

State Update

In Memoriam



Lt. Governor Catherine Baker Knoll

Lt. Governor Catherine Baker Knoll, who was the first woman elected to the Office of Lieutenant Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, died Nov. 12 after a battle with a rare form of cancer. Prior to being the Treasurer of the Commonwealth, Baker Knoll was a former school teacher and businesswoman who was an integral part of many community organizations.

“We mourn the passing of one of the Commonwealth’s most dedicated officials,” said Joan Benso, President and CEO of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children. “Our condolences are with her family during this difficult time.”

Knoll will be replaced by the Senate President Pro Tempore, Joseph B. Scarnati, R-Jefferson, who plans to retain his Senate seat. He was sworn in on Dec. 3.

Published by Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, a strong, effective, and trusted voice to improve the health, education, and well-being of the Commonwealth’s children. Joan L. Benso, President and CEO.

House and Senate Elect Leaders

The House and Senate recently met to elect leaders for the upcoming legislative session. Rep. Keith McCall (D-Carbon) was nominated by the House Democratic Caucus to become Speaker of the House. Rep. McCall is expected to be elected to the position after a vote before the entire House Jan. 6. The Speaker is responsible for conducting legislative sessions and maintaining the proper order of events on the House floor.

The Senate Republican caucus nominated Senator Joe Scarnati (R-Jefferson) to continue as President Pro-Tempore. Scarnati was sworn in on November 26. In this role, Sen. Scarnati presides over the Senate in the absence of the Lieutenant Governor and is second in succession to the Governor.

House and Senate members also met privately in November to elect leaders. The results are as follows.

House Democrats:

- *Majority Leader: Todd Eachus (Luzerne)*
- *Majority Whip: H. William DeWeese (Greene)*
- *Caucus Chairman: Mark Cohen (Philadelphia)*

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- Appropriations Chairman: Dwight Evans (Philadelphia)
- Policy Chairman: Mike Sturla (Lancaster)
- Caucus Administrator: Ronald Buxton (Dauphin)
- Caucus Secretary: Jennifer Mann (Lehigh)

House Republicans:

- Minority Leader: Samuel Smith (Jefferson)
- Minority Whip: Mike Turzai (Allegheny)
- Caucus Chairwoman: Sandra Major (Susquehanna)
- Appropriations Chairman: Mario Civera (Delaware)
- Policy Chairman: Stanley Saylor (York)
- Caucus Administrator: Merle Phillips (Northumberland)
- Caucus Secretary: Jerry Stern (Blair)

Senate Democrats:

- Majority Leader: Robert Mellow (Lackawanna)
- Whip: Michael O’Pake (Berks)
- Appropriations Chairman: Jay Costa (Allegheny)
- Caucus Chairman: Vince Hughes (Philadelphia)
- Caucus Secretary: Sean Logan (Allegheny)
- Policy Chairman: Richard Kasunic (Fayette)
- Caucus Administrator: Christine Tartaglione (Philadelphia)

Senate Republicans:

- Majority Leader: Dominic Pileggi (Delaware)
- Minority Whip: Whip: Jane Orié (Allegheny)
- Appropriations Chairman: Jake Corman (Centre)
- Caucus Chairman: Mike Waugh (York)
- Caucus Secretary: Robert Robbins (Mercer)
- Policy Chairman: John Pippy (Allegheny)
- Caucus Administrator: Pat Browne (Lehigh)

Senate Republican Committee Chairs Announced

- Aging and Youth - Senator Pat Vance (Cumberland)
- Education - Senator Jeffrey Piccola (Dauphin)
- Public Health and Welfare - Senator Ted Erickson (Chester)
- Labor and Industry - Senator John Gordner (Columbia)

The Senate Democrats and both chambers of the House have not yet announced committee chairs.

For a complete list of election results, visit our elections web page at www.papartnerships.org/elections.asp.

