SENATE
WEDNESDAY, April 2, 2008

The Senate met at 11 a.m., Eastern Daylight Saving Time.

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

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Reverend ROBERT M. SIEBER, Pastor of Faith Bible Church, Port Royal, offered the following prayer:

Let us bow for prayer.

Heavenly Father, in the quiet of this Senate Chamber, we come to You with praise, adoration, and thanksgiving for who You are, the Creator of all things and the giver of all the many blessings that we have as a nation, as a State, and as individuals. Too often, Father, in the hustle and bustle of our fast-paced lives, we forget to show our gratitude to You by giving You the thanks for those blessings, and for this, this morning, we would ask for Your forgiveness.

Heavenly Father, we come to Your throne today seeking Your guidance for this Senate body as it sets out to do its duties in seeing that the business of this great Commonwealth is carried forth in a timely manner. As You well know, Heavenly Father, our nation and her individual States are entering a period of financial uncertainty. So, Heavenly Father, as this Senate body convenes in today’s Session, we know that it is a time when leadership must come together, consider, discuss, and then implement legislation for the good of the individual and for all the people of this great State. And in order to do this, Father, we humbly seek Your guiding hand.

Again, Heavenly Father, as these elected representatives of the people set about their day’s agenda, we hold each of them up to You, simply asking that You would work Your perfect will through each of them so that their collective decisions here today would benefit us all and bring honor and glory to You. May no personalities be seen here today, Father, simply good judgment in enacting what would benefit the well-being of this Senate body, our Governor, and the citizens of this, the great Keystone State.

This we pray, seeking and asking in Your holy name. Amen.

The PRESIDENT. The Chair thanks Reverend Robert Sieber, who is the guest today of Senator Corman.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

COMMUNICATION FROM THE GOVERNOR

RECALL COMMUNICATION
REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

The PRESIDENT laid before the Senate the following communication in writing from His Excellency, the Governor of the Commonwealth, which was read as follows and referred to the Committee on Rules and Executive Nominations:

INSURANCE COMMISSIONER OF PENNSYLVANIA

April 2, 2008

To the Honorable, the Senate of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania:

In accordance with the power and authority vested in me as Governor of the Commonwealth, I do hereby recall my nomination dated December 4, 2007, for the appointment of Joel S. Ario, 720 Cocoa Avenue, Hershey 17033, Dauphin County, Fifteenth Senatorial District, as Insurance Commissioner of Pennsylvania, to serve until the third Tuesday of January 2011, and until his successor is appointed and qualified, vice The Honorable M. Diane Koken, Lancaster, resigned.

I respectfully request the return to me of the official message of nomination on the premises.

EDWARD G. RENDELL
Governor

DISCHARGE PETITION

The PRESIDENT laid before the Senate the following communication, which was read by the Clerk as follows:

April 2, 2008

A PETITION

To place before the Senate the nomination of Joel S. Ario as Insurance Commissioner of Pennsylvania.

TO: The Presiding Officer of the Senate:

WE, The undersigned members of the Senate, pursuant to section 8(b) of Article IV of the Constitution of Pennsylvania, do hereby request that you place the nomination of Joel S. Ario, Hershey, Pennsylvania, as Insurance Commissioner of Pennsylvania, before the entire Senate body for a vote, the nomination not having been voted upon within 15 legislative days:
The PRESIDENT. The communication will be laid on the table.

GENERAL COMMUNICATION

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA'S COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

The PRESIDENT laid before the Senate the following communication, which was read by the Clerk as follows:

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE HARRISBURG March 28, 2008

Mr. Mark R. Corrigan
Secretary-Parliamentarian Senate of Pennsylvania
462 Main Capitol Building Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120-3053

Dear Mr. Corrigan:

I am pleased to provide you with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2007. This report contains financial information covering all the activities and operations of the Commonwealth. The basic financial statements contained herein have been prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and have been jointly audited by the Pennsylvania Auditor General and the national accounting firm Ernst & Young LLP who have expressed their unqualified opinion on the fair presentation of the financial statements in conformity with GAAP. Along with the basic financial statements, the CAFR includes Management's Discussion and Analysis, and combining financial statements.

