

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

Legislative Journal

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2008

SESSION OF 2008 192ND OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

No. 9

SENATE

TUESDAY, February 5, 2008

The Senate met at 11:15 a.m., Eastern Standard Time.

The PRESIDENT (Lieutenant Governor Catherine Baker Knoll) in the Chair.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Reverend Dr. JOHN STEWART HARDY, of Trinity Lutheran Church, Camp Hill, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray. Almighty God, pour out Your grace and favor upon the Senators of our Commonwealth. Grant them patience and understanding, wisdom and insight, courage and conviction that they might serve You, the party to which they belong, and the people of Pennsylvania. Strengthen them that they might endure unjust criticism, biased reports, and misrepresentations and misunderstandings of that for which they stand. Grant them the respect of the people for which their position in office calls, and uphold them with the gift of Your spirit. Amen.

The PRESIDENT. The Chair thanks Dr. Hardy, who is the guest today of Senator Vance.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

(The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those assembled.)

HOUSE MESSAGE

HOUSE CONCURS IN SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

The Clerk of the House of Representatives informed the Senate that the House has concurred in the resolution from the Senate, entitled:

Joint Session.

BILLS REPORTED FROM COMMITTEES

Senator M.J. WHITE, from the Committee on Environmental Resources and Energy, reported the following bill:

HB 1281 (Pr. No. 3175) (Amended)

An Act amending the act of April 28, 1978 (P.L.87, No.41), known as the Pennsylvania Appalachian Trail Act, further providing for actions by municipalities and their powers and duties; and making editorial changes.

Senator BAKER, from the Committee on Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness, reported the following bills:

SB 1172 (Pr. No. 1588)

An Act amending Title 35 (Health and Safety) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, further providing, in provisions relating to the Governor and disaster emergencies, for general authority of the Governor.

SB 1199 (Pr. No. 1627)

An Act amending Title 51 (Military Affairs) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, further providing for educational leave of absence.

SB 1225 (Pr. No. 1738) (Amended)

An Act amending Title 35 (Health and Safety) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, providing for mutual aid.

HB 1094 (Pr. No. 1325)

An Act designating March 19 of each year as "Pennsylvania Military Heroes Day."

Senator D. WHITE, from the Committee on Banking and Insurance, reported the following bill:

SB 484 (Pr. No. 1737) (Amended)(Rereported)

An Act amending the act of May 15, 1933 (P.L.565, No.111), known as the Department of Banking Code, further providing for general scope of supervision and exercise of discretion; prohibiting disclosure of certain information; further providing for criminal history record information; and providing for conduct of administrative proceedings relating to institutions and credit unions.

RESOLUTION REPORTED FROM COMMITTEE

Senator M.J. WHITE, from the Committee on Environmental Resources and Energy, reported the following resolution:

SR 224 (Pr. No. 1703)

A Resolution directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to study the cost for wastewater treatment plants to comply with Pennsylvania's Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy.

LEGISLATIVE LEAVES

The PRESIDENT. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Delaware, Senator Pileggi.

Senator PILEGGI. Madam President, I request a legislative leave for Senator Punt.

The PRESIDENT. Senator Pileggi requests a legislative leave for Senator Punt.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Lackawanna, Senator Mellow.

Senator MELLOW. Madam President, I request a legislative leave for Senator Stout.

The PRESIDENT. Senator Mellow requests a legislative leave for Senator Stout.

Without objection, the leaves will be granted.

SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS JOURNALS APPROVED

The PRESIDENT. The Journals of January 1, 2008, for the 191st Session of the General Assembly, and January 1, 2008, for the 192nd Session of the General Assembly, are now in print.

The Clerk proceeded to read the Journals of the Sessions of January 1, 2008.

Senator PILEGGI. Madam President, I move that further reading of the Journals be dispensed with and that the Journals be approved.

On the question,

Will the Senate agree to the motion?

The yeas and nays were required by Senator PILEGGI and were as follows, viz:

YEA-49

Baker	Fumo	Orie	Tomlinson
Boscola	Gordner	Piccola	Vance
Browne	Greenleaf	Pileggi	Washington
Brubaker	Hughes	Pippy	Waugh
Corman	Kasunic	Punt	White, Donald
Costa	Kitchen	Rafferty	White, Mary Jo
Dinniman	LaValle	Regola	Williams, Anthony H.
Earl	Logan	Rhoades	Williams, Constance
Eichelberger	Madigan	Robbins	Wonderling
Erickson	McIlhinney	Scarnati	Wozniak
Ferlo	Mellow	Stack	
Folmer	Musto	Stout	
Fontana	O'Pake	Tartaglione	

NAY-0

A majority of the Senators having voted "aye," the question was determined in the affirmative.

The PRESIDENT. The Journals are approved.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Senator PILEGGI asked and obtained a leave of absence for Senator ARMSTRONG, for today's Session, for personal reasons.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Delaware, Senator Pileggi.

Senator PILEGGI. Madam President, for the information of the Members, after we listen to the Governor's Budget Address, there will be a meeting of the Republican Caucus in the Majority Caucus Room at approximately 1:30 p.m. We expect to return to the floor at approximately 3 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Lackawanna, Senator Mellow.

Senator MELLOW. Madam President, I ask that the Democratic Members report to our caucus room at 1:30 p.m., following the Joint Session and an opportunity to have lunch.

COMMITTEE APPOINTED TO ESCORT THE GOVERNOR TO THE HALL OF THE HOUSE

The PRESIDENT. The time has come in our order of business to assemble in the Hall of the House of Representatives for a Joint Session. The President pro tempore has appointed the following Senators to act as a committee on the part of the Senate to escort the Governor to the Joint Session: The gentleman from Schuylkill, Senator Rhoades, Chair; the gentleman from Bradford, Senator Madigan; and the gentleman from Beaver, Senator LaValle. The committee will leave immediately to discharge its duties.

SENATE PROCEEDS TO HOUSE TO HEAR GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE

The PRESIDENT. The Members of the Senate will please form a line in the center aisle immediately behind the Sergeant-at-Arms in order to proceed to the Joint Session.

I am also permitting Reverend John Stewart Hardy to accompany the Members over there.

RECESS

The PRESIDENT. The Chair now declares a recess of the Senate.

AFTER RECESS

The PRESIDENT. The time of recess having expired, the Senate will come to order.

CALENDAR

BILLS ON CONCURRENCE IN HOUSE AMENDMENTS TO SENATE AMENDMENTS

SENATE CONCURS IN HOUSE AMENDMENTS TO SENATE AMENDMENTS

HB 1621 (Pr. No. 3154) — The Senate proceeded to consideration of the bill, entitled:

An Act authorizing the Department of General Services, with the concurrence of the Department of Environmental Protection, to lease to VTE Philadelphia, LP, or its nominee, land within the bed of the Delaware River in the City of Philadelphia; and affirming the authority of the General Assembly to enact certain conveyances.

On the question,

Will the Senate concur in the amendments made by the House to Senate amendments to House Bill No. 1621?

Senator PILEGGI. Madam President, I move that the Senate do concur in the amendments made by the House to Senate amendments to House Bill No. 1621.

On the question,
Will the Senate agree to the motion?

The yeas and nays were required by Senator PILEGGI and were as follows, viz:

YEA-49

Baker	Fumo	Orie	Tomlinson
Boscola	Gordner	Piccola	Vance
Browne	Greenleaf	Pileggi	Washington
Brubaker	Hughes	Pippy	Waugh
Corman	Kasunic	Punt	White, Donald
Costa	Kitchen	Rafferty	White, Mary Jo
Dinniman	LaValle	Regola	Williams, Anthony H.
Earll	Logan	Rhoades	Williams, Constance
Eichelberger	Madigan	Robbins	Wonderling
Erickson	McIlhinney	Scarnati	Wozniak
Ferlo	Mellow	Stack	
Folmer	Musto	Stout	
Fontana	O'Pake	Tartaglione	

NAY-0

A constitutional majority of all the Senators having voted "aye," the question was determined in the affirmative.

Ordered, That the Secretary of the Senate inform the House of Representatives accordingly.

SENATE CONCURS IN HOUSE AMENDMENTS TO SENATE AMENDMENTS

HB 1627 (Pr. No. 3155) -- The Senate proceeded to consideration of the bill, entitled:

An Act authorizing the Department of General Services, with the concurrence of the Department of Environmental Protection, to lease to NCCB Associates, LP, or its nominee, land within the bed of the Delaware River in the City of Philadelphia; and affirming the authority of the General Assembly to enact certain conveyances.

