

# Senate News Brief

## from Senate Republicans

*"This bill not only increases penalties for those who prey on children, it also ensures that if and when they are released their whereabouts are known for the rest of their lives."*

– **Sen. Jane Orié (R-Allegheny)**, sponsor of Pennsylvania's "Jessica's Law," which was approved by the Senate this week.

### Preview

#### SENATE TO ACT ON BUDGET, LOBBYIST DISCLOSURE, GAMBLING REFORMS

THE SENATE next week is expected to finalize a 2006-07 state budget, including significant tax cuts. The Senate is also expected to consider gambling reforms and lobbyist disclosure.

#### PENNSYLVANIA COMBAT METH INITIATIVE

A COMPREHENSIVE SEVEN-BILL LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE, known as the "Pennsylvania Combat Meth Initiative," is scheduled for Senate consideration on Monday. The goal is to combat the scourge of methamphetamine in Pennsylvania.

Senate Bills 1115 through 1121 – introduced by **Sen. Roger Madigan (R-Bradford)**, **Sen. Rob Wonderling (R-Montgomery)**, **Sen. John Gordner (R-Columbia)** and **Sen. Bob Robbins (R-Mercer)** – would make it more difficult to obtain the ingredients necessary to make methamphetamine, add new protections for children and clean up the environmental damage caused by meth labs.

### Review

#### "JESSICA'S LAW" TARGETING CHILD MOLESTERS APPROVED BY SENATE

THE STATE SENATE ON MONDAY overwhelmingly approved legislation sponsored by **Sen. Jane Orié (R-Allegheny)** and **Sen. John Rafferty (R-Montgomery)** that would establish a mandatory minimum sentence of 25 years for convicted child molesters and require them to wear a monitoring device for life.

The Senate also approved Senate Bill 1054, sponsored by **Sen. John Pippy (R-Allegheny)**, which would require that the addresses of all of Pennsylvania's 7,800 convicted sex offenders be listed on the Megan's Law web site. Presently, addresses of only about 100 offenders designated as a "sexually violent predator" are listed. The remainder include only county, hometown and zip code. Both bills were sent to the House of Representatives.

For more on Jessica's Law, please see *In the Spotlight*, below.

#### SENATE VOTES TO REDUCE MERCURY EMISSIONS

THE SENATE overwhelmingly approved historic, bipartisan legislation Tuesday to reduce mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants.

Senate Bill 1201, sponsored by **Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee Chair Mary Jo White (R-Venango)**, would require mercury emission reductions of 86 percent over 1999 levels no later than 2018. It also directs the use of the emissions-trading program authorized under the federal Clean Air Act. Emission trading has proven to be a highly successful means of reducing pollutant discharges quickly and cost-efficiently, while also encouraging some facilities to over-comply with air quality standards. The bill was sent to the House of Representatives.

#### LIMITS ON FUNERAL DEMONSTRATIONS CLEARS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

LEGISLATION SPONSORED BY **SEN. JOHN PIPPY (R-ALLEGHENY)** AND **SEN. BOB REGOLA (R-WESTMORELAND)** to limit the scope of demonstrations at funerals and memorial services received final Senate approval Thursday and was sent to the governor to be signed into law.

The lawmakers took action in response to incidents of pickets and abusive chants targeting Pennsylvania military funerals. The demonstrators have been targeting grieving family members with vulgar language and other harassments to protest social and political issues.

Senate Bill 1150 requires demonstrators to remain 500 feet from any funeral, memorial service or memorial procession beginning one hour before and ending one hour after the event. Violators would be charged with a third-degree misdemeanor.

## BILL TO INTEGRATE STATE, FEDERAL PRESCRIPTION PLANS PASSED BY SENATE

LEGISLATION SPONSORED BY **SEN. PAT VANCE (R-CUMBERLAND)** that would update Pennsylvania's prescription drug assistance program to work with the federal Medicare prescription drug program was approved Wednesday by the Senate.

Among other provisions, Senate Bill 1188 would pay Medicare Part D premiums for PACE enrollees, eliminate the PACENET deductible, and provide coverage for Part D copayments in excess of the current PACE/PACENET amount. It would also provide assistance to PACE/PACENET recipients in determining if they are eligible for the Medicare subsidy, and in determining which plan to choose. The bill was sent to the House of Representatives. For more on SB 1188, please see *Fast Facts*, below.

## SENATE SENDS IDENTITY THEFT LEGISLATION TO GOVERNOR

THE SENATE on Monday gave final approval of legislation sponsored by **Sen. Rob Wonderling (R-Montgomery)** to ensure the privacy of Social Security numbers. Senate Bill 601 was sent to the governor to be signed into law.

The measure would prohibit any person or institution from making a Social Security number available to the public, and would forbid the use of Social Security numbers to access goods or services.

## SENATE URGES FRENCH TOWN TO RESCIND HONOR FOR KILLER OF PA OFFICER

THE SENATE approved a measure Wednesday urging a French municipality to change the name of a street named after the killer of a Philadelphia police officer.

Senate Resolution 320, sponsored by **Senate President Pro Tempore Robert Jubelirer (R-Blair)**, condemns the decision by the municipal government of Saint-Denis to name the street in honor of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the convicted murderer of Philadelphia Police Officer Daniel Faulkner.

The measure urges the government of France to take action if the municipality does not rescind the honor. Mumia Abu-Jamal shot Officer Faulkner four times in the back as the officer was attempting to arrest the killer's brother in 1981. He then shot the fallen officer in the face, mortally wounding him. A jury later convicted Abu-Jamal of first-degree murder. SR 320 was approved 44-4. All four negative votes were recorded by Democrats.

## In the Spotlight

SENATE BILL 944, "Jessica's Law," is named for Jessica Lunsford, a 9-year-old Florida girl who was kidnapped and murdered by a convicted sex offender.

Senate Bill 944 would impose a minimum of 25 years in prison for anyone over 18 years who is convicted of sexually assaulting a child, mandatory GPS monitoring for life, and a mandatory life sentence for anyone convicted of a second offense.

The bill also provides additional penalties for anyone convicted of knowingly harboring or aiding a sex offender who has failed to register under Megan's Law. It also reduces the time permitted for an offender to register after his or her release or relocation.

## Fast Facts

### SENATE APPROVES SENATE BILL 1188: INTEGRATING STATE AND FEDERAL PRESCRIPTION ASSISTANCE

- Authorizes the Commonwealth to assist PACE/PACENET recipients in signing up for the most appropriate Medicare prescription drug plan.
- Creates real-time online coordination of benefits between PACE and appropriate Medicare plans so enrollees in PACE/PACENET and Medicare continue to fill their prescriptions at pharmacies without additional cost, delay or paperwork.
- Shifts to the federal program some costs that have typically been incurred by the state program.
- Pays Part D premiums for PACE enrollees.
- Eliminates the PACENET deductible.
- Provides coverage for Part D copayments in excess of the current PACE/PACENET amount.

*Question or comments? Contact the Senate Republican Communications Office at [senaterepublicancommunicationsoffice@pasen.gov](mailto:senaterepublicancommunicationsoffice@pasen.gov) or call 717-787-6725. Current and archived News Briefs are also available online at [www.pasenategov.com](http://www.pasenategov.com).*