We have submitted our 2007 CAFR to the Government Finance Officers Association to be considered for the award of our twenty-second consecutive Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting. Our publication of this report and the receipt of the award affirm our continued commitment to Pennsylvania's financial accountability and fiscal responsibility.

The CAFR is available on our website at: http://www.budget.state.pa.us/budget/cwp/view.asp?a=3&c=a=167632

We welcome your comments or questions on this report.

Sincerely,
Michael J. Masch
Secretary
Office of the Budget

The PRESIDENT. This report will be filed in the Library.

APPOINTMENT BY THE PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDENT. The Chair wishes to announce the President pro tempore has made the following appointment:

Senator Patrick M. Browne as a member of the Joint State Government Commission Task Force on Decedents' Estates Laws.

BILL REPORTED FROM COMMITTEE

Senator ERICKSON, from the Committee on Public Health and Welfare, reported the following bill:

SB 1132 (Pr. No. 1887) (Amended)

An Act providing for the collection and banking of placental and umbilical cord blood for therapeutic transplantation and research; and making an appropriation.

BILLS INTRODUCED AND REFERRED

The PRESIDENT laid before the Senate the following Senate Bills numbered, entitled, and referred as follows, which were read by the Clerk:

April 2, 2008

Senators O'PAKE, MELLOW, COSTA, LAVALLE, TARTAGLIONE, PUNT, HUGHES, RAFFERTY, BOSCOLA, C. WILLIAMS, LOGAN, FONTANA, ORIE, ERICKSON, BROWNE, WOZNIAK, KITCHEN, GREENLEAF, RHOADES, KASUNIC, MUSTO, FERLO and STACK presented to the Chair SB 1326, entitled:

An Act amending the act of August 26, 1971 (P.L.351, No.91), known as the State Lottery Law, further defining "income."

Which was committed to the Committee on AGING AND YOUTH, April 2, 2008.

Senators BROWNE, RAFFERTY, WAUGH, GREENLEAF, FOLMER, M. WHITE, EICHELBERGER, BRUBAKER, ARMSTRONG, ORIE and D. WHITE presented to the Chair SB 1336, entitled:

An Act amending Title 4 (Amusements) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, further providing for the definition of "slot machine."

Which was committed to the Committee on COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC AND RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, April 2, 2008.

Senators WONDERLING, COSTA, ERICKSON, RAFFERTY, REGOLA, DINNERMAN, TOMLINSON, PIPPY, FONTANA, BROWNE, WOZNIAK, ROBBINS, O'PAKE, C. WILLIAMS, BRUBAKER, GREENLEAF, CORMAN, BOSCOLA, BAKER, EARLL, KITCHEN, STACK, PUNT, ORIE, HUGHES and SCARNATI presented to the Chair SB 1337, entitled:

An Act establishing the Medical Assistance Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee within the Department of Public Welfare; and providing for the powers and duties of the committee.

Which was committed to the Committee on PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE, April 2, 2008.

Senators MUSTO, STACK, STOUT, TARTAGLIONE, FONTANA, C. WILLIAMS, MELLOW, WASHINGTON, FERLO, COSTA, FUMO, WOZNIAK, HUGHES, O'PAKE, BOSCOLA, LAVALLE and KITCHEN presented to the Chair SB 1338, entitled:
An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, providing for basic education funding for student achievement and for accountability to Commonwealth taxpayers.

Which was committed to the Committee on EDUCATION, April 2, 2008.

Senators MUSTO, STACK, STOUT, TARTAGLIONE, FONTANA, C. WILLIAMS, MELLOW, WASHINGTON, FERLO, COSTA, FUMO, KASUNIC, WOZNIAK, HUGHES, O'PAKE, BOSCOLA, LOGAN, LAVALLE, ERICKSON and KITCHEN presented to the Chair SB 1339, entitled:

An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, further providing for Pennsylvania accountability grants.

Which was committed to the Committee on EDUCATION, April 2, 2008.

LEGISLATIVE LEAVES

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

Senator PILEGGI. Madam President, I request legislative leaves for Senator Earl!, Senator Punt, and Senator Tomlinson.

The PRESIDENT. Senator Pileggi requests legislative leaves for Senator Earl!, Senator Punt, and Senator Tomlinson.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Lackawanna, Senator Mellow.

