

# GOVERNMENT HIGHLIGHTS

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## VOTE ON ELECTION DAY! TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7 POLLS OPEN 7 A.M. – 8 P.M.

If questions, please call the Allegheny County Division of Elections at:

412 350-4500

**A LIST OF SELECTED RACES AND CANDIDATES IS ATTACHED TO THE  
END OF THIS NEWSLETTER**

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### **North Korea Uses Plutonium Fuel in Nuclear Test; Strongly Critical of U.N. Resolution**

According to the findings of American intelligence agencies based on atmospheric sampling of radiation, North Korea used plutonium fuel in its recent nuclear test and may be planning a second nuclear test. This finding strongly suggests that North Korea might not yet be in a position to use uranium, based on enrichment equipment and expertise purchased from Pakistan's former nuclear leader.

China sent a high-level delegation to North Korea to give the nation "a strong message" about its nuclear test and to urge it to return to six-nation negotiations. China has been North Korea's largest trading partner.

### **Major Strategy Change Expected in Iraq War—Maybe...**

Senior Administration advisers, legislators, and other policy makers are projecting a significant change in the strategy for the Iraq War due to increasing doubts about the current plan and the growing likelihood of Democratic gains in the November 7 election, according to David S. Cloud of *The New York Times* and other reporters. The senior individuals are agreeing in the conclusion that the Bush Administration, according to

Michael Abramowitz and Thomas E. Ricks of the *Washington Post*, will not be able “to achieve its goal of a stable, democratic Iraq within a politically feasible time frame.” The reporters add that “Agitation is growing in Congress for alternatives to the administration’s strategy of keeping Iraq in one piece and getting its security forces up and running while 140,000 U.S. troops try to keep a lid on rapidly spreading sectarian violence.”

Some possibilities include the partitioning of the country according to regional lines, a gradual withdrawal of troops over a short period, and settling for national stability instead of democracy. The term “staying the course” has become increasingly unacceptable and will no longer be used by the President, according to his press secretary Tony Snow.

However, reports from an October 21 meeting on Iraq at the White House indicated there would not be significant policy changes. Yet, in a press conference on October 23 Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said that U.S. and Iraqi officials are working out broad time frames for Iraq’s steps toward self-government through 2007, including political reconciliation and the handover of all 18 provinces. No specific dates would be used, according to Rumsfeld. Press Bush in a press conference on October 25 used the term “benchmark” 13 times to describe evaluating progress in Iraq.

In a related area, Colum Lynch of the *Washington Post* reported that Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki’s office has told the health minister to refrain from providing mortality figures to the United Nations, which puts at risk an important source on the number of civilian deaths in Iraq. The Iraqi government has resisted U.N. efforts to obtain reliable government mortality data, but for the last 15 months or so the Medico-Legal Institute in Baghdad, supported by the health ministry, provided U.N. investigators with raw data from morgues and the health ministry provided data from Iraqi hospitals.

The U.S. and Iraqi governments released a joint statement on October 27 renewing their commitment to work together for peace and security in Iraq. The statement followed a meeting by Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad.

More than 100 American military have been killed in Iraq in October.

In another related area, the Bush Administration notified the U.S. District Court in Washington that it no longer had jurisdiction to consider hundreds of *habeas corpus* petitions filed by inmates at the Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba. The administration cited the new Military Commissions Act (MCA) as the authority for its position which it said prohibits courts, justices, or judges from considering those petitions or other actions related to the treatment or imprisonment filed by anyone designated as an enemy combatant, now or in the future.

## **Putin to Leave Office in 2008**

Russian President Vladimir V. Putin on October 25 again stated his intention to leave the presidency in 2008 at the end of his second term, as required by the constitution. He also suggested, however, that he might want to continue to exert influence—possibly in a different governmental position.

### *Federal Government Developments*

## **Congress Still in Recess**

The U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate are still in recess until November 13, after the General Election on Tuesday, November 7, although a *pro forma* session will be held on November 9. The first order of business upon the return to Washington of the legislators is the passage of the remaining ten FY2007 appropriations bills. The exact scheduling of this Congressional session is unknown. If the remaining appropriations are passed by the November 17 expiration date of the current Continuing Resolution (CR) (H.J.Res. 97), then Congress may adjourn for the year and end the Second Session of the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress. If the November 7 election results cause a switch in the majority in the House and/or the Senate, there may be little interest on the part of the current Republican majority to cooperate with the Democrats to pass some or all of the remaining appropriations bills, another CR, or an omnibus appropriations bill. The current CR funds federal departments, agencies, and programs not funded in the Defense and Homeland Security Appropriations bills at the FY2006 funding level or the FY House-passed funding level, whichever is lower.