On the question,

Will the Senate concur in the amendments made by the House to Senate amendments to House Bill No. 1627?

Senator PILEGGI. Madam President, I move that the Senate do concur in the amendments made by the House to Senate amendments to House Bill No. 1627.

On the question,

Will the Senate agree to the motion?

The yeas and nays were required by Senator PILEGGI and were as follows, viz:

YEA-49

Baker	Fumo	Orie	Tomlinson
Boscola	Gordner	Piccola	Vance
Browne	Greenleaf	Pileggi	Washington
Brubaker	Hughes	Pippy	Waugh
Corman	Kasunic	Punt	White, Donald
Costa	Kitchen	Rafferty	White, Mary Jo
Dinniman	LaValle	Regola	Williams, Anthony H.
Earll	Logan	Rhoades	Williams, Constance
Eichelberger	Madigan	Robbins	Wonderling

Erickson	McIlhinney	Scarnati	Wozniak
Ferlo	Mellow	Stack	
Folmer	Musto	Stout	
Fontana	O'Pake	Tartaglione	

NAY-0

A constitutional majority of all the Senators having voted "aye," the question was determined in the affirmative.

Ordered, That the Secretary of the Senate inform the House of Representatives accordingly.

LEGISLATIVE LEAVE

The PRESIDENT. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Delaware, Senator Pileggi.

Senator PILEGGI. Madam President, I request a legislative leave for Senator Piccola.

The PRESIDENT. Senator Pileggi requests a legislative leave for Senator Piccola. Without objection, the leave will be granted.

CONSIDERATION OF CALENDAR RESUMED

THIRD CONSIDERATION CALENDAR

BILL AMENDED

SB 295 (Pr. No. 1707) -- The Senate proceeded to consideration of the bill, entitled:

An Act providing for idling restrictions on diesel-powered commercial vehicles; and imposing a penalty.

On the question,

Will the Senate agree to the bill on third consideration?

Senator MADIGAN offered the following amendment No. A5644:

Amend Sec. 2, page 5, line 18, by inserting after "VEHICLE" where it appears the first time: is being used commercially and

On the question,

Will the Senate agree to the amendment?

The PRESIDENT. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Bradford, Senator Madigan.

Senator MADIGAN. Madam President, this amendment insures that the intent of the legislation to apply to commercial motor vehicles is clear and that noncommercial drivers are not required to comply with the provisions of the act, and I ask for an affirmative vote.

On the question,

Will the Senate agree to the amendment?

It was agreed to.

Without objection, the bill, as amended, was passed over in its order at the request of Senator PILEGGI.

BILL AMENDED AND LAID ON THE TABLE

SB 776 (Pr. No. 1719) -- The Senate proceeded to consideration of the bill, entitled:

An Act amending the act of June 29, 1953 (P.L.304, No.66), known as the Vital Statistics Law of 1953, further providing for registration districts and local registrars' duties, for death and fetal death registrations and for reports.

On the question,

Will the Senate agree to the bill on third consideration?

Senator WONDERLING offered the following amendment No. A5647:

Amend Sec. 4 (Sec. 801.1), page 4, lines 13 and 14, by striking out "AT A MINIMUM,"

Amend Sec. 4 (Sec. 801.1), page 4, line 15, by striking out "AND" and inserting a comma

Amend Sec. 4 (Sec. 801.1), page 4, line 16, by inserting after "DEATH": , county of death, State file number and the last four digits of the decedent's Social Security number

Amend Sec. 4 (Sec. 801.1), page 4, line 20, by striking out "PURGING" and inserting: removing

On the question,

Will the Senate agree to the amendment?

It was agreed to.

Upon motion of Senator PILEGGI, and agreed to by voice vote, the bill, as amended, was laid on the table.

SB 776 TAKEN FROM THE TABLE

Senator PILEGGI. Madam President, I move that Senate Bill No. 776, Printer's No. 1740, be taken from the table and placed on the Calendar.

The motion was agreed to by voice vote.

The PRESIDENT. The bill will be placed on the Calendar.

BILL OVER IN ORDER

SB 949 -- Without objection, the bill was passed over in its order at the request of Senator PILEGGI.

BILL AMENDED

SB 987 (Pr. No. 1620) -- The Senate proceeded to consideration of the bill, entitled:

An Act amending the act of June 23, 1931 (P.L.932, No.317), known as The Third Class City Code, providing for emergency services.

On the question,

Will the Senate agree to the bill on third consideration?

Senator BAKER offered the following amendment No. A5631:

Amend Sec. 1 (Sec. 2403), page 2, lines 11 through 19, by striking out all of said lines and inserting:

69. Emergency Services.—(a) The city shall be responsible for ensuring that fire and emergency medical services are provided within the city by the means and to the extent determined by the city, including the appropriate financial and administrative assistance for these services.

(b) The city shall consult with fire and emergency medical services providers to discuss the emergency services needs of the city.

(c) The city shall require any emergency services organizations receiving city funds to provide to the city an annual itemized listing of all expenditures of these funds before the city may consider budgeting additional funding to the organization.

On the question,

Will the Senate agree to the amendment?

The PRESIDENT. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Luzerne, Senator Baker.

Senator BAKER. Madam President, this amendment is an agreed-to amendment through the Boroughs Association, the Township Supervisors Association, the League of Cities, and the fire and EMS community. It is reflective of Senate Resolution No. 60 and its number-one recommendation, and I ask for its immediate adoption.

Thank you, Madam President.

And the question recurring,

Will the Senate agree to the amendment?

It was agreed to.

Without objection, the bill, as amended, was passed over in its order at the request of Senator PILEGGI.

BILL ON THIRD CONSIDERATION AND FINAL PASSAGE

SB 1019 (Pr. No. 1711) -- The Senate proceeded to consideration of the bill, entitled:

An Act amending the act of December 22, 1983 (P.L.306, No.84), known as the Board of Vehicles Act, further providing for definitions, for grounds for disciplinary proceedings for vehicle shows, off-premise sales and exhibitions; providing for recreational vehicle shows, recreational vehicle off-premise sales, recreational vehicle exhibitions and recreational vehicle rallies; and further providing for vehicle shows, off-premise sales and exhibitions on Sundays.

Considered the third time and agreed to,

And the amendments made thereto having been printed as required by the Constitution,

On the question,

Shall the bill pass finally?

The yeas and nays were taken agreeably to the provisions of the Constitution and were as follows, viz:

YEA-49

Baker	Fumo	Orie	Tomlinson
Boscola	Gordner	Piccola	Vance
Browne	Greenleaf	Pileggi	Washington
Brubaker	Hughes	Pippy	Waugh
Corman	Kasunic	Punt	White, Donald
Costa	Kitchen	Rafferty	White, Mary Jo
Dinniman	LaValle	Regola	Williams, Anthony H.
Earll	Logan	Rhoades	Williams, Constance
Eichelberger	Madigan	Robbins	Wonderling
Erickson	McIlhinney	Scarnati	Wozniak
Ferlo	Mellow	Stack	
Folmer	Musto	Stout	
Fontana	O'Pake	Tartaglione	

NAY-0

A constitutional majority of all the Senators having voted "aye," the question was determined in the affirmative.

Ordered, That the Secretary of the Senate present said bill to the House of Representatives for concurrence.

BILL LAID ON THE TABLE

SB 1027 (Pr. No. 1302) -- The Senate proceeded to consideration of the bill, entitled:

An Act amending Title 42 (Judiciary and Judicial Procedure) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in State intermediate punishment provisions, further providing for referral to State intermediate punishment program.

Upon motion of Senator PILEGGI, and agreed to by voice vote, the bill was laid on the table.

SB 1027 TAKEN FROM THE TABLE

Senator PILEGGI. Madam President, I move that Senate Bill No. 1027, Printer's No. 1302, be taken from the table and placed on the Calendar.

The motion was agreed to by voice vote.

The PRESIDENT. The bill will be placed on the Calendar.

BILLS AMENDED

HB 1131 (Pr. No. 1382) -- The Senate proceeded to consideration of the bill, entitled:

An Act amending the act of May 1, 1933 (P.L.103, No.69), known as The Second Class Township Code, providing for the establishment of fire and emergency medical services.

On the question,

Will the Senate agree to the bill on third consideration?