Senator MELLOW. Madam President, I request legislative leaves for Senator Fumo and Senator Anthony Williams.

The PRESIDENT. Senator Mellow requests legislative leaves for Senator Fumo and Senator Anthony Williams.

Without objection, the leaves will be granted.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

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

CALENDAR

SENATE RESOLUTION No. 265 CALLED UP OUT OF ORDER, ADOPTED

Senator PILEGGI, without objection, called up from page 6 of the Calendar, as a Special Order of Business, Senate Resolution No. 265 , entitled:

A Resolution designating April 2, 2008, as "Pennsylvania Farm Bureau Day" and congratulating Pennsylvania Farm Bureau members for their contribution to this Commonwealth and to this Commonwealth's agricultural industry.

On the question,
Will the Senate adopt the resolution?

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

YEA-49

Armstrong Fontana Orie Tomlinson
Baker Fumo Piccola Vance

NAY-0

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

SENATE RESOLUTION No. 266 , ADOPTED

Senator PILEGGI, without objection, called up from page 6 of the Calendar, Senate Resolution No. 266, entitled:

A Resolution designating April 23, 2008, as "United States Army Reserve Day" in Pennsylvania, in celebration of the 100th birthday of the United States Army Reserve, honoring its commitment, dedication and service to America, and wishing it and our soldiers continued support.

On the question,
Will the Senate adopt the resolution?

The PRESIDENT. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Mercer, Senator Robbins.

Senator ROBBINS. Madam President, today I rise to ask for support for Senate Resolution No. 266, which commemorates the 100th birthday of the United States Army Reserve on April 23, 2008.

Previously known as the Medical Reserve Corps, the Army Reserve was renamed in 1908 and has continuously provided a wide range of expertise to Army capabilities, at home and on the battlefield. Over time, the role of the Army Reserve has changed and has moved from a strategic reserve to an operational force.

The Army Reserve has been an integral part of numerous conflicts, with more than 70 Army Reserve units deployed in the Korean Peninsula, more than 84,000 soldiers providing combat support during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and others providing support in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Noble Eagle, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Army Reserve also provides resources and training to first-responder organizations across the nation, trains soldiers, implements national objectives, keeps the Army mobile, and enables the Army to do more with fewer resources. Furthermore, the Army Reserve makes up 20 percent of the Army's organized units but provides one-half of the Army's combat support and one-fourth of its mobilization base expansion capabilities.

Please join me in celebrating the 100th birthday of the United States Army Reserve. Thank you.

And the question recurring,
Will the Senate adopt the resolution?

A voice vote having been taken, the question was determined in the affirmative.
SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS
GUESTS OF SENATOR ROBERT WONDERLING PRESENTED TO THE SENATE

The PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Montgomery, Senator Wonderling.

Senator WONDERLING. Madam President, I apologize for the brief delay. I am really delighted to announce and welcome to the Senate today two young students who are serving as interns in the Northampton County portion of our Senate operations. The first is Justina Grabowski. Justina grew up in the Blue Mountain area but currently is a junior at Lehigh University, where she is studying political science and is also an environmental science major. Justina has a passion for public policy and is considering law, politics, and government upon graduation from Lehigh.

She is joined by Dan Reynolds. Dan will be graduating this May from Lafayette College in Easton with a degree in economics and business. He intends to study the law and hopefully attain an MBA at the same time. He was named all-national prosecuting attorney at the national collegiate Mock Trial Tournament this past winter and is scheduled to work for a paralegal in his home city of Cleveland, Ohio, in the fall.

So, Madam President, I ask that the Senate offer a warm welcome to both Justina and Daniel.

The PRESIDENT. Will Justina and Dan please rise so we can welcome you.

(Applause.)

GUESTS OF THE PRESIDENT PRESENTED TO THE SENATE

The PRESIDENT. For all our other guests from the Pennsylvania Coal Association, thank you for joining us.