Some lawmakers predict the passage of some or all of the remaining appropriations bills on or shortly after November 13 and a CR if necessary, followed by a short recess until after Thanksgiving, and then the final lame duck session in December.

## **College Board Releases College Cost Report**

The newest report from the College Board on college costs released on October 24 concludes that college tuition prices are up, as is student financial aid. Federal Pell Grant funding for low-income students declined for the first time in six years. Specific conclusions of the report include the following:

- Public four-year university prices for in-state students rose 6.3 percent to \$5,836 versus 7.1 percent last year, after two years of double-digit increases;
- Private four-year university prices were up 5.9 percent, the same rate of increase as last year, to \$22,218; and
- Public two-year college prices rose 4.1 percent, to \$2,272, down from 5.4 percent last year.

The College Board cautioned that pricing practices vary by region and that the average net prices—the amount students pay after financial aid is factored in—are “significantly

lower” than published prices. Student financial aid of all types increased 3.7 percent to \$134.8 billion in 2005-2006, compared with three percent the previous year. Funding for Pell Grants was down from \$13.1 billion in 2004-2005 to \$12.7 billion last year, and the average amount per recipient dropped \$120 from \$2,474 to \$2,354. Last year, the maximum Pell Grant of \$4,050 covered 33 percent of tuition at public four-year institutions; four years ago, it covered 42 percent. Median debt levels of graduating students are “almost certain” to have increased in recent years, the report says.

### **Lower Deficit vs. Tax Cuts as Economic Stimulus**

Although President Bush claimed that tax cuts (“pro-growth economic policies”) proposed by his Administration and passed by Congress were responsible for the shrinking of the federal deficit by 40 percent over the past two years, economists knowledgeable about the issue dispute the President’s claim of credit due. They agree that the economy has grown and that tax receipts have increased to historic rates over the past two years, but they also say that the Bush tax cuts were a small factor in the process and, according to Lori Montgomery of the *Washington Post*, “cost the Treasury more in lost taxes than it gained from the resulting economic stimulus.”

Alan D. Viard, a former Bush White House economist now at the nonpartisan American Enterprise Institute, noted: “Federal revenue is lower today than it would have been without the tax cuts. There’s really no dispute among economists about that.” Economists at the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and in the U.S. Treasury Department have reached the same conclusion.

Republican legislators on the campaign trail, however, have been touting the good fiscal news and attacking Democrats for wanting to roll back the tax cuts.

### **New U.S. Plan for Nuclear Weapons**

Thomas P. D’Agostino, head of defense programs for the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), recently told reporters that the “Complex 2030” program would repair or replace “inefficient, old and expensive [to maintain]” nuclear facilities at eight sites, primarily in California, New Mexico, Texas, and Tennessee. The Bush plan would replace 6,000 warheads with a smaller and more reliable arsenal and consolidate the handling of plutonium in one center. All highly enriched uranium would be removed from the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California. A critical component is a decision expected in December by the NNSA on a design for the new “Reliable Replacement Warhead.”

### **U.S. Population at 300 Million**

The U.S. Census Bureau noted that at 7:46 a.m. on Tuesday, October 17, the population of the United States was projected to reach 300,000,000—one person every 11 seconds. The last significant milestone had been in 1967 when the U.S. population reached 200 million. Immigrants, legal and illegal, account for approximately 40 percent of

population growth and about 12 percent of the total population. The latest milestone is not a specific count of people, but rather an educated guess by the Census Bureau, developed from a formula that includes births and new immigrants against deaths.

### **New Atomic Element Created**

Scientists in California and Russia announced on October 17 that they have created the heaviest atomic element ever made, adding to the periodic table of elements. Although no official name has been given to the super-heavy radioactive element, it is unofficially being referred to as ununoctium (Latin for “one-one-eight”), eka-radon (beneath radon on the periodic table), or simply element 118 for the number of protons in its nucleus. The finding must be considered provisional, until the research can be independently replicated. Complicating the replication of this element is the fact that the three atoms of ununoctium came and went in a literal flash (less than 1,000<sup>th</sup> of a second). Also, the element was first reported by a Berkeley team in 1999 and then retracted two years later when it was clear that the results of the research were fraudulent. The element was reported in the October issue of the journal *Physical Review C*. Team leaders of the research are Dawn Shaughnessy and Ken Moody of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in Livermore, California, and Yuri Oganessian of the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research in Dubna, Russia.

If the results are confirmed, they would constitute additional progress toward the “island of stability” that theorists believe exists in even the heavier regions of the periodic table.

