

Pennsylvania Works! Newsletter

Here is an update on the ***Pennsylvania Works!*** campaign:

As many of you know, we are still (!) without a state budget. As a consequence, the legislators are intently focused on getting a budget passed. However, we are still pushing forward with our objectives. Here is a summary of four policy initiatives that are front and center:

Green Buildings

The cheapest kilowatt is the one that is never used.

This is the goal of Rep. Matt Smith, who was successful in getting the High Performance, State-Funded Buildings Standards Act (HB 444) through the House of Representatives by a vote of 180-17. The bill is currently in the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee. If passed, this bill would require that the design and construction of new or renovated buildings receiving State funding meet certain energy efficiency requirements and other environmental standards. This would include colleges and universities, local government buildings, any new state buildings, and certain buildings that the state will rent from private developers.

This bill would benefit the state in three key areas: 1) the State government will be leading by example, creating a market for environmental building products and construction practices that will eventually become commonplace in private sector buildings; 2) additional skilled tradesmen will be needed to make the buildings energy efficient, thus employing more people; and 3) although the upfront costs for the building or renovation project will be greater, the utility costs to the state or other owner will be much lower over the life of the building, saving taxpayers money.

To show the scale of what's at stake, the Department of General Services (DGS) has, so far reduced energy usage at state office building by 18%, saving taxpayers \$2.2 million. DGS is currently working on 38 additional projects around the state. Once completed, these 38 projects will save the Commonwealth **266 million kilowatt hours of electricity** and prevent over 136,000 tons of CO2 emissions, the equivalent of taking nearly 24,000 cars off the road. Now multiply that by any new or renovated building that the state funds...a tremendous victory for taxpayers and the environment!

How can you help? We'll be asking for your assistance with calls or e-mails when the time is right for the Senate vote. In the meantime, contact your state Senator and urge them to support House Bill 444.

Historic Preservation

The Historic Preservation Incentive Program (House Bill 42), sponsored by Rep. Robert Freeman, would give owners of historic buildings grants or tax credits to restore their properties. Owners of residential properties could receive up to \$15,000 to restore the exterior of their property, while commercial landowners would be eligible for up to \$500,000 in tax credits.

Improving our downtown and historic areas creates jobs and communities where people want to work and live. In addition, numerous studies have shown that rehabilitating older structures is a great way to create more jobs than new construction, as the work is labor intensive. Making our towns and cities

more attractive and livable reduces the need for development to sprawl out into our green-spaces and agricultural land.

The bill has stalled in the Senate, primarily as a result of the focus on the budget. However, we are working on several different ways to fund the program, given the budget situation. A new, innovative way to fund the program may be the key to getting this out of the Senate Appropriations committee, giving it a chance for a full vote on the floor.

How can you help? The Pennsylvania Works! coalition is planning on doing district office visits with state Senators once the budget is passed. It would be great if individuals or organizations interested in preserving their community's historic building would accompany us. It's always better to have constituents in the meetings. If you are interested, please send me an e-mail, we'll be happy to include you. In the meantime, contact your state Senator and urge them to support House Bill 42, to preserve the heritage and integrity of your neighborhood.

Housing Trust Fund

We are working on the Housing Trust Fund on two different fronts: the Federal and the State. The goal here is to ensure that Federal money will be appropriated for the National Housing Trust Fund, as well as getting a state Housing Trust Fund passed, in order to properly spend the money that may come down from the Federal government.

Recently, members of the Housing Alliance of PA, the Pennsylvania Works Campaign, and others made 27 visits to 18 congressional offices (district and D.C), as well as Senators Casey and Specter. We were well received by the offices, with many expressing their support for the appropriation. At the same time we urged them to consider a foreclosure prevention plan that would help unemployed Pennsylvanians from losing their homes.

If funding is available after the Federal budget is passed (Oct 1), we estimate approximately \$35-40 million will be available to Pennsylvania. This money can be used by local communities and other non-profit organizations to build modern and efficient homes, emergency repairs, accessibility, and more. Monies from the fund could also be used for rental assistance, foreclosure prevention, and other housing needs.

Without a state trust fund in place, we are not guaranteed how or where the money will be spent here in the Commonwealth. We need to make sure Federal money slated for housing goes to housing! Help us get a Housing Trust Fund passed in Harrisburg!

How can you help? The Housing Alliance of PA is coordinating district visits with legislators and senators for **Thursday, October 15 and Friday October 16**. Can you help? If so, please send me an e-mail. We would be happy to have you assist us. In the meantime, contact your state Senator or Representative and urge them to pass the state Housing Trust Fund (SB 599 or House Bill 60). Working families need housing they can afford.

Other Good Info

Below are links to other items in the news that relate to the campaign. Enjoy!

Press Release from DGS on energy savings -

http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_2_12691_1354_505925_43/http%3B/pubcontent.state.pa.us/publishedcontent/publish/cop_general_government_operations/dgs/community_content/dgs_homepage/portlets/dgs_home_page_news_and_media/articles/green_power_4.pdf

Great article on the largest solar powered Affordable Housing Community -

<http://www.sunlightandpower.com/about/news.html>

When Revitalization and Green Jobs work together – Pittsburgh, the Renaissance City

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/23/AR2009092304713.html?wprss=rss_business

Helping the unemployed keep their homes. Story on a rally in Philadelphia pushing for a national HEMAP program. http://www.philly.com/philly/business/20090925_Mortgage-modification_program_questioned_protected.html

Keep Informed and Keep in Touch

Please check our website frequently, as we update it with news, press releases, and other updates on the issues that make up our campaign. Our website is www.pennsylvaniaworks.org. As always, if you have any questions or comments on the issues we are working on, please feel free to drop us a line.

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