CONSIDERATION OF CALENDAR RESUMED
THIRD CONSIDERATION CALENDAR
BILL REREPORTEED FROM COMMITTEE AS AMENDED ON THIRD CONSIDERATION AND FINAL PASSAGE

HB 1589 (Pr. No. 3496) -- The Senate proceeded to consideration of the bill, entitled:

An Act providing for the capital budget for the fiscal year 2007-2008; itemizing public improvement projects, furniture and equipment projects, transportation assistance projects, redevelopment assistance capital projects, flood control projects, Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund projects, Environmental Stewardship Fund projects, Motor License Fund projects, State forestry bridge projects, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission projects, Manufacturing Fund projects and federally funded projects to be constructed or acquired or assisted by the Department of General Services, the Department of Community and Economic Development, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Department of Environmental Protection, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission or the Department of Transportation; stating the estimated useful life of the projects; providing an exemption; providing for limitation on certain capital projects, for special provisions for certain redevelopment assistance capital projects and for preemption of local ordinances for Department of Corrections projects; and making appropriations.

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:

YEAS-47

Armstrong Baker Boscola Ernst Fumo Fontana O'Pake

Boscola Gordon Greenleaf Kasunic Kitchen Kasunic

Browne Brubaker Brownie LaValle Logan

Corman Costa Conklin Davis DiNinno Dinninman

Doty Dinninman Gajewski Davis DiNinno Dinninman

Earl Erickson Farley Ferlo Fontana Frey

Tartaglione Tomlinson Vance Washington

Vaugh White, Donald White, Mary Jo

Williams, Anthony H. Williams, Constance

Wonderling Wozniak

NAY-2

Eichelberger Folmer Gordon

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 OVER IN ORDER

SB 822 -- Without objection, the bill was passed over in its order at the request of Senator PILEGGI.

BILL ON THIRD CONSIDERATION AND FINAL PASSAGE

SB 1021 (Pr. No. 1279) -- The Senate proceeded to consideration of the bill, entitled:

An Act amending Title 18 (Crimes and Offenses) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, repealing provisions relating to pool and billiard rooms.

Considered the third time and agreed to,
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:

YEAS-49

Armstrong Baker Boscola Costa

Fontana Fumo Gajewski Gordon

Orie Piccola Pileggi

Tomlinson Vance Washington
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.

BILLS OVER IN ORDER

HB 1152, SB 1254 and SB 1278 -- Without objection, the bills were passed over in their order at the request of Senator PILEGGI.

SECOND CONSIDERATION CALENDAR

BILL ON SECOND CONSIDERATION
REREPORTED FROM COMMITTEE AS AMENDED OVER IN ORDER

SB 9 -- Without objection, the bill was passed over in its order at the request of Senator PILEGGI.

BILL REREPORTED FROM COMMITTEE AS AMENDED ON SECOND CONSIDERATION

SB 1020 (Pr. No. 1871) -- The Senate proceeded to consideration of the bill, entitled:

An Act amending the act of May 15, 1945 (P.L.547, No.217), known as the Conservation District Law, further providing for declaration of policy, for the State Conservation Commission, for creation of conservation districts, for designation of district directors, for appointment, qualifications, compensation and tenure of directors, for organization of directors, for powers of districts and directors, for Commonwealth agencies to cooperate and for discontinuation of districts; and making a repeal.

Considered the second time and agreed to,

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

BILLS ON SECOND CONSIDERATION
REREPORTED FROM COMMITTEE AS AMENDED OVER IN ORDER

SB 1063 and SB 1225 -- Without objection, the bills were passed over in their order at the request of Senator PILEGGI.

BILLS OVER IN ORDER

SB 232, SB 428, HB 675, SB 906, SB 998, SB 1033, HB 1044, SB 1107 and SB 1149 -- Without objection, the bills were passed over in their order at the request of Senator PILEGGI.
our action and approval. We have amended this bill to further strengthen our resolve in the industry's commitment and willingness to enhance telecommunication coverage in the Commonwealth. As this body is aware, this resolution authorizes Pennsylvania's Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to study the improvement and enhancement of telecommunications in wireless coverage areas throughout Pennsylvania.

The committee would be required to study ways to identify areas to improve telecommunications coverage and eliminate gaps in cell phone service. It would encourage colocation and use of existing structures for towers as an alternative to unnecessary proliferation of cell towers. It would be required to develop recommendations for policies to encourage wireless carriers to improve coverage throughout our State. And finally, the study would be responsible to present its findings to the General Assembly by October of this year.