Senator BAKER offered the following amendment No. A5632:

Amend Sec. 1 (Sec. 1553), page 1, lines 12 through 17; page 2, lines 1 through 4, by striking out all of said lines on said pages and inserting:

Section 1553. Emergency Services.—(a) The township shall be responsible for ensuring that fire and emergency medical services are provided within the township by the means and to the extent determined by the township, including the appropriate financial and administrative assistance for these services.

(b) The township shall consult with fire and emergency medical services providers to discuss the emergency services needs of the township.

(c) The township shall require any emergency services organizations receiving township funds to provide to the township an annual itemized listing of all expenditures of these funds before the township may consider budgeting additional funding to the organization.

On the question,

Will the Senate agree to the amendment?

It was agreed to.

Without objection, the bill, as amended, was passed over in its order at the request of Senator PILEGGI.

HB 1133 (Pr. No. 1384) -- The Senate proceeded to consideration of the bill, entitled:

An Act amending the act of February 1, 1966 (1965 P.L.1656, No.581), known as The Borough Code, providing for specific powers of boroughs relating to emergency services.

On the question,

Will the Senate agree to the bill on third consideration?

Senator BAKER offered the following amendment No. A5629:

Amend Sec. 1 (Sec. 1202), page 2, lines 3 through 12, by striking out all of said lines and inserting:

(82) Emergency services. The borough shall be responsible for ensuring that fire and emergency medical services are provided within the borough by the means and to the extent determined by the borough, including the appropriate financial and administrative assistance for these services. The borough shall consult with fire and emergency medical services providers to discuss the emergency services needs of the borough. The borough shall require any emergency services organization receiving borough funds to provide to the borough an annual itemized listing of all expenditures of these funds before the borough may consider budgeting additional funding to the organization.

On the question,

Will the Senate agree to the amendment?

It was agreed to.

Without objection, the bill, as amended, was passed over in its order at the request of Senator PILEGGI.

HB 1134 (Pr. No. 1385) -- The Senate proceeded to consideration of the bill, entitled:

An Act amending the act of June 24, 1931 (P.L.1206, No.331), known as The First Class Township Code, providing for specific powers relating to emergency services.

On the question,

Will the Senate agree to the bill on third consideration?

Senator BAKER offered the following amendment No. A5630:

Amend Sec. 1 (Sec. 1502), page 1, lines 16 and 17; page 2, lines 1 through 8, by striking out all of said lines on said pages and inserting:

LXXIX. Emergency Services. (a) The township shall be responsible for ensuring that fire and emergency medical services are provided within the township by the means and to the extent determined by the township, including the appropriate financial and administrative assistance for these services.

(b) The township shall consult with fire and emergency medical services providers to discuss the emergency services needs of the township.

(c) The township shall require any emergency services organizations receiving township funds to provide to the township an annual itemized listing of all expenditures of these funds before the township may consider budgeting additional funding to the organization.

On the question,

Will the Senate agree to the amendment?

It was agreed to.

Without objection, the bill, as amended, was passed over in its order at the request of Senator PILEGGI.

SB 1201 (Pr. No. 1709) -- The Senate proceeded to consideration of the bill, entitled:

An Act amending Title 74 (Transportation) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, providing for logging of certain aircraft flights.

On the question,

Will the Senate agree to the bill on third consideration?

Senator MADIGAN offered the following amendment No. A5661:

Amend Sec. 1 (Sec. 5302), page 3, line 1, by inserting after "OF":
executive and passenger

Amend Sec. 1 (Sec. 5302), page 3, line 4, by striking out "IF NOT MORE FREQUENTLY"

On the question,
Will the Senate agree to the amendment?

The PRESIDENT. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Bradford, Senator Madigan.

Senator MADIGAN. Madam President, this amendment clarifies that the detailed public log of executive and passenger flights on our Commonwealth aircraft is not required for flights of aircraft doing surveying, mapping, aerial photography, or similar nonpassenger flights. I request a unanimous affirmative vote.

And the question recurring,
Will the Senate agree to the amendment?
It was agreed to.

Without objection, the bill, as amended, was passed over in its order at the request of Senator PILEGGI.

BILL REREFERRED

HB 1691 (Pr. No. 2225) -- The Senate proceeded to consideration of the bill, entitled:

An Act authorizing the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Department of Transportation, Department of Environmental Protection and Philadelphia Regional Port Authority, on behalf of the Commonwealth, to agree to hold and save the United States Army Corps of Engineers free from certain damages arising from certain construction projects.

Upon motion of Senator PILEGGI, and agreed to by voice vote, the bill was rereferred to the Committee on Appropriations.

SECOND CONSIDERATION CALENDAR

BILLS OVER IN ORDER

HB 500 and HB 501 -- Without objection, the bills were passed over in their order at the request of Senator PILEGGI.

BILL ON SECOND CONSIDERATION

SB 1096 (Pr. No. 1708) -- The Senate proceeded to consideration of the bill, entitled:

An Act amending Title 75 (Vehicles) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, further providing, in snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles, for the definition of "all-terrain vehicle" or "ATV," for operation on State or private property and for penalties for violation of chapter.

Considered the second time and agreed to,
Ordered, To be printed on the Calendar for third consideration.

SENATE RESOLUTION No. 188, CALLED UP

RESOLUTION LAID ON THE TABLE

Senator PILEGGI, without objection, called up from page 3 of the Calendar, **Senate Resolution No. 188**, entitled:

A Resolution urging the Government of Turkey to cease its discrimination of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, to grant the Ecumenical Patriarch appropriate international recognition, ecclesiastical succession and the right to train clergy of all nationalities, and to respect the property rights and human rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Upon motion of Senator PILEGGI, and agreed to by voice vote, the resolution was laid on the table.

SR 188 TAKEN FROM THE TABLE

Senator PILEGGI. Madam President, I move that Senate Resolution No. 188, Printer's No. 1637, be taken from the table and placed on the Calendar.

The motion was agreed to by voice vote.

The PRESIDENT. The resolution will be placed on the Calendar.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS SENATE RESOLUTION ADOPTED

Senators HUGHES, A. WILLIAMS, C. WILLIAMS, WASHINGTON, MUSTO, FERLO, FONTANA, TARTAGLIONE, GREENLEAF, ORIE, WONDERLING, RAFFERTY, LAVALLE, LOGAN, WOZNIAK, DINNIMAN, BAKER, ERICKSON, COSTA and ARMSTRONG, by unanimous consent, offered **Senate Resolution No. 232**, entitled:

A Resolution designating February 7, 2008, as "Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day" in Pennsylvania.

On the question,
Will the Senate adopt the resolution?

The PRESIDENT. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Philadelphia, Senator Hughes.

Senator HUGHES. Madam President, this resolution is in recognition of February 7, 2008, as Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. We have stood in this Chamber in years past, in numerous situations, to discuss the issue of the crisis of HIV/AIDS. It is a devastating disease. It is growing not just in this country, but it is growing internationally. It is moving. In every case where you find issues in communities of poverty, you will find significant levels of infection of HIV and the manifestation of AIDS.

This disease is especially impacting communities of color and especially impacting black communities all around the globe. We know in the United States that approximately 50 percent of the new infections of HIV are within the African American community.

Obviously, that is a disproportional reality, given the fact that the African American community represents about 13 percent of the entire population of this country.

So this resolution, Madam President, is just an opportunity for this body to officially recognize the reality of this disease, especially where it has nurtured itself, has grown and manifested to

something that is incredibly devastating, and I would hope that this body, this State, and this nation take this issue a little more seriously with respect to dealing with the issues around HIV and AIDS. This disease is a little over 25 years of age. It has impacted the lives of thousands of people in this country, and has impacted the lives of millions of people all over the world. We choose, for whatever reason, to not be as serious as we need to be in terms of presenting our attention, our minds, and our resources to try to find a resolve.

So consequently, Madam President, I ask for a unanimous vote by this body in support of this resolution, which raises the level of attention on the issue of February 7, this coming Thursday, as National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day.

Thank you very much, Madam President.

And the question recurring,

Will the Senate adopt the resolution?

A voice vote having been taken, the question was determined in the affirmative.