### **Post Office to Phase Out Vending Machines and Drop Boxes**

According to the Associated Press, the U.S. Postal Service plans to eliminate its 23,000 vending machines in post offices by 2010. According to a department spokesperson, the machines are old, breakdowns are increasing, and replacement parts are costly or unavailable. Freestanding blue collection boxes will also be phased out, due to a decline in first-class mail. Customers can still purchase stamps from postal clerks and the agency is increasing its use of automated postal centers that print postage on demand and also sell some stamps.

### **Higher Ed Associations Request Consideration in Federal Budget for FY2008**

The presidents of six higher education associations—American Council on Education, Association of American Universities, American Association of Community Colleges, the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, and the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges—wrote last week to Mr. Rob Portman, the director of the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Their letter requested that OMB “consider increasing federal investments in the following” programs in the federal budget for FY2008:

- The Pell Grant and other student financial aid programs;
- International education;
- The American Competitiveness Initiative;
- The National Institutes of Health;
- Workforce development;
- NASA science; and
- The National Endowment for the Humanities.

### **Other Federal Developments**

-- President George W. Bush will visit Ho Chi Minh City, once known as Saigon, during a trip to Vietnam in November. He will attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation leaders' forum in the Vietnamese capitol of Hanoi on November 18 and 19.

--President Bush signed into law on October 26 the legislation authorizing 700 miles of fencing along the southern border of the United States. The bill does not, however, provide funding for the approved border.

--Judge Charles B. Kornmann of the federal district court in South Dakota ruled on October 27 that while the law that bars the awarding of federal student financial aid to students convicted of drug offenses may be unnecessary, unfair, and even unconscionable, it nevertheless is not unconstitutional. The judge dismissed the lawsuit brought by the Students for Sensible Drug Policy and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) on behalf of three students who had lost their financial aid, one of whom was from South Dakota.

--The Federal Reserve left interest rates alone for the third consecutive meeting on October 25, saying it expects economic growth to continue. The central bank also warned, however, that inflation remains a threat given the tight job market and the slump in the housing market. The short-term interest rate is 5.25 percent, the highest in nearly six years. The core consumer price index—which excludes food and energy—is up 2.9 percent in the past 12 months, above the Fed's informal one-to-two percent comfort range.

--A panel of the House Ethics Committee (officially the House Committee on the Standards of Official Conduct) has been conducting interviews of legislators and staff who may have some information about the communications former Representative Mark Foley (R-FL) may have sent current and past Congressional pages. The interviews address who had knowledge, when they had it, and whom did they notify about it. Foley resigned his seat on September 29 after his inappropriate and sexually explicit email and instant messages were disclosed by ABC News.

--Government scientists at the Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland, report that this year's Antarctic ozone hole is the largest one ever—at 10.6 million square miles. Scientists say human-produced gases containing bromine and chlorine damage the ozone layer, causing the hole, i.e. a region in the upper atmosphere where there is severe depletion of the ozone.

--The number of U.S. medical students increased significantly, according to figures released recently by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC). Enrolment in the 2006-2007 entering medical school class was almost 17,400, 2.2 percent increase over last year. The number of medical school applicants also increased to more than 39,000, up 4.6 percent from the previous year.

--The United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), the non-profit organization that administers the national Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, is facing criticism for failing to identify or fix problems at hospital transplant programs or organ procurement organizations, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. Although UNOS can censure hospitals and recommend the closure of their transplant programs, it has never done so, the article noted. UNOS Executive Director Walter Graham admitted that the “sense of outrage has grown in the transplant community” and said changes would be made.

--The U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled on October 20 that Arizona may enforce a new state law requiring voters to show a photo identification card at the polls on Election Day. The ruling did not address the constitutionality of the law, but overturned the ruling of the federal appeals court in San Francisco that would have prevented enforcement of the law until a suit by opponents could be decided.

--The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) withdrew its three-year old lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the USA Patriot Act, following the revision of some parts of the law by Congress. ACLU spokesperson Ann Beeson commented: “While the reauthorized Patriot Act is far from perfect, we succeeded in stemming the damage from some of the Bush administration’s most reckless policies.” The Justice Department said it is pleased with the action of the ACLU.

--“Lucy,” one of the earliest known paleontological relics, will be on display in some American cities on loan from the Ethiopian Ministry of Culture and Tourism, but she will not be on exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington or the American Museum of Natural History in New York. The primary reason for not accepting the display of the 3.2 million-year-old fossilized remains is their fragility. About 40 percent of a female skeleton was discovered near Hadar, Ethiopia, in 1974 by Donald Johanson and Tom Gray and given the name Lucy from the Beatles song “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds,” which was played during the party celebrating her discovery, according to *Washington Post* reporter Jacqueline Trescott.