Madam President, as someone who regularly travels on our State highways, especially from Schuylkill County to Dauphin County along I-81, I have experienced dropped calls on numerous occasions, and once again, I say this is no laughing matter. Cell phones are no longer just conveniences or luxury items, but more and more people are getting rid of their landline phones and using cell phones in their homes. A dropped call can mean life or death.

This is a consumer issue, this is a safety issue, and this is a problem that needs resolution. Certainly, this is reason enough for us as a legislative body to approve this resolution and require this study. Madam President, the time to act is now. I again encourage my colleagues to support this resolution.

Thank you, 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.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE GOVERNOR REPORTED FROM COMMITTEE ON RULES AND EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS

Senator ORIE, from the Committee on Rules and Executive Nominations, reported a communication from His Excellency, the Governor of the Commonwealth, recalling the following nomination, which was read by the Clerk as follows:

INSURANCE COMMISSIONER OF PENNSYLVANIA

April 2, 2008

To the Honorable, the Senate
of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania:

In accordance with the power and authority vested in me as Governor of the Commonwealth, I do hereby recall my nomination dated December 4, 2007, for the appointment of Joel S. Ario, 720 Cocoa Avenue, Hershey 17033, Dauphin County, Fifteenth Senatorial District, as Insurance Commissioner of Pennsylvania, to serve until the third Tuesday of January 2011, and until his successor is appointed and qualified, vice The Honorable M. Diane Koken, Lancaster, resigned.

I respectfully request the return to me of the official message of nomination on the premises.

EDWARD G. RENDELL
Governor

NOMINATION RETURNED TO THE GOVERNOR

Senator ORIE. Madam President, I request that the nomination just read by the Clerk be returned to His Excellency, the Governor.

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

The PRESIDENT. The nomination will be returned to the Governor.

JOURNALS APPROVED

The PRESIDENT. The Journals of the Sessions of March 11, 2008, and March 12, 2008, are now in print.

The Clerk proceeded to read the Journals of the Sessions of March 11, 2008, and March 12, 2008, when, on motion of Senator PILEGGI, and agreed to by voice vote, further reading was dispensed with and the Journals were approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

BILLS REPORTED FROM COMMITTEE

Senator REGOLA, from the Committee on Local Government, reported the following bills:

SB 1028 (Pr. No. 1328)
An Act amending the act of May 1, 1933 (P.L.103, No.69), known as The Second Class Township Code, further providing for public roads.

SB 1332 (Pr. No. 1866)
An Act amending Title 53 (Municipalities Generally) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in general provisions, providing for form of oaths of office.

SB 1334 (Pr. No. 1867)
An Act amending the act of August 9, 1955 (P.L.323, No.130), known as The County Code, further providing for other meeting expenses paid by counties and for annual assessments for county commissioners and others.

SB 1335 (Pr. No. 1868)
An Act amending the act of July 28, 1953 (P.L.723, No.230), known as the Second Class County Code, further providing for other meeting expenses paid by county and for annual assessments for county commissioners and others.

HB 239 (Pr. No. 1441)
An Act amending the act of May 1, 1933 (P.L.103, No.69), known as The Second Class Township Code, further providing for liens for assessments and for connection to water system.
HB 780 (Pr. No. 3532) (Amended)

An Act amending the act of July 31, 1968 (P.L.805, No.247), known as the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, further providing for appointment, term and vacancy of planning commission members and for conduct of business of planning commission; providing for interpretation of subdivision and land development ordinances; and further providing for approval of plats and for jurisdiction.

RESOLUTION REPORTED FROM COMMITTEE

Senator REGOLA, from the Committee on Local Government, reported the following resolution:

SR 253 (Pr. No. 1830)

A Resolution designating the week of April 14 through 18, 2008, as "Local Government Week" and April 15, 2008, as "Local Government Day" in Pennsylvania.

SENATE RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED

Senators GREENLEAF, RAFFERTY, KASUNIC, A. WILLIAMS, FONTANA, ERIKSON, FERLO, LAVALLE, LOGAN, WONDERLING, PILEGGI, TARTAGLIONE, MUSTO, TOMLINSON, WASHINGTON, PIPPY, ORIE, BOSCOLA, WAUGH, BROWNE, DINNIMAN and ARMSTRONG, by unanimous consent, offered Senate Resolution No. 278, entitled:

A Resolution recognizing April 21, 2008, as "Youth in Construction Safety Awareness Day" in Pennsylvania.