CONGRATULATORY RESOLUTIONS

The PRESIDENT laid before the Senate the following resolutions, which were read, considered, and adopted by voice vote:

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to the 193rd Special Operations Wing of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard by Senator Brubaker.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Family Services Incorporated of Altoona by Senator Eichelberger.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Kevin Blattner by Senator Erickson.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Damian Davies by Senator Ferlo.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to the Bridge of Hope Lebanon County by Senator Folmer.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Thomas A. Bruder, Jr., Michael Alfred Lizza and to John W. Ryan by Senator Pileggi.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Cody Luchs and to Kyle Anstrom by Senator Scarnati.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Paul Gorski, Hope Mayer, Lawrence Padalino, Stephen Kraiss, Steven Krippel, Stephen Brookes, James W. McGuire III, Nicholas Owarzani, Christopher Hawraney, Marc Kaman, Adam Noel, William Martin, William Wiegman, Jr., Gerald Kuhner, Timothy Kennelly, James Taylor, Melvin Groninger and to Mark Kramer by Senator Tomlinson.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Brian McGuire by Senators Tomlinson and Greenleaf.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Larry Grake by Senators Tomlinson and Wonderling.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Dana Alexander by Senator D. White.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Mamadou Cisse by Senator A.H. Williams.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Kyle M. Sinding by Senator Wonderling.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Richard and Roberta Fleming and to Joseph Correll by Senator Wonderling and others.

CONDOLENCE RESOLUTION

The PRESIDENT laid before the Senate the following resolution, which was read, considered, and adopted by voice vote:

Condolences of the Senate were extended to the family of the late Dr. Brian D. Murphy by Senator McIlhinney.

BILLS ON FIRST CONSIDERATION

Senator FUMO. Madam President, I move that the Senate do now proceed to consideration of all bills reported from committees for the first time at today's Session.

The motion was agreed to by voice vote.

The bills were as follows:

SB 1172, SB 1199, SB 1225, HB 1094 and HB 1281.

And said bills having been considered for the first time,

Ordered, To be printed on the Calendar for second consideration.

PETITIONS AND REMONSTRANCES

The PRESIDENT. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Philadelphia, Senator Stack.

Senator STACK. Madam President, I rise today to highlight just a few key areas of Governor Rendell's proposed 2008-09 budget. Like many things we do here in Harrisburg, it is not perfect, and it does not do everything, but it proposes some excellent initiatives. I want to praise the Governor for presenting a budget that protects our economic growth, while once again proposing no new taxes.

As our nation prepares for troubling economic times, Pennsylvania is safeguarding our economic infrastructure with this proposed budget. We cannot control what happens in the world economy, but we can do our part to protect our future as best we can. By funding projects that improve our bridges, dams, rail freight, airports, and others, we are improving Pennsylvania for the short term and for the long term. Investing in these projects will maintain, and even increase, quality jobs. We are doing better on Pennsylvania jobs. We can keep improving, Madam President.

This budget will help businesses and communities. Most importantly, it will strengthen our critical infrastructure and ensure our safety. In addition to protecting our economy, this budget also takes a bold step to protect our citizens. Specifically, the budget calls for doubling the funding of the State's Police on Patrol program from \$10 million to \$20 million. Many communities will benefit from this program, including Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Erie, Reading, and York.

The Police on Patrol program helps communities hire additional police officers to work in problem neighborhoods. There is no substitute for more police on our streets, Madam President, and I can tell you that in Philadelphia, contrary to a lot of talk, people in tough neighborhoods appreciate greatly extra police to help keep them safe. This program improves safety and enhances the quality of life in communities across Pennsylvania. Our police officers are putting their lives on the line for all of us. This increased funding will give police departments the support they need to continue to perform their job to the fullest potential.

Madam President, as we prepare to weigh the 2008-09 budget in the next few months, I hope that the entire General Assembly can work together to pass a solid budget that is fiscally responsible and helpful to the citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. After all, that is why our constituents have sent us here.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDENT. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Centre, Senator Corman.

Senator CORMAN. Madam President, I want to also talk a little bit today about what the Governor proposed, and some of my thoughts on the area of healthcare. The Governor today renewed his interest in his proposed plan, Cover All Pennsylvanians. In the coming days, Madam President, we are going to hear a lot about the uninsured, what that number is, and the amount of dollars, the billions of dollars it will take to reach the uninsured.

Hopefully, Madam President, we will also discuss a few other important issues dealing with healthcare; what we can do to lower the costs of healthcare, both in the short term and the long term, so we can make health insurance more affordable to all Pennsylvanians. Before we get into that discussion, I think it is important that we discuss what we already do here as Pennsylvanians, the taxpayers of Pennsylvania, Madam President. And it is always important to remember that the services that are provided by the government of Pennsylvania are not provided by the legislature or by the executive branch, but by the taxpayers. The taxpayers are the ones who foot the bill, whether they are paying through their income taxes, whether they are paying through the sales tax, or whether they are paying through the higher cost of goods because of the cost to bring those to business to tax. The people of Pennsylvania are providing the dollars that provide the services in Pennsylvania. When it comes to healthcare services, Madam President, Pennsylvania taxpayers foot the bill to the tune of \$6.3 billion. Let me repeat that number, because it is a significant number: \$6.3 billion in State tax dollars currently go toward health services here in Pennsylvania in providing health insurance.

In 2007, Governor Rendell focused his legislative initiatives on providing universal healthcare for uninsured Pennsylvanians. This year, healthcare and health coverage, again, and healthcare costs are not new, but become an ever-increasing concern for both government and citizens in Pennsylvania. Both individuals and families are finding it more and more difficult to pay for the insurance that they are forced to pay more and more out of their pockets. A study released in 2006, Madam President, stated that in 2003, individuals spent an average of \$707 out of their pocket for healthcare expenses. That amount has surely grown in the last 5 years, and increases with each family member. While Pennsylvanians can clearly see how much they are paying out of their pocket for their own office visits, prescriptions, and healthcare costs and needs, that is only a fraction of what they are actually paying.

Through State tax dollars, Pennsylvanians are also contributing, as I mentioned, over \$6 billion in order to fund public welfare insurance programs and plans. At issue is not the fact that all Pennsylvanians should have access to healthcare or that taxpayer dollars are used for those people in need, but the administration of these programs that call for enormous dollar amounts are what is in question, Madam President.

Currently, as I said, we fund over \$6 billion for Medical Assistance for those in need, and there are 1,893,397 individuals.

Again, there are almost 1.9 million individuals eligible for these services. If you qualify for these services, Madam President, you get them. It is that simple. In Pennsylvania, taxpayers are very generous with the benefits we provide on those medical assistance programs. Other States, people who live in other States, would be very envious of the programs we provide. As a matter of fact, people here in Pennsylvania who have private insurance would be very envious of the programs we provide.

We cover ambulance services when it is not mandated by the Federal government. We cover ambulatory surgical center visits when it is not mandated by the Federal government. We cover behavioral health rehabilitation services when it is not mandated by the Federal government. We cover birthing center services when it is not mandated by the Federal government. We cover chiropractor services when it is not mandated by the Federal government. We cover dental services when it is not mandated by the Federal government. We cover eyeglasses when it is not mandated by the Federal government. We cover medical supplies and equipment when it is not mandated by the Federal government. We cover optometrist services when it is not mandated by the Federal government. We cover personal care when it is not mandated by the Federal government. We cover podiatrist services when it is not mandated by the Federal government. We cover private duty nursing when it is not mandated by the Federal government. We cover psychological services when it is not mandated by the Federal government. We cover renal dialysis when it is not mandated by the Federal government. We cover residential treatment facility services when it is not mandated by the Federal government. We cover pharmacy services when it is not mandated by Federal government.

Breaking this down, Madam President, \$4.5 billion in State funding, \$1.1 billion in provider assessments, \$0.2 billion from the Lottery, and \$0.2 billion from the tobacco settlement. If we include Federal dollars, Madam President, to this pot of \$7.8 billion, we will almost reach \$14 billion of subsidized healthcare services to the people of Pennsylvania, and we are not done yet. We fund \$163.3 million for adultBasic, a health insurance for those individuals between the ages of 19 and 65. AdultBasic provides health insurance to adult Pennsylvanians who are uninsured with a net family income no greater than 200 percent of the Federal poverty guidelines, which amounts to about \$42,400 for a family of four. Sixty million dollars of that comes from tobacco settlement funds, and \$103 million comes from the Annual Community Health Reinvestment.