### **New Fantasy Congress Web Site**

Four students at Claremont McKenna College in southern California have developed a new competitor for electronic football leagues in Fantasy Congress ([www.fantasycongress.us](http://www.fantasycongress.us)), a Web site that permits each player to select a Congressional team of four Senators and 12 House members and compete with other players in a league typically managed by a friend or co-worker. According to Cindy Chang of *The New York*

*Times*, players accumulate points as the lawmakers on their teams do their Congressional business, accumulating five points for introducing a bill or an amendment and more points for “negotiating successfully each step in the legislative process.” The Web site’s creators plan to provide additional ways to earn points, including floor speeches and news media references. Claremont student Andrew Lee, who initiated the concept of the site, noted: “Everyone knows about football, but more people need to know about Congress. If as many people knew about Congress as knew about football, baseball and basketball, we’d all be more educated.”

### **SAT and ACT Use Increases**

Both the SAT and ACT are reporting that the number of students taking their tests has increased significantly this year: approximately 520,000 registered for the ACT exam on October 28, 17 percent more than last year. The registration for the most recent SAT exam was about 660,000, an increase of 90,000 over last year. Students appear to be thinking that taking both tests will increase their chances of acceptance. More students may want to attend college and may also want to get the test out of the way as soon as they can.

### **People on the Move—or Not**

--U.S. Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) acknowledged he was considering a possible presidential run in 2008, although a few years ago he said he would serve out his Senate term which does not end until 2010. National Democrats have been encouraging him to consider a campaign. He told supporters he would make a decision sometime after the November elections. He has served just two years of his U.S. Senate term and seven years in the Illinois State Senate.

--U.S. Congressman Phil English (R-PA) is in a three-way race to become the next chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC), along with Congressmen Pete Sessions (R-TX) and Tom Cole (R-OK). English is also a candidate for re-election to his Congressional seat which covers Erie, Butler, and Armstrong counties.

--John E. Niederhuber, M.D., on October 18 was officially sworn in as Director of the National Cancer Institute (NCI) of the National Institutes of Health. He will be the 13<sup>th</sup> director of NCI in its almost 70-year history.

### **Correction**

The October 16, 2006 issue of *Government Highlights* erroneously described Bob Casey, Jr., as Pennsylvania State Auditor, his previous position, instead of his current position as Pennsylvania State Treasurer. We regret the error.

## Local and Commonwealth Government Developments

### **Pitt Drives Western PA Economy**

The University of Pittsburgh Economic Impact Report, released last Friday, showed Pitt accounted for \$944 million in direct spending and \$566 million in indirect spending during fiscal 2005. The university also paid \$117.4 million to local governments in sales, wages and real estate taxes. The figures do not include the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. Since its last Economic Impact Report two years ago, Pitt spending has grown 15.4 percent.

Other findings include:

- Pitt generates \$1.1 billion in personal income and sponsors 32,000 jobs.
- The university attracts \$603 million in sponsored research--creating 17,100 jobs. That is an increase of \$90 million and 2,500 jobs in two years.
- Pitt spent an average of \$115.7 million a year on construction between fiscal 2003 and 2005, generating 1,100 jobs.
- Visitors to the university spend \$78 million directly and indirectly.

### **Late Night Session Produces Legislation, Almost**

Three major pieces of legislation were passed in Harrisburg last week. Changes to the slots legislation were agreed upon, and a form of lobbying disclosure passed as well as expanded health insurance for children. Below is a summary of each piece of legislation.

#### LOBBYIST DISCLOSURE (House Bill 700)

- Requires lobbyists to register with the State Department once they are paid more than \$2,500 in a financial quarter for lobbying activities.
- Requires principals — corporations, trade groups and others that employ lobbyists — to register once they spend more than \$2,500 in a financial quarter.
- Requires reports to categorize how money was spent, taking into account salaries and benefits, travel and office expenses, as well as efforts to sway the general public, such as PR campaigns on billboards and radio and newspaper ads.
- Requires reports to identify the general subject matter or issue for which they were lobbying.
- Requires reports to identify state officials or employees who received gifts worth more than \$250 in a year, or who received entertainment, meals, transportation and other forms of hospitality worth more than \$650 in a year.

- Exempts people from registering and reporting if they spend less than 20 hours lobbying in a financial quarter.
- Makes reports available online.