On the question,

Will the Senate adopt the resolution?

The PRESIDENT. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Montgomery, Senator Greenleaf.

Senator GREENLEAF. Madam President, I rise to offer a resolution to designate April 21 of this year as "Youth in Construction Safety Awareness Day." A career in the construction profession is a worthy cause and a worthy profession that youth have available to them.

Safety is all-important. As a result of a program initiated by OSHA, we have and provide safety training for youth, because about 70 adolescents die of work-related injuries in a year, and about 200,000 of them are injured during a 1-year period. So it is important for them to pursue this career, but also to be safe and to be trained in how to avoid injuries. This is what this resolution would do. There are a number of events that are concentrating on this, training programs that are available to the youth who are going into construction, and this day, there will be an event in Montgomery County to designate this to put concentration on this so that the youth who do choose to go into construction are trained in safety procedures.

So it is my pleasure and honor to offer this resolution and in fact leave the resolution at the Secretary's desk if any other Members of the Senate would like to cosponsor it with me. It will be available for additional cosponsors. Thank you, 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.

Senators STACK, ORIE, BAKER, STOUT, TARTAGLIONE, FONTANA, MELLOW, PUNT, REGOLA, C. WILLIAMS, O'PAKE, PILEGGI, ROBBINS, PIPPY, KASUNIC, COSTA, FERLO, LAVALLE, HUGHES, FOLMER, EARLL, RAFFERTY, GREENLEAF, WAUGH, ERIKSON, McILHINNEY, BRUBAKER, DINNIMAN, LOGAN, TOMLINSON, BOSCOLA, WOZNIAK, BROWNE and WASHINGTON, by unanimous consent, offered Senate Resolution No. 279, entitled:

A Resolution recognizing the month of April 2008 as "Autism Awareness Month" in Pennsylvania.

On the question,

Will the Senate adopt the resolution?

Senator STACK. Madam President, I rise today with my friend and colleague, Senator Orle, to ask unanimous support for a resolution that recognizes the month of April as "Autism Awareness Month" in Pennsylvania. The pin I am wearing on my lapel recognizes autism awareness and indicates that this is an ongoing battle that we are involved in. Today is World Autism Awareness Day. It is a day when we can bring this still mysterious disorder to the forefront and advocate for more research and more services for children and adults who are living with autism spectrum disorder. So it is appropriate that we recognize April as "Autism Awareness Month" here in Pennsylvania.

Autism is the fastest growing developmental disability in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1 in 150 children have an autism spectrum disorder. Sixty-seven children across the country are diagnosed with this neurological disorder every day. And despite the ever-increasing number of children who are diagnosed, scientists still cannot pinpoint what triggers autism. While a cure for autism has not been found, individuals with the disorder can reach their greatest potential through accurate, early diagnosis, intervention, and treatment.

Thankfully, Pennsylvania has opportunities for autistic children and adults. This year's budget proposal calls for nearly $50 million in State and Federal funding for autism services, a dramatic increase from several years ago. The Department of Public Welfare's Bureau of Autism Services provides expertise and support for all State agencies that serve Pennsylvanians with autism. Pennsylvania families can apply for mini-grants for up to $500, which can be used for support services and activities like child care, summer camp, recreation programs, or home modifications. Additionally, local organizations can apply for grants to develop regional autism services, education, research, and training--or ASERT--centers, which offer support to families while working to improve autism research and intervention practices.

Yesterday, the Senate Committee on Banking and Insurance held a hearing on House Bill No. 1150, the autism insurance coverage bill. This legislation, which passed unanimously in the House, would ensure that children receive early diagnosis and access to treatment from public and private insurers. Currently, in Pennsylvania, most health insurers do not provide coverage for autism-related treatments. This measure would help very vulnerable children get the help they need.
Madam President, autism spectrum disorder touches many lives, and that is why I ask my colleagues to support this resolution recognizing "Autism Awareness Month" in Pennsylvania, and ask that we all inform our constituents about autism services that are available, as well as support beneficial services, programs, and legislation. And I am happy to stand with my colleague, Senator Orie. I think we can find an answer to autism only if we all work together.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDENT. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Allegheny, Senator Orie.