House Education Committee holds hearing on teacher preparation guidelines

In November, the House Education Committee held a public hearing on guidelines issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) for teacher preparation programs. The guidelines represent a significant step in the implementation process for the regulations approved by the State Board of Education that change the grade-band certification levels for new Pennsylvania teachers. These regulations are often referred to as the Chapter 49-2 regulations. PPC strongly supported the adoption of these new regulations as they will assure that future teachers of children in prekindergarten through third grade will be prepared with more attention to the developmental needs of young children and with a richer repertoire of academic instructional skills.

The Chapter 49 regulations split the current K-6 elementary certificate into PreK-4th grade and 4th grade – 8th grade. Teachers certified in special education would also have to be certified in PreK-4th grade, 4th grade-8th grade or 7th grade-12th grade. All new teachers, beginning in 2011, would have to graduate with 9 credits of special education and 3 credits on teaching English to language learners.

PDE contends that previous guidelines for institutions of higher education were not clear with



regard to elements of high-quality teacher preparation programs. According to Kate Shaw, Deputy Secretary for the Office of Postsecondary and Higher Education at PDE, the new teacher preparation guidelines establish “the foundation for insuring that our teachers have the content, pedagogy and knowledge of human development to effectively teach” Pennsylvania’s students.

Specifically, the guidelines establish a detailed framework on what teacher candidates need to know and be able to do in the classrooms. But some college faculty members contend that the state’s guidelines for revising teacher training programs to comply with the new regulations are too prescriptive and impinge on the autonomy of professors or the institutions. The Association of Independent College and Universities of Pennsylvania (AICUP) contends that the guidelines are actually mandates “not authorized by statute or regulation.” Other testifiers said that the new guidelines would result in major curricula changes, increase the number of required education courses, increase the cost of higher education

for students and families and make it impossible for teacher candidates to have dual majors in a different academic area or complete an early childhood or middle level certification in four years.

While there was strong opposition to the guidelines at the hearing, committee members also heard from supporters including representatives of the State System of Higher Education, Clarion University and York College. All indicated that while the work required of higher education institutions under the new Chapter 49 guidelines is extensive, PDE has been especially helpful as faculty undertake the challenge of determining if their teacher preparation program curricula align with the guidelines.

PPC Joins Others to Tackle Dropout Problem

New strategies to keep students engaged in school and on track to earning a high school diploma were discussed at Pennsylvania’s Dropout Prevention and Re-Engagement Summit held in November with state, education, business and community leaders. The

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Register Now!

Viewing sites are scheduled at 21 sites throughout the state:

2008 Pre-K Now Satellite Conference

Mark Your Calendar! Wednesday, December 10, 2008

12:30 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Live broadcast from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

To find the closest viewing site and to register for the event go to: www.preknow.org

Governor Edward G. Rendell will be featured in the broadcast. Last year, the governor won the Pre-K Star award from Pre-K Now with your help.

For questions and information contact: Diane Barber, Early Childhood Education Director, PPC at 717-236-5680 x 210 or email dbarber@papartnerships.org.

Allentown (Lehigh County)
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Corry (Erie County)
Fairless Hills (Bucks County)
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Kingsley (Susquehanna County)
Mercer (Mercer County)
Mill Hill (Clinton County)
Moosic (Lackawanna County)
New Castle (Lawrence County)
Philadelphia (Philadelphia County) - Two sites
Pittsburgh (Allegheny County)
Schnecksville (Lehigh County)
Slippery Rock (Butler County)
State College (Centre County)
Stroudsburg (Monroe County)
Uniontown (Fayette County)
Waynesburg (Greene County)



group will develop an action plan for increasing the state's high school graduation rate in order to ensure that Pennsylvania's young people are better prepared for college, work and life.

A new report released by PPC just last month shows that young people who drop out of high school are twice as likely to live in poverty as youth who have received a high school diploma, and three times as likely as youth who have attended some college or earned an associate's degree. More information including unemployment, poverty and salary data by educational attainment is available by visiting www.papartnerships.org/droppingbackin/.

"It is imperative that we provide the necessary supports to not only keep kids in school and prevent them from dropping out in the first place, but to find a way to re-engage them in their education once they have dropped out," said Joan Benso, President and CEO of PPC. Benso served as the emcee of the summit.