#### SLOT-MACHINE GAMBLING (Senate Bill 862)

- Requires the state Attorney General's Office to form a gambling-crimes unit and gives the office jurisdiction to prosecute gambling-related crimes.
- Clarifies that the state Right-to-Know Law applies to the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board.
- Wipes out a provision allowing public officials to hold one percent of a gambling interest, unless it is an indirect investment.
- Removes a requirement that slot-machine manufacturers sell through an in-state distributor.
- Limits slot-machine manufacturers to supplying 50 percent of a casino's machines for 30 months.
- Sends casino zoning appeals to the state Supreme Court
- Prevents slots casinos that are not tied to racetracks from taking advantage of tax breaks meant for struggling business zones.
- Prevents local indoor smoking bans from applying to casinos.
- Requires members of the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board to recuse themselves from individual licensing decisions in which they have a direct conflict.

Additional changes approved by the House and sent back to the Senate include:

- Ban on campaign contributions to local and state officials by applicants for horse racetrack licenses.
- Requirement that casinos to comply with local ordinances banning indoor smoking.
- Allows the Legislature, rather than the state, to decide whether to transfer state-owned riverbed property rights to casinos.

## CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE (House Bill 2699)

- Expands the state-subsidized children's health insurance program, which currently tops out with families earning 235 percent of the federal poverty level — about \$47,000 for a family of four.
- Helps pay health insurance for families earning up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level — about \$60,000 for a family of four — and institutes a sliding premium based on ability to pay. That premium ranges from \$36 per child to \$57 per child.
- Allows some families that earn above 300 percent of the federal poverty level to participate under certain conditions, including: If the family has been refused coverage by private insurers due to a pre-existing condition; if the cost of coverage exceeds 10 percent of family income; or if the total cost for the child is greater than 150 percent of the premium under the state's program.
- Ends the program in 2010, unless the Legislature renews it.
- Allows the Insurance Department to charge copayments for some services covered by the program.

### **Not So Fast**

Senators rushing to finish remaining business in the early hours of October 24 before returning home to campaign, passed a lobbyist disclosure bill with language from an earlier amended version. Senate and House leaders discovered the mistake the following morning, when the House was scheduled to concur and send the long-awaited bill to the governor's desk.

The House attributed a similar Senate drafting error Tuesday night as reason for changing the long-awaited gambling reform legislation, sending it back to the Senate with the possibility that it would not be finalized before the November election.

The delay in final passage will have no impact on the legislation, since it is scheduled to go into effect January 1. Pennsylvania senators returned Friday, October 27, to session to deal with lobbyist disclosure and gambling reform bills — yet again. Although Senate leaders initially said they would wait for the lame duck session to finish up lobbyist disclosure, the addition of gambling reform to the unfinished list provided the momentum to come back for a rare Friday session. Although the lobbyist disclosure bill seems ironed out, senators will be facing a House-altered gambling reform bill. One change includes reinstating local smoking bans on casinos.

### **Changing of the Guard?**

Democrats next month have an outside chance at taking control of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for the first time in 12 years, political analysts say. The

legislative pay raise of 2005 continues to haunt some incumbents, and it is one of many factors that could determine whether Republicans retain control of the chamber.

Party control of the House affects issues ranging from state spending to environmental policy. The majority party determines which bills come up for a vote and the makeup of committees. Control of the House has changed hands 16 times since 1900. Republicans now control the House by a 109-93 margin, with one vacancy.

Analysts said House districts, drawn to protect incumbents, still make it difficult for challengers from either party. The GOP's 29-21 edge in the Senate isn't likely to change.

Some Western Pennsylvania House seats are critical to determining the overall outcome in the 203-member House. Representative Frank Dermody, D-Oakmont, chairman of the Allegheny County delegation, recently was ranked as the Democrats' most vulnerable incumbent statewide by *The Insider*, a statewide political newsletter. Dermody faces former Allegheny County Councilwoman Eileen Watt, R-Cheswick.

Three other local Democrats are on the publication's list of most vulnerable Democrats: Representative Joseph Markosek, of Monroeville; Representative Ted Harhai, of Monessen; and freshman Representative Shawn Flaherty, a Fox Chapel attorney.

On the GOP side, Representative Mike Diven, of Brookline, who changed parties to run for the state Senate, is one of the GOP's endangered incumbents. He faces a strong opponent in Democrat Chelsa Wagner.

### **PHEAA Audited**

Pennsylvania's Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA), the state's biggest student loan company, is undergoing an audit by the U.S. Department of Education's Inspector General concerning the amount of money it requests in reimbursements from the federal government.

According to PHEAA, the reason loan companies are still claiming reimbursements from the government is because students who took out loans before 1993 may still be paying them off and are thus under the pre-1993 legislation. Michael Dannenberg, Director of Education Policy at the New America Foundation and editor of **higheredwatch.org**, said if that is the case, the number of loans and amount of money the government is giving PHEAA should be decreasing as more students pay off the loans they owe from college.