Senator ORIE. Madam President, I join my colleague, Senator Stack, and commend him for his dedication to this issue of autism as well as his dedication and participation in the Autism Caucus. Madam President, just to go a little further with the remarks that Senator Stack made, especially in regard to the data with autism, Madam President, 1 in 150 children are diagnosed with autism. One in 94 boys are on the autism spectrum. Sixty-seven children, as Senator Stack indicated, are diagnosed each and every day. A new case is diagnosed almost every 20 minutes. More children will be diagnosed with autism this year than with AIDS, diabetes, and cancer combined.

Madam President, when I mention these other diseases, I want to emphasize that they are just as problematic for this State as autism. But when you look to the private funding, and I am not taking away from the private funding that these diseases receive, but I am calling attention to the lack of funding that autism receives. Let me share with you, Madam President: Leukemia affects 1 in 25,000. The funding is $310 million. Muscular dystrophy affects 1 in 20,000. The funding is $175 million. Pediatric AIDS affects 1 in 8,000. The funding is $175 million. Juvenile diabetes affects 1 in 500. The funding is $130 million. Autism affects 1 in 150. The funding, $15 million.

Madam President, the total 2005 National Institutes of Health funding allocation is $29 billion. Of that $29 billion, only $100 million goes towards autism research. That represents less than 0.3 percent toward NIH funding for autism.

Madam President, autism is a complex disability often involving mental retardation. It requires greater recognition and understanding to ensure that all individuals with autism, whether or not they have mental retardation, are accurately diagnosed and appropriately treated throughout their lives. As was indicated, although a cure for autism has not been found, those who suffer from its effects can be assisted, especially with early intervention, Madam President, and reach the greatest potential through accurate diagnosis, education, and intervention.

That is why it is important today. And I am honored to join Senator Stack, because, Madam President, there is legislation in the Senate to recognize insurance for autism which would get this early diagnosis. I commend Senator Don White and Senator Stack, the chair and minority chair of the Committee on Banking and Insurance, for bringing this issue forward and allowing education on it. Hopefully, Madam President, we can move forward on this and be one of the first States in the country to provide insurance.

With that said, Madam President, I ask all my colleagues to join in support of this autism resolution.
Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Robert G. Williamson, Bernard M. Billick, Harry F. Lee, James F. Marsh and to Samuel W. Newman by Senator Boscola and others.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Bryan Hill by Senators Browne and Boscola.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lewistown by Senator Corman.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Angie Gialloreto by Senator Costa and others.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to The Salvation Army of West Chester by Senator Dinniman.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Master Sergeant Gary J. Gillen by Senator Folmer.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Raymond Penyak by Senator Greenleaf.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Evan S. Nowak by Senator Kasunic.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Ling Ling Cheng by Senator Kitchen.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Logan Lewis Hatton by Senator Madigan.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Ethan Gramlich by Senator Mcllhinney.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Leadership Data Processing, Inc., by Senator Musto.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Robert Zegar, Joseph LaMonica, Matthew Grubb, Joseph Abbott and to the members and coaches of the Pine Richland High School Ice Hockey Team of Gibsonia by Senator Orie.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Chief W. Tim Christy by Senators Orie and Ferlo.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to William Scheller, Matthew Lucas and to James Ogilvie by Senators Orie and Fontana.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Jack Shea and to Jean Friday by Senator Orie and others.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Faith United Presbyterian Church of Harrisburg and to the State Library of Pennsylvania by Senator Piccola.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Sean McCormack by Senators Piccola and Vance.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Frieda Riesenfeld, Kayla Harrison, Corinne Heiberger, Hannah Everett, Maria Ayers, Margaret Lyons, Megan Royer, Sarah Simon and to the members and coaches of the Chester High School Boys' Varsity Basketball Team by Senator Pileggi.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Eric H. Weiss and to St. Columbkille Roman Catholic Church of Imperial by Senator Pippy.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to the Scott Middle School Mentoring Program of Coatesville by Senator Rafferty.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to the members and coaches of the Norristown Area High School Boys' Basketball Team by Senators Rafferty and C. Williams.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to the members and coaches of the Jeannette High School Boys' Basketball Team by Senator Regola.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Sarah Bolinger, Timothy Joseph Quandt, Robert Bedford and to the Marian Catholic High School Girls' Basketball Team by Senator Rhoades.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Billie-Jo Leech, Mildred Moore, Howard N. Roxberry and to Raymond Benjamin Sperry by Senator Robbins.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Our Lady of Calvary Roman Catholic Church of Philadelphia by Senator Stack.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Cox by Senator Stout.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Mr. and Mrs. Pete Ciarrocchi, Mr. and Mrs. Raphael Beniflah, Mr. and Mrs. Hal Solar, Mr. and Mrs. Adi Kronfeld, the Honorable Catherine Baker Knoll, Ernest E. Jones, Bart Blatstein and to B. Someday Productions by Senator Tartaglione.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Elaine Richardson, Kenneth Gamble, Leon Huff, Matthew Paul Burns, Robert Kalinoski, Jr., and to the Eastern Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce by Senator Washington.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Sarah Helen H. Schlag Miller and to Matthew W. Reiblich by Senator Waugh.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Mr. and Mrs. Forest Potter, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Renninger and to Casey A. Burkhardt by Senator M.J. White.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to the Honorable Daylin Leach, the Honorable Wendell Foster Holland, Paula D. Courtney, John S. Ondik, James L. Minus III, Shawn Lee and to Central Montco Technical High School of Plymouth Meeting by Senator C. Williams.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to Chief Eileen Behr by Senators C. Williams and Hughes.