Last, but not least, Madam President, we cover all kids. The CHIP Program, as it is known as, the Children's Health Insurance Program, which was established in 1992, updated in 1997, and also in 2006, is funded at over \$100 million in State taxpayer funding, with Federal funding as well. CHIP provides health insurance for uninsured children and teenagers who are not eligible for Medical Assistance. As of last month, there are 166,969 children enrolled in CHIP. Here is what CHIP provides: Immunizations, routine checkups, prescription drugs, dental care, maternity care, mental health benefits, up to 90 days of hospitalization per year, durable medical equipment, substance abuse treatment, hospitalization for mental health services, rehabilitation services, home healthcare, labs and pathology testing, X-rays, emergency care including ambulance transportation, and hearing and vision care.

The funding for these benefits are about \$63.5 million from State taxpayer funding, \$36.7 million from cigarette smokers, and \$209 million from Federal funding, totaling \$309.3 million. In total, Pennsylvania serves over 2.1 million people through Medical Assistance, adultBasic, and CHIP, and we spend over \$6 billion in doing it. These costs are not going to go down, either, Madam President. They continue to rise. All budgets, whether they be Federal, State, local, school district, or home, are affected by the rising costs of providing healthcare. Again, this is a starting point for me, as I will continue to come back and talk about the issue of healthcare and how we go about trying to give all Pennsylvanians access to healthcare.

It is a major problem. The problem, Madam President, is the affordability of healthcare, and that is a major part of this discussion we need to have going forward. As I laid out here, the taxpayers of Pennsylvania are very generous, Madam President. We spend over \$6 billion every year on providing healthcare services. Now, the Governor's plan to Cover All Pennsylvanians would increase that dramatically, and it is a debate we should have. All our goals should be to make sure that everyone has access to health insurance and affordable healthcare. But to just throw more money on top of this without tackling the significant issue of the affordability of healthcare, I think, could get us into an endless pot of money which the taxpayers of Pennsylvania are going to find very difficult to afford in the coming months.

So, as we move on during this debate, I will be back in a few weeks to talk about the uninsured, who they are, and what some of the issues are with them. I will be back to talk about the Governor's plan, Cover All Pennsylvanians. Again, Madam President, whether the government is providing the insurance or whether private employers are providing insurance, whatever it may be, if we do not figure out how to lower the costs, as I said here, we are all going to go bankrupt. We need to really give a lot of attention toward the affordability of healthcare.

I'll just steal a line from the Democratic presidential nominee, Barack Obama, in his debate most recently with Hillary Clinton and John Edwards, when he said, I do not think we have uninsured because people do not want insurance. I think we have uninsured because people cannot afford insurance. His plan was directed more toward affordability, and I would like to see us make an effort at that, as well.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDENT. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Philadelphia, Senator Kitchen.

Senator KITCHEN. Madam President, I rise to express concern, and not just myself, but on behalf of a number of people here in Pennsylvania, and that concerns the way we are doing background checks here in Pennsylvania.

Madam President, we are talking specifically about nonviolent offenders. Here in Pennsylvania, an offense can stay on your record, we are speaking now of nonviolent offenses, until you reach age 70. Madam President, that is preventing people from getting a decent job, preventing them from getting mortgages, and preventing them from being able to make the necessary adjustments they need to make in life. These particular people I am talking about committed nonviolent offenses 20 years ago, 30 years ago, even 10 years ago, and it is still holding them back.

Now, there was a bill, and it did make it as far as the Calendar, and it was Senate Bill No. 232. I was very hopeful that we were going to see some action. Senate Bill No. 232 was a very

reasonable way to approach this subject; it did not change who would control removing the background checks, but what it did was put a reasonable time limit so that people who committed no other offenses would not be unfairly penalized. The people that want a second chance have remained crime-free for 20 and 30 years. Madam President, I do not think that we should penalize young people for using bad judgment, for making mistakes, because I think we all have made bad judgments, but we did it at a time when every little thing did not turn into something that was going to be on our records for 10, 20, or 30 years.

In order for us to stop building prisons, we have to do something about the recidivism rate, and one of the ways we have to do it is that we have to give people a chance who have been crime-free, who have committed nonviolent offenses, have been crime-free 10 years, 20 years, and who have demonstrated that they want to turn their lives around. I think that we are unfairly, though maybe not intentionally, but we are unfairly holding people back. We are unfairly, we are unknowingly, adding to the reason of recidivism, which is pushing for more prisons and pushing the prison budget up.

Madam President, I hope if not now, before this election, but before this term is out, that we can revisit Senate Bill No. 232, because it is affecting people all over Pennsylvania, not just people in my district. I do not want people to think it is just people in my district, because it is not. It is people across all of Pennsylvania. It is affecting people from all walks of life. People have gone to college and cannot work in their profession because they have an infraction on their record which occurred maybe 20 or 30 years ago.

Madam President, I am really preaching to the choir when I talk to you because you know all about it, and you have demonstrated that you would like to help young people across Pennsylvania start over. I think if we would just look into Senate Bill No. 232, it does nothing more than give people a second chance. The courts still decide who receives an expungement. It does not change any of that. It just puts reasonable time limits for people who have remained crime-free.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDENT. Senator Kitchen, I could not agree with you more. I would suggest you take your petition to your Committee on Judiciary. I thank you for what you had to say.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Allegheny, Senator Costa.

Senator COSTA. Madam President, I rise to briefly respond to the comments that were addressed by my friend and colleague from Centre County, Senator Corman, relative to the issue of healthcare. No doubt, Madam President, I agree with Senator Corman and his assessment that this is a very, very important issue, one that we do need to talk about in the very near future, because I think it is one that our Pennsylvanians, our residents of this Commonwealth, expect us to talk about and to address.

I appreciated the opportunity to hear from the Senator the benefits, the programs that are provided here in this Commonwealth to our constituents across this Commonwealth. They are very, very important. My only comment to that is, Madam President, while he indicated a number of times that they were above and beyond what the Federal government requires, I think the bottom line is that I tend not to look and see what the Federal government requires to determine what we need to do here in Pennsylvania. I think it is appropriate that the programs we pro-

vide and the resources that we provide for our Commonwealth residents are derived from us here in Pennsylvania, because our Commonwealth residents expect us to be able to provide these types of benefits.

Over the past several years, there have been a lot of discussions about driving down the cost of healthcare, and I agree with my colleague when he states that we need to look at that issue. I think as he knows, and my colleagues in this room know, we have done that. We have taken significant steps to try to drive down the cost of healthcare.

Madam President, as you know, and my colleagues know, as part of the Mcare program that we put in place a few years back, we created a patient safety authority to direct them to be able to look at some of the things that need to be done relative to patient safety in our healthcare facilities.

More recently, we talked about Senator Erickson's legislation, the landmark legislation that talked about healthcare-acquired infections and how important that legislation is, and how that is going to work to drive down costs in the healthcare arena.

Madam President, we also addressed the issue of scope of services. We have addressed the scope of services for midwives, in terms of what they are permitted to do, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners.

Nevertheless, Madam President, the bottom line is that we have expanded the scope of their practices to allow them the opportunity to provide services at a lower cost, and to be able to provide access to healthcare for those people who need it throughout this Commonwealth. So we have taken steps toward that end to try to drive down healthcare costs in this administration.

More recently, as part of the Governor's Prescription for Pennsylvania, the Governor has consistently talked about two areas. One is an area dealing with, and again he spoke about it today in his Budget Address, how we manage chronic care. The Governor has talked consistently about putting together programs and implementing legislation that is going to address the need of how we manage our chronic care patients. It is absolutely critical that we do a better job in that regard. We are talking about \$2 billion worth of costs that we can take out of the healthcare system. Madam President, to me, that is very significant. And as it relates to hospital-acquired infections, or healthcare-acquired infections, the hope is that we are going to be able to drive close to \$5 billion of resources out of that healthcare system.

Madam President, many of my colleagues know that I unfortunately have had the opportunity to be part of the healthcare system more recently. Not that I wanted to be there, but I got a firsthand opportunity to see exactly how things operate and what takes place there. I will tell you that I agree that we need to take a look at the spiraling costs of healthcare, but the fact of the matter remains, we still have 700,000 people who are without healthcare in this Commonwealth. We need to find a way to make those folks have access to the quality, the high quality healthcare that we have here in Pennsylvania.