The audit comes at a crucial time for PHEAA, as Governor Ed Rendell called for a massive restructuring of the loan giant several weeks ago. He expressed concern in a recent interview with *The Patriot-News'* editorial board last month concerning bonuses given to PHEAA executives totaling more than \$850,000, pointing out that that amount could have provided maximum grants for nearly 200 students.

Since the early 1980s, loan companies such as PHEAA have been guaranteed a 9.5 percent rate of return on loans they make. This means that for every dollar loan companies gave to students, they were guaranteed \$1.095 back. In 1993, that law was repealed. Since then, the number of loans PHEAA claims are entitled to the 9.5 percent government subsidy has risen sharply -- equaling a large increase in the amount of money the government gives to PHEAA.

The government payments to PHEAA have risen sharply in recent years. In the 2001 fiscal year, the government paid out \$209 million, according to a report from the Government Accountability Office. The report said that number shot up to "well over" \$600 million in mid-2004. A PHEAA spokesperson said the audit is nothing out of the ordinary for a loan company.

### **Pitt History Hits Internet**

A recent announcement from the University of Pittsburgh states that the institution has gone online with "Documenting Pitt," which provides access to more than 70,000 pages from publications regarding the school's history. The materials include yearbooks, catalogs, published histories, chancellor's reports, athletics media guides and early student publications. All of these publications can be searched by name. The Web interface is seamless. You call up the type of publication you want to look at — "Fact Books," for instance — and determine which years' page images have been put online. Several types of searches can be done of the text. The site is already receiving a large number of hits.

"Documenting Pitt" is found at the URL <http://digital.library.pitt.edu/d/documentingpitt/>.

The new Web site is just one of Pitt's efforts to make its huge collections more accessible to users at a distance. The university is working at digitizing the entire collection of its Darlington Memorial Library, which was one of the pre-eminent private libraries of the 19th century before being donated to Pitt in the early 20th century. This library contains more than 10,000 books, more than a thousand maps and 100 square feet of manuscripts. Among its varied materials are treaty texts printed by Benjamin Franklin, original Revolutionary War muster rolls, and Audubon nature prints.

### **Efficiency Committee Formed**

The region's two top elected leaders announced the creation of a 13-member committee to find ways to make their governments run better. Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl and Allegheny County Executive Dan Onorato empanelled the Advisory Committee to Enhance Efficiency and Effectiveness of County and City Government, implying there is room for improvement. They put few limits on the committee, saying it could recommend anything from small cooperative efforts to a full merger. They also provided no deadline, though both officials and committee Chairman Mark A. Nordenberg, Chancellor of the University of Pittsburgh, said they hoped for fairly quick action.

Chancellor Nordenberg said the committee's first order of business would be to gather studies already done on consolidation and cooperation. The committee will start meeting soon, and will seek public input but deliberate in private.

In the meantime, the city and county are close to announcing the merger of their purchasing operations, which would end a negotiation that started last year. Purchasing would join the 911 dispatching, fingerprinting operations and municipal courts, which are cited as examples of successful city-county consolidation.

The committee vice chairs are Kathleen McKenzie, deputy county manager, and Yarone Zober, city chief of staff. Other members are Eva Tansky Blum, senior vice president of the PNC Foundation; JoAnne E. Burley, executive director of the Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education; Lalit Chordia, president of Thar Technologies; the Reverend William H. Curtis, pastor of Mount Ararat Baptist Church; Aradhna M. Dhanda, president and chief executive officer of Leadership Pittsburgh; M. Richard Dunlap, executive officer of the Allegheny League of Municipalities; Jesse W. Fife Jr., executive vice president of Manchester Bidwell Corp.; Maxwell King, president of The Heinz Endowments; Jack Shea, president of the Allegheny County Labor Council; and Frederick W. Thieman, a partner at Thieman & Ward.

### **Getting the 3-1-1**

Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl introduced a "311" hot line last week to field residents' complaints and answer their questions. The line is intended to handle reports of non-emergencies ranging from potholes to broken street lights. Some cell phone users, however, cannot get through by dialing 311. They must dial the full number, 412-255-2489.

Ravenstahl kicked off the 311 system at a news conference where he was flanked by several City Council members, department heads and a large Lamar Advertising billboard displaying the mayor's image and a black-and-gold graphic that said "Call 3-1-1 -- Questions, Comments, Concerns."

"Mayor Luke Ravenstahl's Response Line" will cost \$150,000 a year to run and will be staffed by three to five operators working on the first floor of the City-County Building, Downtown, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Ravenstahl expects the number of calls to swell once the donated billboard goes up Downtown and fliers with information about the 311 line begin circulating. The last time the city had such a service line was in 2004 under then-Mayor Tom Murphy. It was canceled due to budget cuts.