Congratulations of the Senate were extended to His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas Smisko by Senator Wozniak.

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 Adam Emanuel Erickson by Senator Baker.

BILLS ON FIRST CONSIDERATION

Senator WONDERLING. 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 1028, SB 1132, SB 1332, SB 1334, SB 1335, HB 239 and HB 780.
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 gentlewoman from Luzerne, Senator Baker.

Senator BAKER. Madam President, it is with great sadness that I rise to talk about a young boy from the 20th Senatorial District. We all know that the loss of a child is certainly one of the most difficult tragedies a family can ever face. In northeastern Pennsylvania this year, we have lost 19 people in fires, including several children. Just this past weekend, young Adam Erickson, age 11, a fifth grader from Beach Lake in Wayne County, died in a fire in his home.

And what is so difficult that you may recall, Madam President, is just a few weeks ago, you and I joined each other in welcoming Adam and his classmates from the Wallenpaupack North Elementary School as part of Music in Our Schools. What is so difficult is this young boy stood just outside this Chamber singing in the Rotunda, delighting in a tour of the Capitol, and coming onto this Senate floor with his classmates. They also took a tour of the Lieutenant Governor's office and loved the view of Harrisburg from your balcony. In fact, young Adam asked me a question about how I could help him control the cost of video games.

I will remember a kind and well-liked student, Adam, who was the son of Eric and Sharman Edwards Erickson. In addition to his parents, he is survived by two brothers, Jonathan and John, and two sisters, Erica and Elaine. So today I offer my deepest sympathy to his family, to his friends, to his school and our community, his classmates, who have been devastated by his loss, and the volunteer firefighters from the Beach Lake, Welcome Lake, Honesdale, and White Mills fire departments, who did everything to save his life. We need to cherish the memories of his voice ringing loud and clear here in this Rotunda, and we will always keep this family close in our hearts and in our prayers.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDENT. May I please ask the Senate and staff to stand for a moment of silence for Adam Erickson of Beach Lake.

(Whereupon, the Senate en bloc stood in a moment of silence in solemn respect to the memory of ADAM ERICKSON.)

RECESS

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

Senator PILEGGI. Madam President, I move that the Senate do now recess until Monday, April 7, 2008, at 1 p.m., Eastern Daylight Saving Time.

The motion was agreed to by voice vote.

The Senate recessed at 11:58 a.m., Eastern Daylight Saving Time.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SECRETARY

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

SENATE OF PENNSYLVANIA
COMMITTEE MEETINGS
THURSDAY, APRIL 3, 2008

9:00 A.M.  STATE GOVERNMENT (to Hrg. Rm. I consider the PA State Horse North Off. Racing Commission and the PA State Harness Racing Commission)