

# Senate News Brief

## from Senate Republicans

*“The reported contract cost of more than \$2 billion over the four years is a big number. That translates into a 22.5 percent increase. If these were economically robust times throughout Pennsylvania, and the state was flush with revenue, perhaps there might be less concern. But this is one more indication to people that state government continues heading in the wrong direction on spending matters.”*

– **Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Gib Armstrong (R-Lancaster)**, on the new contract reached by the Rendell Administration and unionized state employees.

### Preview

#### SECOND HEARING SET ON PLCB HIRING OF CEO

THE SENATE LAW AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE, chaired by **Sen. John Rafferty (R-Montgomery)**, will hold a second public hearing Tuesday into the hiring of a chief executive officer at the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board.

The committee held its first hearing on January 23. (*For details, please see “Review” below.*)

#### COMMITTEE TO HOLD PUBLIC HEARING ON PA GAMING REGULATION

THE SENATE COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC AND RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE, chaired by **Sen. Jane Earll (R-Erie)**, will hold an informational hearing Tuesday on regulating gaming in Pennsylvania.

The committee has legislative oversight of the commonwealth’s emerging gaming industry, and the hearing will focus on funding and industry regulation.

#### VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER GRANT EXTENSION BEFORE COMMITTEE

LEGISLATION WHICH WILL EXTEND THE \$25 MILLION Volunteer Fire Company and Volunteer Ambulance Services grant program for 2007 will be considered on Tuesday by the Senate Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee, chaired by **Sen. Lisa Baker (R-Luzerne)**. **Sen. Bob Regola (R-Westmoreland)** is prime sponsor of the legislation.

#### HEARING TO FOCUS ON TRANSFER OF CREDITS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE, chaired by **Sen. James Rhoades (R-Schuylkill)**, will conduct a public hearing Wednesday to take testimony from representatives of the Department of Education and several of Pennsylvania’s colleges and universities regarding the higher education articulation program that was approved as part of Act 114 of 2006.

The law is designed to improve articulation and transfer of credits among Pennsylvania institutions of higher education. The purpose of the hearing is to provide committee members with information on this important new program and to outline the steps that have been taken to date to implement the law.

#### SENATORS TO DISCUSS FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY MEASURE

**SEN. BOB REGOLA (R-WESTMORELAND)** and **Sen. Mike Folmer (R-Lebanon)** will hold a news conference Monday to announce legislation designed to promote fiscal responsibility by state government.

The event will be held at 2 p.m. in the Capitol Media Center.

### Review

#### SEN. PILEGGI OUTLINES NEXT ROUND OF REFORM MEASURES

FOLLOWING UP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION of a series of reform measures aimed at making Senate operations more open and efficient, **Senate Majority Leader Dominic Pileggi (R-Delaware)** this week outlined the next round of reforms.

Speaking to the Pennsylvania Press Club on Monday, Sen. Pileggi said the reforms he is spearheading with **Senate President Pro Tempore Joe Scarnati (R-Jefferson)** and others would include further changes to Senate operations, and legislation to strengthen the Open Records in all branches of state government. *For details of further Senate reforms, please see [In the Spotlight](#). For information on expanding the Open Records Law, please see [Fast Facts](#), below.*

## COMMITTEE REVIEWS HIRING OF CEO FOR LIQUOR BOARD

THE SENATE LAW AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE, chaired by **Sen. John Rafferty (R-Montgomery)**, held a public hearing Tuesday to question members of the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board over the controversial process Gov. Rendell used to hire a CEO for the board.

Among those testifying was former LCB Chairman Jonathan Newman, who resigned in protest over the way the hiring was handled, with no public input and less than 48 hours notice. Senators taking part in the hearing included committee vice chairman **Sen. John Pippy (R-Allegheny)**, **Sen. Chuck McIlhinney (R-Bucks)**, **Sen. Bob Regola (R-Westmoreland)**, **Sen. James Rhoades (R-Schuylkill)**, **Sen. Pat Vance (R-Cumberland)**, and **Senate President Pro Tempore Joe Scarnati (R-Jefferson)**.

Sen. Rafferty said: *"I firmly believe that people sent a message to Harrisburg to do things in a more open fashion, hence the hearing here today."*

## SEN. ORIE INTRODUCES BILL TO ELIMINATE TURNPIKE COMMISSION

**SEN. JANE ORIE (R-ALLEGHENY)** is introducing legislation to eliminate the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission.

The senator's measure would make the commission a department under the state Department of Transportation. The measure comes as the state is considering leasing the Turnpike. The commission was created in 1937 prior to construction of what would become a 530-mile east-west toll road.

## In the Spotlight

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER DOMINIC PILEGGI outlined further changes coming to Senate operations designed to provide greater public access and input, and improve efficiency. The coming reform measures include:

- Posting video and audio feeds of Senate floor action on the Internet (by September).
- Posting online all official reports made to the Senate by state agencies and departments, such as departmental budget requests and reports from select committees and official task forces (by September).
- Better organizing reports already online – such as reports from the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee and the Joint State Government Commission – making them more useful to the public (by September).
- Developing a system to make it easy for citizens to use the Web to submit comments for all committee meetings and public hearings, as well as to provide comments on specific bills (by May).
- Placing laptop computers on the floor of the Senate to give members quicker access to information on bills and amendments being debated (as soon as possible).

## Fast Facts

### SEN. PILEGGI TO SPONSOR LEGISLATION EXPANDING OPEN RECORDS LAW

- Including the General Assembly's financial records under the Open Records Law.
- Expanding the law to cover the judiciary's financial records.
- Clearly covering PHEAA and covering, for the first time, state-related institutions – Penn State, Pitt, Temple and Lincoln.
- Cutting the time period for agency responses to requests for information from 10 days to 5 days.
- Detailing the procedure on how to request information under the Open Records Law and making it more user-friendly.
- Allowing Open Records requests to be submitted by email.
- Establishing an Open Records Clearinghouse in state government to handle appeals when requests for information are denied.

*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).*