We are fortunate. I am fortunate to have the ability to go to the UPMC in Pittsburgh and be treated, and treated very well. That is not the case for so many Pennsylvanians, and it is critical that we go toward that end. The Governor cited a statistic today that should be very alarming to all of us. The Governor said in his speech today that over 400,000 people are losing their healthcare benefits, working people, because employers made

the decision that they cannot afford to cover healthcare for their employees any longer. They made the decision to cancel that; 400,000 people have gone off the healthcare rolls, basically.

Fortunately, we do have an adultBasic program that is out there right now that provides some relief to some Pennsylvanians. We were fortunate to put 29,000 more people from those rolls onto the adultBasic rolls, but at the end of the day, we still have a waiting list of several tens of thousands, maybe closer to 60,000 to 70,000 people in this Commonwealth who want to be part of adultBasic but cannot get involved. The fact of the matter is, it is imperative that we have this dialogue about healthcare. We need to have dialogue about how we provide coverage to our Pennsylvanians and how we make certain that we fund it in an appropriate way that we are not going to be overly burdensome to the taxpayers of Pennsylvania.

Going back to the point about taxpayers of Pennsylvania paying for healthcare, it is because we need it. It was mentioned in the previous comments about Medical Assistance. Medical Assistance is consistently one of the biggest numbers that grows in this budget every year, and we always hear about how we need to drive back the resources. At the end of the day, we all know in this room that the biggest cost for Medical Assistance is derived from our seniors and our disabled, and the healthcare costs related to them. They are one of the smaller percentage numbers, but yet cost the most. That is because of the nature of our Commonwealth. We are a Commonwealth that is an aged Commonwealth. It is important that we recognize that we have an obligation, and as Members of this General Assembly, we put these programs into place, we vote for these programs, to continue to provide these services to our residents because they want us to do that.

So I am appreciative of the efforts of my colleague from Centre County to bring this issue up. I think it is one that we really need to continue to embark upon, and I hope that we can have some good dialogue about it and figure out the best way that we can mutually agree to address this issue in a very expeditious fashion. So I thank you for the opportunity to raise the issue, and we can agree to disagree about how we get to that end, but I think at the end of the day, we need to have the dialogue, and I think it is something that is very, very important.

I thank you for the opportunity to provide some remarks, Madam President.

The PRESIDENT. Before you start, Senator Hughes, Senator Wonderling wants to respond to Senator Costa. Are you going to be on the same subject?

Senator WONDERLING. Thank you, Madam President. In particular, thank you, Senator Hughes, for yielding the floor. I will not be as eloquent as Senator Hughes, but I do want to offer a couple of comments, as I was sitting here listening to both of my colleagues, Senator Corman and Senator Costa. First, I was delighted to see Senator Costa back from his recovery from unexpected surgery.

I was amazed at the litany of benefits and the \$6-plus billion obligation, if you will, that we as taxpayers in Pennsylvania currently provide by law to insure that Pennsylvanians have access to healthcare, and, as Senator Costa suggested, high-quality healthcare. We, as Pennsylvanians, are blessed with absolutely world-class healthcare providers and systems.

And I am also greatly enthused that today, on a day in which the Governor proposes his budget and meets his constitutional

obligation, that at least those of us in the Senate have begun, in a respectful fashion, the debate on what is a paramount issue in people's minds. I hear from my constituents daily that they struggle to make ends meet, that they are concerned that if they do suffer illness that requires hospitalization, they may not have the healthcare coverage to support that.

Our economy is in flux, and that is the nature of working in Pennsylvania, in what is now a global economy. People come and go from an employer at a much more frequent pace than they did even a decade or so ago. So I empathize with the millions of Pennsylvanians who are concerned about their economic future, and particularly how that relates to the future of their healthcare. What they want is access to high-quality healthcare, and they want that healthcare to be affordable. And so we will have vigorous debate in this Chamber, and I am sure in the House also, on the specifics of the Governor's proposal.

I know Senator Folmer, on our side of the aisle, has put forth a comprehensive plan of his own, and there are many ideas around this building as to how to attack this problem. But at the end of the day, I think the issue will come down to, how do we pay for it? Can the hardworking men and women of this Commonwealth bear any more tax increases to fund access to affordable healthcare? By any estimate, if you work in the Commonwealth today, over 50 percent of your gross income goes to fund Federal, State, and local government. It is a high price that we pay to be secure, to have services provided to us, and people, at least the folks whom I serve, do not want to pay much more in taxes.

So if we look at the Governor's specific financial plan to fund Cover All Pennsylvanians, he essentially is proposing its funding in three broad areas. One is a reliance on the Federal government in the form of waivers and dispensation, in which we will get a greater share of the Federal pie. What I appreciate and respect of His Excellency, Governor Rendell, is the eternal optimism. But I read the same financial reports that I am sure he does coming from our Federal government in terms of looming deficits. In all candor, Madam President, I do not think anybody who is in the White House in November is going to do anything more for those of us in the States in terms of moving a portion of that Federal pie to Pennsylvania. I wish I could offer a more optimistic scenario in that regard, but I think Pennsylvania is no different than the other States in this union, and that we are going to have to deal with these healthcare issues on our own. So if indeed the Governor is counting on a portion of his plan to be financed by the Federal government, I suggest they get about a 50-50 chance of success.

Second, he is calling on a tax increase on smokers in Pennsylvania. That might be well and good to carve out a segment of our society and impose an even higher tax on them, but it is not exactly sound economic policy to sustain a long-term commitment to the healthcare of Pennsylvanians when you look at the fact that that tax, as a source of revenue, is on the decline, both here in Pennsylvania and nationally. Obviously, this is because fewer and fewer folks are smoking, and the tax, therefore, is not a reliable tax over the long term. Whether you think it is fine to tax cigarette smokers more is not the issue. I just do not think it is a reliable source of revenue to fund this ambitious healthcare agenda.

And then finally, and I think what is really somewhat tragic about the Governor's proposal, he wants to tax entrepreneurship.

Clever nomenclature to call it a fair share tax, but let us be crystal clear what the Governor is proposing. He is proposing a payroll tax on the entrepreneurs of this Commonwealth, the mom-and-pop businesses that are struggling to start, to meet payroll, and in their growth and maturity, may not be able to afford a health insurance plan. In fact, that is part of the problem that we have. The number of uninsured in Pennsylvania is growing from the ranks of the small business sector. And when I say small business sector, companies of a hundred or less employees. Yet the Governor is proposing yet another tax increase, and in doing so, I think is taxing entrepreneurship, which is the lifeblood of our economy.

So I have every reason to believe, Madam President, that we will reach consensus on a bipartisan basis on the specifics of who we cover, when we cover, and what is the mix of benefits for Pennsylvanians so they have the access and the opportunity for healthcare in this Commonwealth that I know we all agree on, which is why, Madam President, I would like to propose perhaps a different way to finance this solution.

This week, I have introduced Senate Bill No. 1273, which calls for the privatization of retail liquor stores in this Commonwealth. I know some have suggested that, much like Don Quixote, I am tilting at a policy windmill, and that this has been tried and attempted many times, and I guess even folks carrying fancy titles like "Governor" have attempted to privatize the liquor system to no success. But I would argue, Madam President, the following: First, it has been over 10 years since we have had a vigorous public debate on whether or not the retail sale of wine and booze is a core function of a modern State government. Second, Madam President, when the citizens of this Commonwealth are taxed at a rate of over 50 percent of their gross income, and yet they know, and we all know, that they need to have some access to affordable healthcare, where do we find the money? Where do we find the money?

So that is why, Madam President, it is estimated that the legislation that I have introduced, by selling off the State Store system, can raise upfront upwards to anywhere from \$800,000 to \$1 billion that can be placed in an interest-bearing account not much different than our tobacco settlement fund that can be used to finance the long-term healthcare requirements of Pennsylvania citizens. Our legislation also insures that there will be no offset to the General Fund. The current public monopoly that we call the Liquor Control Board generated gross revenues of over \$1 billion last year and, I believe, are making a one-time transfer again this year of \$80 million, for a total of about \$400 million to the General Fund. We have a multibillion dollar budget, so let us put those numbers into context.

And then finally, Madam President, under my legislation, we would create another event for a future auction of some 200 liquor licenses that would remain under a part ownership model, a hybrid ownership model between the Pennsylvania State government and the private equity markets.

So why am I talking about healthcare and privatizing the liquor system? I think we need to find a new way, a third way, a different way to finance what we all agree is an important issue for Pennsylvanians. Where do we find the money? This is not like manna from heaven. The money does not grow on trees, and Pennsylvanians are sick and tired of having their taxes increased, no matter how meritorious the program or policy might be. So what I am hoping for, Madam President, my plea, I guess, to my

colleagues today and those Pennsylvanians beyond this building, is that we look at, very seriously, what we want from a modern Pennsylvania government.

