast Facts*, below.](#)

SENATE APPROVES BILL ALLOWING AID IN EMERGENCIES

THE SENATE APPROVED LEGISLATION JAN. 25 that would set specific guidelines for political subdivisions to donate or lend resources during an emergency.

The need for the measure, sponsored by the late **Sen. Robert Thompson (R-Chester)**, became apparent after two devastating hurricanes slammed the Gulf Coast last year. Many local governments opened their warehouses and offered leave to their employees as a way to help in the relief efforts. Yet, even as that aid headed south, a question arose as to whether state law allowed those municipalities to take those steps.

Under Senate Bill 928, counties, municipalities and school districts could provide the aid within 60 days of a state of emergency declared by the president or governor. The bill was sent to the House of Representatives for consideration.

SEN. GREENLEAF'S PROBATE CODE REVISIONS APPROVED BY SENATE

THE SENATE ON JAN. 25 APPROVED LEGISLATION sponsored by **Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Stewart Greenleaf (R-Montgomery)** amending the Probate Code to incorporate the Uniform Trust Code and to provide modifications to the law with regard to trusts.

Senate Bill 660 is aimed at providing an organized and comprehensive codification to make it easier for judges and attorneys to access the law. It would also assist trustees who do business in more than one state to have a more uniform framework to comply with the law. The bill was sent to the House of Representatives.

In the Spotlight

THE PENNSYLVANIA CLEAN CARS PROGRAM ACT WOULD PROHIBIT the state Department of Environmental Protection and the Environmental Quality Board from adopting the low emission vehicle standard established by the State of California.

The California standards would force Pennsylvania motorists to purchase more expensive vehicles and may ultimately lead to more expensive gasoline. The federal Environmental Protection Agency has cautioned states who were over-estimating the benefits of California's standards, saying they provide emission reduction of only one or two percent over federal standards.

Senate Bill 1025 would require the state Department of Environmental Protection to continue following the federal emission standards established in 2000.

Fast Facts

UNDERAGE DRINKING PREVENTION LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE

The 14-bill package includes:

- Driver's license revocation for adults who furnish alcohol to minors. *Sen. John Rafferty (R-Montgomery)*
- Increased penalties for adults who furnish alcohol to minors and an injury results. *Sen. John Rafferty (R-Montgomery)*
- Age compliance checks by full-time police departments. *Sen. John Pippy (R-Allegheny)*
- Mandated identification tag to track keg purchases. *Sen. Stewart Greenleaf (R-Montgomery)*
- Mandatory alcohol policy for higher education institutions. *Sen. John Rafferty (R-Montgomery)*

Question or comments? Contact the Senate Republican Communications Office at senaterepublicancommunicationsoffice@pasen.gov or call 717-787-6725. Current and archived News Briefs are also available online at www.pasenategov.com. For a free download of the Adobe Acrobat reader for PDF files, visit www.adobe.com.