

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 347 Session of
2008

INTRODUCED BY ORIE, PIPPY AND BROWNE, JUNE 23, 2008

REFERRED TO URBAN AFFAIRS AND HOUSING, JUNE 23, 2008

A RESOLUTION

1 Supporting efforts for current functional consolidation and
2 future political consolidation of the City of Pittsburgh with
3 Allegheny County.

4 WHEREAS, Many studies, such as the notable report, Back to
5 Prosperity: A Competitive Agenda for Renewing Pennsylvania,
6 published in December 2003 by The Brookings Institution, have
7 promoted the potential efficiencies and cost savings to
8 taxpayers of eliminating fragmented government and consolidating
9 government functions; and

10 WHEREAS, The Citizens Advisory Committee on the Efficiency
11 and Effectiveness of City-County Government recently recommended
12 that the City of Pittsburgh merge with Allegheny County; and

13 WHEREAS, In 2005, the Local Government Consolidation: Lessons
14 for West Virginia studies on merger and consolidation showed
15 that most successful reorganizations are characterized by a
16 process involving a few functions which expand to a much larger
17 number as experience builds both trust and competency; and

18 WHEREAS, In January 1996, the Committee to Prepare Allegheny

1 County for the 21st Century (CompAC 21), established by the
2 county commissioners, noted that "As a region, we cannot afford
3 nor do taxpayers expect to pay for unnecessary and duplicative
4 public services"; and

5 WHEREAS, In October 1996, the Competitive Pittsburgh Task
6 Force, established by the Mayor of the City of Pittsburgh,
7 issued a report containing the "major recommendation" for
8 cooperation between the city and the county to eliminate all
9 duplicate services, which included specialized police and public
10 safety services, emergency management, senior citizen programs,
11 recreational programs, public works and administrative support
12 services; and

13 WHEREAS, Specific recommendations included selling the
14 asphalt plant and entering into a joint purchasing agreement for
15 the purchase of asphalt, combine bomb and ordnance disposal
16 units, fleet maintenance and senior centers; and

17 WHEREAS, In 2001, the PBGH 21 Commission, formed by the Mayor
18 of the City of Pittsburgh, proposed that the rapid changes in
19 technology should prompt the city to share services, personnel
20 and infrastructure, or to take advantage of economies of scale,
21 hardware and software, with Allegheny County and other
22 jurisdictions; and

23 WHEREAS, This included, but was not limited to, a joint
24 nonemergency call-taking center, purchasing and fleet
25 management; and

26 WHEREAS, In 2003, the Allegheny County Chief Executive sent a
27 letter to the city which identified cost savings that could be
28 achieved through the sharing of services; and

29 WHEREAS, Those proposed shared functions included integration
30 of economic development organizations, combined purchasing

1 operations, telecommunications, records storage, furniture
2 warehousing and inventory control, mailing and vending, fleet
3 management and shared fueling facilities, information
4 technology, road maintenance, print and sign printing shops and
5 joint public safety training; and

6 WHEREAS, The Interim Coordination and Information Sharing
7 report to the Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority (ICA) from
8 the City of Pittsburgh Act 47 Recovery Plan Development, dated
9 April 8, 2004, noted its recommendations will build on recent
10 discussions with Allegheny County and the Pittsburgh School
11 District for increased functional consolidation in areas, such
12 as the purchasing of uniforms, utilities, telecommunications,
13 vending and information technology services and in pooled
14 service delivery, such as police training, including
15 consolidation of training facilities; and

16 WHEREAS, The ICA for Cities of the Second Class preliminary
17 report of April 12, 2004, noted that the declines in the city's
18 tax base have still not been offset by corresponding reductions
19 in city expenditures and noted that excessive duplication of
20 services continues; and

21 WHEREAS, The Municipalities Financial Recovery Act Recovery
22 Plan for the City of Pittsburgh prepared by Public Financial
23 Management and Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellott, LLC, and filed
24 with the city clerk on June 11, 2004, contained 29
25 intergovernmental cooperation initiatives, including
26 consolidation of purchasing, transfer of arson investigation to
27 the county, transfer of pet licensing to the county, joint
28 facility management, joint information technology management,
29 equipment and services and consolidation of tax collection; and

30 WHEREAS, The November 2004 report of the ICA for Cities of

1 the Second Class discussed the continuing need for the merger of
2 city and county purchasing functions and the study of other
3 consolidations, such as the integration of city and county
4 detectives, which should and must occur if they can provide
5 significant cost reductions while enhancing the quality of such
6 services to citizens; and

7 WHEREAS, According to the Allegheny Institute for Public
8 Policy, the city and county have failed to move forward on a
9 majority of the above-recommended consolidations of services to
10 date, including, but not limited to, park maintenance and other
11 public works activities, and has even failed to privatize
12 garbage collection; and

13 WHEREAS, The city has failed to sell assets or set aside
14 funds to address its significant debt and legacy costs; and

15 WHEREAS, A presentation in March 2008 by the ICA for Cities
16 of the Second Class to the Department of Community and Economic
17 Development demonstrated that the city continues to have serious
18 financial issues and noted that more structural change is
19 necessary to impact the heavy legacy burden of unfunded
20 pensions, postretirement health care, debt and capital budget
21 needs and that the current five-year operating budget
22 projections show a return to deficits even before addressing
23 these legacy costs; and

24 WHEREAS, The governmental consolidation proposed by the
25 Citizens Advisory Committee does not adequately address the
26 responsibility for the debts and legacy costs of the city in
27 that it fails to contemplate the debts and obligations of the
28 city's numerous authorities, such as urban redevelopment, sewer
29 and parking, among others; and

30 WHEREAS, The governmental consolidation proposed by the

1 Citizens Advisory Committee leaves constitutional and other
2 major issues unanswered, such as the future political
3 representation of citizens, the Uniformity Clause prohibitions
4 on disparate tax rates within a single jurisdiction, the number
5 and level of future governmental employees and operations, and
6 the role of other municipalities located within the county,
7 among other issues, in addition to the above-mentioned serious
8 financial questions regarding pension, debt and other
9 inadequately funded obligations of the city; and

10 WHEREAS, Merging services can be accomplished immediately by
11 vote of the respective councils and the agreement of the Mayor
12 of the City of Pittsburgh and the Allegheny County Chief
13 Executive without legislation by the General Assembly; therefore
14 be it

15 RESOLVED, That the Senate support the immediate functional
16 consolidation of services between the City of Pittsburgh and
17 Allegheny County and encourage the city to take the necessary
18 and significant steps to reduce its debt and legacy costs as a
19 precondition to any political or governmental consolidation; and
20 be it further

21 RESOLVED, That the Senate Urban Affairs and Housing Committee
22 conduct hearings on the issues raised in this Resolution, and
23 any other issues that may arise from the proposed consolidation,
24 prior to the passage of any legislation authorizing political
25 consolidation between the City and the County; and be it further

26 RESOLVED, That no legislation be passed authorizing such
27 political consolidation unless the resolution of these issues is
28 contained therein, and the citizens of the affected jurisdiction
29 can therefore be fully informed of the consequences of political
30 consolidation prior to any ballot referendum thereon.