I believe that providing access and providing affordable healthcare should be a core function of a modern government in this Commonwealth. We need to do this. I do not believe having retail establishments in the sale of liquor and booze is a core function of that same modern government. We should shed ourselves of something that is obsolete and from the past and, in the process of shedding something that is obsolete and a relic of the past, raise substantial revenue to fund something that, I think, is important to Pennsylvania's future, and that is our healthcare system.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDENT. Thank you, Senator Wonderling, for your proposals.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Philadelphia, Senator Hughes.

Senator HUGHES. Madam President, let me rise to the podium, to the microphone at this moment. Obviously, I want to speak about healthcare, as I have been trying to do for several weeks, several months now. But before I do that, I also want to congratulate and thank and welcome back my good friend and colleague, Senator Costa. It is good to see him. It is good to have him back. It is better when you are here than when you are not here, although caucuses did run a little bit shorter, but that is okay. We appreciate that, and we are glad he is here. We are glad he is here.

Senator COSTA. Thank you.

Senator HUGHES. I also want to send a note of appreciation out to my good friend and colleague, Senator Corman, for his thoughtful analysis of healthcare and what we provide, as a State, to millions of Pennsylvania citizens with respect to trying to get our citizens, those whom we represent, the people for whom we are charged to take care of their situation. Senator Corman provided us a good, thoughtful analysis of the dollars that we currently spend, taxpayer dollars that we currently spend, on trying to provide quality healthcare services. And if not quality, at least sufficient healthcare services to try to make them healthier, put them in a good position. And also, when someone else has good health, that kind of spreads around to the rest of us. It is a positive thing for the rest of us. So I sincerely appreciate the good Senator for making those comments. We served as Republican and Democratic chairs of the Committee on Public Health and Welfare together, and we did some good work, and I really appreciate his years of service.

I want to, however, go through some statistics and some numbers that have just been raised, or may not have been raised, excuse me, but I think need not be lost in this conversation. In spite of all of the dollars and all of the resources and the drive that we provide for so many millions of Pennsylvania citizens with respect to their healthcare, in spite of some of the most incredible healthcare institutions that we have in this Commonwealth that cannot be matched anywhere in the world - our incredible pharmaceutical industry, our cancer centers, our children's hospitals, our incredible research facilities and healthcare providers. Some of the top doctors in the entire country reside in Pennsylvania. Some of the most committed healthcare professionals reside in Pennsylvania. We have one of the leading programs of any State in the country with respect to trying to get

more folks to go into healthcare as a profession, as a life's work, especially around the nursing profession, but also around allied health services.

We are doing a lot in this great State of ours to try to provide the services and try to provide high-quality, accessible, and affordable healthcare to millions of people in this State, try to make sure that the market does what it is supposed to do, and when the market is not truly responding to the need, to make sure that the State steps up. We have some of the best healthcare institutions in the world in Pennsylvania. We have them.

The problem is with all that we are doing, with every contribution that we do make, with all of the fine institutions that we do have, with the millions of dollars, the billions of dollars that we do spend, there still remains a gaping hole for so many hundreds of thousands of adults in this State. There still remains over 700,000 people, maybe three-quarters of a million people, 750,000 people in this State who have no health insurance, who are left to go wanting, who make decisions on whether to buy some food, heat their home, or figure out a way that they can pay for some kind of care. They make those decisions. Those are some very difficult decisions for an individual or a family to make.

We who have some of the best healthcare in the world, some of the best healthcare institutions in the world, some of the best health coverage in the world, exist in this room. We who have some of the best still have so many people who are left wanting. And that is a dichotomy that does not need to be. That is a question of political will. That is a question of political courage. That is a question of political fortitude, to try to solve that problem.

I commend our Governor for taking so much time out of his speech today to talk about this specific issue. He has committed extensive amounts of time, with respect to senior-level staff, researching for several years the things we have to address. And we have made significant strides in this State over the last several years, more strides than have been made in decades in terms of dealing with this problem. But the problem still exists nonetheless.

One of the most compelling, and it really caused me and a number of my colleagues to kind of shudder for a minute when we heard it today, and we had the opportunity in the Hall of the House in the Joint Session to reflect on these numbers, went to the issue of the number of people over the last 6 or 7 years whose coverage has been dropped from them by their place of employment. Their employer-provided coverage, the healthcare coverage provided at the place of employment, where they were, was dropped to almost half a million people.

Madam President, that number is somewhere around 450,000 people who lost their coverage because the cost of coverage was so high, had skyrocketed so high, that their employers could not continue to afford to provide the coverage. The statistics behind that statistic, Madam President, cannot be lost on this body, should not be lost on the people of this Commonwealth. We know, and it has been stated on several occasions, and the Governor raised it again in this year's Budget Address, and he raised it in last year's Budget Address, that the cost of health insurance, the premiums from 2000 to 2006 have gone up 75.6 percent. If my math serves me correctly, that is, I guess, an average of about 12 or 13 percent per year. Seventy-five-percent increase in the cost of coverage.

Now, if you juxtapose that on regular inflation, inflation in that same time period has gone up about 17 percent. I think it is 17.4 percent. So again, the graph, if you will, premium costs are going up 75.6 percent. Inflation is going up 17 percent. The real trick in the equation, Madam President, and the real informing number in the equation, Madam President, and this is where the great divide manifests itself in the ugliest of circumstances, is that real wages have only gone up in that same time period 13.3 percent.

So you have the cost of care going up 75 percent. You have inflation, which everybody else is dealing with, everyone is dealing with, at 17 percent. Wages have only gone up 13 percent. Wage increases have not matched the cost of the increase in inflation, let alone the cost of the increase in the coverage in providing for the costs of premiums, healthcare premiums. Consequently, the numbers behind the number, the numbers behind the number drive the reality that 450,000 people had coverage and were dropped from coverage.

So as the good Senator, my friend and colleague Senator Corman, quoted, and I am not going to take it as an endorsement, I am not going to take that much liberty, but he did quote the good Senator Obama in saying that it is important for us to address the issue of the cost of care. Now, I will not report to my friend Senator Obama that he has the support of Senator Corman. I will not take that much liberty. However, I will say that he was quoted on the floor. And I appreciate that. On this day of days, we will take anything we can get. And if you want to endorse him, you are more than welcome to do so, sir.

But the point of all of this is, the point of all of this is, Senator Obama and everyone have tried to raise the level of issue on this issue of healthcare, dealing with the uninsured, and in this specific conversation, dealing with the issue of costs, for those of us who have healthcare. We are informed by all economic studies that when you have a larger aggregate of individuals who are in a system, that it allows for a greater opportunity for negotiation to reduce the costs. When more people are at the table in a negotiation and you are dealing with aggregate, you can allow for a negotiation to reduce the costs. It is Economics 101 that allows for this.

When we create an environment with 767,000 people, Madam President, who have no coverage, they are left outside of the system. They are not in a situation where they can be part of the negotiation. Which then puts us in a position where we are negotiating, in fact, in some respects, against ourselves, and consequently, subject to an increase of 75 percent. Remember that number, Madam President: 75.6 percent increase in costs for premiums over a 6-year period. Wage increases only 13.3 percent. That is a 62.3-percent difference. A 62.3-percent difference.

We have got to step up, as Members of this body, as individuals who have been elected to lead, we must step up and do that. Lead. Lead. Come together, take a few from the Republican Caucus, a few from the Democratic Caucus in the Senate, a few from the House Republican Caucus, a few from the House Democratic Caucus, and the Governor's Office, and sit around the table and let us lock that door and let us hash it out. Let us throw all the numbers up on the wall, let us figure out what we can pull together, and let us hash this thing out. Let us get this thing done.

We have a moment in time to address a real need, to not depend or wait any longer on the Federal government to address it, because they have dropped the ball. They have missed the pass.

They have missed the field goal. They missed the shot. They struck out at the plate. They popped up, and the infield fly rule was called, so they are automatically out. They have dropped the ball and provided us nothing. They could not even do a reauthorization in the expansion of the SCHIP program for our young people, those who are most defenseless.

So we cannot wait on them to act. We must act now. We must step up to the plate. We must hit the ball out of the park. We must hit the ball over the short fence. We must score the touchdown for them. We must step up.