### **Oversight Board Approves Mayor's Budget, Fight Looms**

State overseers approved Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl's proposed budget last week, but they drew the wrath of City Council's president. The city controller, meanwhile,

threatened to sue over cuts. Approval by the Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority allows the mayor to give what is now a \$419 million spending blueprint and a five-year plan to council next month with the state's stamp already on it. The budget needs the approval of a council.

To win the ICA's nod, the mayor had to make changes to the budget he floated a month ago, trimming the council and city clerk allocation from \$1.89 million to \$1.76 million, and the controller's budget from \$2.37 million to \$2.21 million. Mr. Ravenstahl said he included the higher figures at the request of council and the controller, but on the condition that they win over the authority. That did not happen, and the ICA demanded the lower figures.

At the authority's meeting, Council President Doug Shields waved a lengthy e-mail he sent to the panel's staff on Monday, urging more dialogue. He has argued that council and its clerk need \$1.89 million, up from \$1.68 million this year, to cover a 2.5 percent raise, and allow council to stay fully staffed year-round and retain its own lawyer.

Acting Controller Tony Pokora said his office could not effectively monitor city cash flow, contract compliance and performance with just \$2.21 million. He said he expects to file an action seeking \$2.37 million with Common Pleas Court next week.

Mr. Shields said council can amend the budget, and if the authority objects to any changes it makes the agency could punish the city by seizing new tax revenue. That would severely restrict city operations. Council will begin budget hearings next month.

### **Task Force Endorses Casino Plan**

The city's gaming task force on October 26 said a casino plan that promises a new arena for the Penguins is the strongest it has evaluated so far, but stopped short of officially endorsing the proposal. The Pittsburgh Gaming Task Force said Biloxi, Miss.-based Isle of Capri presented a better business model than two other casino operators competing for a slots license, Forest City Enterprises and PITG Gaming LLC.

Isle of Capri has said it will pay \$290 million for a new arena and contribute to economic development in the lower Hill District, one of the city's poorest neighborhoods, if it gets the license. The group said Isle of Capri's proposal "demonstrates excellent use of its site, exceptional design and urban planning, a comprehensive traffic plan, a commitment to a new arena and a solid casino operator who will work with the local community."

But the task force declined to formally back the proposal because the Gaming Control Board's selection process is continuing through the end of the year, and it hopes other applicants will revise their plans before then.

Forest City Enterprises, which is teaming with Harrah's Entertainment Inc., failed to provide details about its plan, preventing the task force from making any positive impacts, he said. The task force praised the proposal by PITG Gaming LLC, which

wants to build a \$460 million slots parlor west of where the Steelers and Pirates play, but said it was concerned about heavy traffic in the area. The city group's letter of support is not binding, because the state board is the arbiter of which companies will get slots licenses in Pennsylvania.

### **Oakland Project Halted Until Spring**

Construction of the long-sought "gateway" to Oakland has been postponed until at least spring. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation confirmed that it has rejected a \$31.8 million low bid as more than it can afford. It has gone back to the drawing board for the construction project that would redesign and spruce up a system of ramps and bridges at the convergence of the Boulevard of the Allies and Forbes and Fifth avenues.

Because the bids came in so high, PennDOT has asked the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, the 10-county planning agency that sets the region's transportation funding agenda, to switch funds for Route 28 interchange rehabilitation in Etna to the Oakland project.

The \$31.8 million low bid was more than 50 percent over engineers' estimate of \$19.9 million for the Oakland makeover. A \$41.1 million high bid was more than double the estimate. PennDOT will repackage bid criteria to give prospective contractors more flexibility with the design, schedule and traffic management in order to bring costs closer to engineering estimates and available money. Work could still get under way in the spring.

The project includes replacing the deteriorated Boulevard of the Allies bridge over Forbes Avenue; building a new exit ramp to Forbes; and adding a direct westbound ramp from Fifth Avenue to the Boulevard so traffic will no longer be required to turn left onto Craft Avenue and travel one block on Forbes. It also would add various design features to transform a major Oakland interchange into an attractive gateway.