Prevention efforts are aimed at helping at-risk children get off to a solid academic start through programs such as Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, Head Start and full-day kindergarten. The Department of Education also works closely with the Department of Public Welfare to administer early intervention programs to aid children with particular educational or developmental needs.

The summit was part of America's Promise Dropout Prevention Campaign, a national effort to reduce high school dropout rates and prepare children for college, work and life. The campaign includes a series of Dropout Prevention summits that will be held in every state and 50 communities over the next two years. For more information on Pennsylvania's summit, visit www.center-school.org/americas_promise.php.

PA Earns Recognition for Tracking Student Success

The Data Quality Campaign awarded its 2008 Leadership Award to the Commonwealth for the

creation of the Pennsylvania Information Management System, or PIMS, which is a secure data collection and reporting system that allows educators to track the learning progress of every student from early childhood through higher education. Student confidentiality is maintained in this system through the use of a unique, anonymous student identifier.

Secretary of Education Gerald Zahorchak said PIMS will serve as a vital tool in ongoing efforts to raise student achievement and ensure that every child in Pennsylvania – regardless of where they live or their social or economic circumstances – receives a quality education that prepares them for the challenges that lie beyond the classroom.

The Data Quality Campaign, a national partnership to improve the quality, accessibility and use of data in education, recognized the award winners for their leadership and innovation in championing the vital need for quality education data. For more information on these efforts, visit www.pde.state.pa.us/pims.

CHIP Enrollment Climbs

CHIP enrollment jumped to 180,701 in November, a 1.5 percent increase over the month. The program grew 8.3 percent over the year and showed growth in 63 counties. There were 9,997 children enrolled in CHIP in November who would not have been eligible before Cover All Kids.

Revenue Update: More Budget Cuts Announced

Pennsylvania collected \$1.6 billion in general fund revenue in November, \$93.1 million, or 5.4 percent, less than anticipated. Fiscal year-to-date general fund collections total \$9 billion, which is \$657.9 million, or 6.8 percent, below estimate.

In light of the sinking revenues, Gov. Ed Rendell asked cabinet officials to explore other cuts that could be made. A detailed list of budget reductions is expected to be announced this week and could total \$128 million. In October, the governor announced a



\$311 million freeze in spending, and asked groups outside his control, including the Legislature and Judiciary, to take similar steps.

Current cuts in the Departments of Education and Public Welfare include assessment, teacher professional development, high school reform, county child welfare, and child care assistance.

President-Elect Barack Obama has been working with the National Governors Association, of which Gov. Rendell is chairman, on an economic recovery

plan. Forty-one states are expected to face budget shortfalls this year or next.

Session Update

Members of the House and Senate will be sworn in on Tuesday, January 6. The Senate is scheduled to be in session January 6, 20 (non-voting), 21 (non-voting), 26, 27, 28. The House is scheduled to be in January 6, 26, 27, and 28.

Federal Update

Fiscal Stimulus in Limbo

On November 17, Senate majority leaders unveiled a proposal for a \$100 billion fiscal stimulus bill. Among other things, the measure would have extended unemployment benefits, increased the federal match for Medicaid spending by states by 8 percent (this would have given Pennsylvania a temporary bump from 55% to 63%), increased Food Stamp benefits, and provided additional funding for weatherization programs. But leaders could not muster the necessary votes to bring the measure up for consideration before the Senate. Instead, the Senate moved quickly to approve a House-passed measure extending unemployment benefits. The president signed the measure into law on November 21.

Congressional observers are speculating that the new 111th Congress and the new president will have to grapple with a stimulus package as the first order of business in 2009.

President-Elect Obama Identifies Key Agency Heads for Child and Family Programs

President-Elect Barack Obama has identified former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD) to serve as Secretary of the United States Department of

Health & Human Services (HHS). The position requires Senate confirmation.

The appointment is a critical one for child advocates, as HHS has the executive authority of many child and family programs including Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Child Care, Head Start, food nutritional programs, and all child welfare activities.

Promoting Permanence Report

PPC recently released its second report on the child welfare system, entitled “Promoting Permanence.”

You can view the paper at www.papartnerships.org/porchlight2.



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