These are people who are playing by the rules, if you will, Madam President. People like to use that saying, they are playing by the rules. What I mean by that is they are waking up every day. They catch the early bus. When we get up to go to work, to come here, to go to our offices, to go to meetings, we see these folks on the way. They are already at work. They are already making a difference. They are already contributing. They caught the early bus. They got there. They are serving us in the fast food place. They are providing us a cup of coffee or a cappuccino at the convenience store. They are taking care of our dry cleaning. They are taking care of us. They are working. They are trying to make a difference. They may be selling newspapers at the newsstand. They may be selling hot dogs at the hot dog stand when you go to the Penguins game, or the Flyers game, or you go to the Sixers game, or something like that, or you are up at State College and you are walking around, getting ready for the season to start, Penn State football, and they are doing that. Or you go down to Liacouras Center to see the Owls play basketball, they are there doing that.

They are out in Pittsburgh. They are out in Blair County, and Warren County, and Pike County. In 67 counties all across the State, these are people who are making a difference, and they need our help. Seventy-one percent of these folks are employed. Most of them are women. Most of them are raising children. Twenty-nine percent of the uninsured, and I keep hammering this statistic, Madam President, 29 percent of the uninsured have been without insurance for 5 years or more, making those hard decisions about what they are going to do with their lives, what kind of care they are going to be able to provide for themselves and their family members. Difficult circumstances, but these are very real people, Madam President, with real problems, real issues, who deserve real leadership and real service from us here in the Senate, from our colleagues in the House, to sit down and work something out with our Governor.

So we are back again, Madam President. After today, we have 39 days that, according to the Senate calendar, we are to be in Session. The clock is ticking. The days are moving by. Thirty-nine days, Madam President. Thirty-nine days. The people are waiting for us to act. Thirty-nine days.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDENT. Thank you, Senator Hughes, for your additional clarification of the Governor's healthcare proposal.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Centre, Senator Corman.

Senator CORMAN. Madam President, first of all, let me join the chorus of good wishes and thanks that Senator Costa is back with us, and thank goodness he had a first-class healthcare system to take care of him, which is something that we all want. One thing about this issue I think we all agree on is we want a first-class healthcare system in this Commonwealth and people

to have access to it. And so, how we may get to that point we may differ somewhat, but I think we all agree on that.

And I want to say, when Senator Hughes was running through his litany of negative baseball analogies of where the Federal government has dropped the ball or popped up or struck out, I thought he was referring to my beloved Pirates and recapping their last 15 seasons, unfortunately. Hopefully, this year. The Brooklyn Dodgers used to say wait until next year, and next year is soon coming.

But I just wanted to make a couple of comments. Senator Costa referred to the litany of things I talked about that were above and beyond the Federal mandate of us, and I was not bringing that out as saying they were unnecessary or something that was above and beyond what we should be doing. I was just trying to make the point that the taxpayers of Pennsylvania are stepping up to the plate to the tune of \$6 billion, and not just to meet the minimum requirement, but even higher, because that is what we want. We want these services, because a lot of those things I listed off will save us money in the long run by having those types of coverages.

So the point is, as I said, we are at \$6 billion in statewide contributions from taxpayers, \$14 billion Federally, and that is a significant investment in healthcare by taxpayers. So before we move forward with a bigger plan, and I am not here to stall or to throw a bunch of rhetoric at you to say that this is not a problem we should address, because it absolutely is. There is no greater issue that we have in front of us than healthcare. It drives the economy. It is going to drive all labor issues in the future. You know, when you are going to have strikes, they are not going to be about wages. They are going to be about benefits. Every school district is going to go through it. Every labor organization is going to go through it when they negotiate.

But my concern is, and Senator Hughes laid it out very, very well, that 75-percent number scares the heck out of me. And if we do not do something about that, and we try our best to pick up the 800,000 who are uninsured, my guess is, as that 75 percent continues to increase, we are not going to get just 800,000. We are going to get a lot more people who are currently insured, like the 400,000 the gentleman was talking about earlier, whom businesses are going to drop because they cannot afford that 75-percent number.

And Senator Costa is absolutely right. We have done some good things, and the Governor deserves a lot of credit for leading on that, but I would suggest that we have dipped our toe into the water on that issue, and we need to go a lot further. The problem with that, Madam President, is that it is not an overnight solution. A lot of the things that we need to do in reducing the cost of healthcare take time, and the people who do not have health insurance do not want to wait for that, and I understand that. But if we do not do that as well in this debate, we are setting the taxpayers up for a huge commitment that I do not think we will be able to afford in the future.

So this is a discussion that needs to happen. I am all in. Again, I think we have the same goal at the end of the day, and I just look forward to making sure that we all understand that the taxpayers are stepping up already. We do fund healthcare at the tune of \$6 billion now, \$14 billion if you count the Feds.

But to finish the job here, we really need to focus on that 75-percent number, because we will all go bankrupt if we continue to have increases of costs at that level. So any movement

forward needs to include that type of addressing as well, and we can sit here and talk all day on reduction of costs of healthcare, and there are a lot of ways to go, but that is the number that is driving this problem. We would not have 800,000 uninsured if we did not have 75-percent increases. That is the number that is driving the problem, and that is the number that has to be solved in this solution.

So I look forward to working with my colleagues and friends. Again, we have the same goals, Republican, Democrat, Independent alike. We want first-class healthcare in this State, we want people to have access to it, and we want it to be affordable. We just have to make sure that we do not put too much of this on the taxpayers along the way, because it will have a significant negative impact on our economy.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDENT. Thank you, Senator Corman. I am sure all the Senators appreciate your response.

HOUSE MESSAGE

HOUSE CONCURS IN SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

The Clerk of the House of Representatives informed the Senate that the House has concurred in the resolution from the Senate, entitled:

Weekly recess.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SECRETARY

The following announcements were read by the Secretary of the Senate:

SENATE OF PENNSYLVANIA

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2008

9:00 A.M.	FINANCE (public hearing on Senate Bill No. 1202)	Room 461 Main Capitol
10:00 A.M.	LOCAL GOVERNMENT (to consider House Bills No. 1329 and 1330)	Room 8E-B East Wing

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2008

11:00 A.M.	GAME AND FISHERIES (to consider Senate Bills No. 1256 and 1257; and House Bills No. 747 and 1214)	Room 8E-A East Wing
12:30 P.M.	URBAN AFFAIRS AND HOUSING (to consider Senate Bills No. 906 and 963)	Room 8E-A East Wing

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2008

9:30 A.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Auditor General Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.
10:30 A.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Historical and Museum Commission Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.
1:15 P.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Department of State Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.

3:00 P.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Budget Secretary Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.	1:15 P.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Department of General Services Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.
	<u>TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2008</u>		3:00 P.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Department of Revenue Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.
9:00 A.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Department of Labor and Industry Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.		<u>THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 2008</u>	
10:30 A.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Department of Insurance Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.	9:00 A.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Department of Public Welfare Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.
1:15 P.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Liquor Control Board Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.	1:15 P.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Department of Community and Economic Development Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.
3:00 P.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (State Related Universities Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.		RECESS	
	<u>WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2008</u>		The PRESIDENT. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Delaware, Senator Pileggi.		
9:00 A.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Attorney General Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.	Senator PILEGGI. Madam President, I move that the Senate do now recess until Wednesday, February 6, 2008, at 11 a.m., Eastern Standard Time.		
10:30 A.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (PSERS/SERS Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.	The motion was agreed to by voice vote.		
1:15 P.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Gaming Control Board Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.	The Senate recessed at 4:30 p.m., Eastern Standard Time.		
3:00 P.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (State System of Higher Education Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.			
	<u>THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2008</u>				
9:00 A.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Department of Agriculture Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.			
10:30 A.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Department of Health Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.			
1:15 P.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Department of Corrections Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.			
	<u>MONDAY, MARCH 3, 2008</u>				
9:30 A.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Treasury Department Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.			
10:30 A.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.			
1:15 P.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Department of Aging Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.			
3:00 P.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Department of Environmental Protection Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.			
	<u>TUESDAY, MARCH 4, 2008</u>				
9:00 A.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.			
10:30 A.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (State Police Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.			
1:15 P.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Department of Transportation Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.			
	<u>WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 2008</u>				
9:00 A.M.	APPROPRIATIONS (Department of Education Budget Hearing)	Hrg. Rm. 1 North Off.			