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**LIST OF SELECTED CANDIDATES**  
**GENERAL ELECTION, NOVEMBER 7, 2006**

Information is listed as provided by the Allegheny County Division of Elections

D= Democratic party affiliation

R= Republican party affiliation

United States Senator

Bob Casey, Jr. (D)

Rick Santorum (R)

Government and Lieutenant Governor

Ed Rendell and Catherine Baker Knoll (D)

Lynn Swann and Jim Matthews (R)

Representative in Congress—4<sup>th</sup> District

Jason Altmire (D)

Melissa A. Hart (R)

Representative in Congress—12<sup>th</sup> District

John P. Murtha (D)

Diana Irey (R)

Representative in Congress--14<sup>th</sup> District

Mike Doyle (D)

No candidate filed (R)

Titus North (Green Party)

Representative in Congress—18<sup>th</sup> District

Chad Kluko (D)

Tim Murphy (R)

Senator in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—38<sup>th</sup> District

Jim Ferlo (D)

No candidate filed (R)

Joseph Murphy (Constitution Party)

Senator in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—40<sup>th</sup> District

No candidate filed (D)  
Jane Clare Orié (R)  
Christopher M. Graham (Constitution Party)

Senator in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—42<sup>nd</sup> District

Wayne Fontana (D)  
No candidate filed (R)

Senator in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—46<sup>th</sup> District

J. Barry Stout (D)  
No candidate filed (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—16<sup>th</sup> District

Sean M. Ramaley (D)  
No candidate filed (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—19<sup>th</sup> District

Jake Wheatley (D)  
No candidate filed (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—20<sup>th</sup> District

Don Walko (D)  
Bill Stalter (R)  
Jim Barr (Constitution Party)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—21<sup>st</sup> District

Lisa Bennington (D)  
No candidate filed (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—22<sup>nd</sup> District

Chelsa Wagner (D)  
Michael B. Diven (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—23<sup>rd</sup> District

Dan B. Frankel (D)  
No candidate filed (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—24<sup>th</sup> District

Joseph Preston, Jr. (D)  
No candidate filed (R)  
Todd Elliott Koger (No party)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—25<sup>th</sup> District

Joseph F. Markosek (D)  
Ed Nicholson (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—27<sup>th</sup> District

Thomas C. Petrone (D)  
Bill Ogden (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—28<sup>th</sup> District

John Henry (D)  
Mike Turzai (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—30<sup>th</sup> District

Shawn T. Flaherty (D)  
Randy Vulakovich (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—32<sup>nd</sup> District

Anthony M. DeLuca (D)  
No candidate filed (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—33<sup>rd</sup> District

Frank Dermody (D)  
Eileen Watt (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—34<sup>th</sup> District

Paul Costa (D)  
No candidate filed (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—35<sup>th</sup> District

Marc J. Gergely (D)  
No candidate filed (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—36<sup>th</sup> District

Harry Readshaw (D)  
No candidate filed (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—38<sup>th</sup> District

Bill Kortz (D)  
Daniel J. David (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—39<sup>th</sup> District

David Levdansky (D)  
No candidate filed (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—40<sup>th</sup> District

No candidate filed (D)  
John A. Maher (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—42<sup>nd</sup> District

Matthew Smith (D)  
Mark Harris (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—44<sup>th</sup> District

Ray J. Uhric (D)  
Mark Mustio (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—45<sup>th</sup> District

Nick Kotik (D)  
No candidate filed (R)

Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly—46<sup>th</sup> District

Jesse White (D)  
Paul Snatchko (R)

City of Pittsburgh, Member of Council, District #1—To Fill A Vacancy

Darlene M. Harris (D)  
Joe Lucas (R)  
Steven P. Oberst (Friends of Oberst)  
David Schuilenburg (Independent)

Kevin Donahue II (People for Donahue)  
Myles P. Rooney (Rooney for Council)

Bethel Park, Ward 7, Member of Council, To Fill a Vacancy

No candidate filed (D)  
Paul R. Martin (R)

Referendum/Ballot Question, Act No. 29 of 2006

Do you favor indebtedness by the Commonwealth of up to \$20,000 for the payment of compensation for service in the Persian Gulf Conflict of 1990-1991?

Plain English Statement: The ballot question asks the voters of Pennsylvania whether they approve of the Commonwealth borrowing \$20 million to create a fund for the payment of compensation to veterans of the United States Armed Forces who served in the Persian Gulf Conflict and were Pennsylvania residents at the time of such service. The Persian Gulf Conflict was fought in 1990 and 1991 following the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq.

If the ballot question is approved, payments will be made from the Persian Gulf Conflict Veterans' Compensation Fund in the following amounts: (1) up to \$525 to a veteran of the Conflict; (2) \$5,000 to a veteran who was a prisoner of war in the Conflict; and (3) \$5,000 to the survivors of a veteran who died in the Conflict or from a wound, disease, or injury sustained during the Conflict.

Act No. 29 of 2006, which presents the ballot question to the voters, authorizes the Pennsylvania Adjutant General to create rules and procedures for administering payments from the Compensation Fund. If necessary to meet the obligations of the Fund, Act 29 authorizes the Governor to transfer money from the General Fund to the Compensation Fund and to reimburse the General Fund from other available funds.