

April, 2006

The NewsPAGR

Pennsylvania Association for Government Relations

**Post Office Box 116 Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17108
(717) 540-4391 Fax (717) 657-9708 www.pagr.org**



United Way of Pennsylvania has office for rent. If you are interested in this potential opportunity contact Tony Ross at (717) 238-7365 or tony@uwp.org.

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Brian Barno



March Madness

It's tough to take a charge. You've got to sacrifice your body and stop the momentum of some big guy going to the hoop. You also have to pray the guy in the striped shirt makes the right call. Harrisburg Capitol watchers know it can be dangerous to get between a politician and a news camera. But if the politician (or self-styled good government advocate) is preaching lobbying reform, it's a losing game to plant your feet, grit your teeth and say "wait a minute." The referee can't help – you're already road kill.

I understand it's an election year. The term "government integrity" will be tossed around like confetti during these campaigns. Everyone in state government will be tarred with being part of some "culture of corruption" in Harrisburg. So it's no surprise Governor Rendell issued an Executive Order regulating Executive Branch lobbying. We

“The referee can't help — you're already road kill.”

also shouldn't be surprised there was no public process. The Administration plans to implement these reporting/disclosure regulations the first week of April. Calls to the Governor's Office of Administration (GOA) offering PAGR assistance in the drafting of these lobbying regulations and their implementation guidelines are met

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IF YOU HAVE NOT YET DONE SO...



Please send in your 2006 dues today!



In Memoriam: Novene Sandherr

Novene was a key aide for Allen Kukovich both in the House and Senate. Known for her kindness, smarts and sense of humor, Novene was the mother of PAGR Executive Director Christine Corrigan. She'll be missed. Our thoughts and prayers are with Christine and her family.

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE*(continued from page one)*

with: "We're working that out internally and we'll call you." Hello! The regulations go into effect at the end of the week! PAGR has worked to provide information to legislators and legislative committees on lobbying issues since the organization was created. While it hasn't been perfect, the recent process in the House and Senate has at least allowed PAGR and the lobbying community to provide input. Legislative leaders on lobbying reform have wanted to understand how proposed regulations impact those advocating issues before state government. When possible, language containing unnecessary and burdensome requirements has been adjusted. PAGR will be actively engaged as the General Assembly moves lobbying reform legislation this spring. Unfortunately, the Governor's office has not provided this opportunity to hear from the PAGR and the lobbying community.

The Executive Order requires lobbying disclosure forms to be filed electronically so they are searchable by the general public. We have no problem with that. PAGR takes issue with the unnecessary and excessive reporting required. Mandating a breakdown of total expenses by organization or person lobbied, further categorized by subject and bill number with additional, more detailed reports necessary for "lobbying coalitions" sets up a bureaucratic nightmare. There are 268 bills that have been considered by the House Transportation Committee this session. Breaking down expenses to this level is not what the public wants or needs. These regulations penalize folks advocating issues before the Executive Branch and are a huge burden for the vast majority of lobbyists who don't have large administrative backup. Is the GOA going to staff up to review these reports? No. Penalty provisions? The Order depends on voluntary compliance by lobbyists.

Maybe it's too simple – to build on what lobbyists are already reporting to the Senate – so we're not reporting to another agency with a different set of guidelines. But simplicity and common sense can take second place when its campaign season – and they stand in the way of the high speed approach to the press microphones and television cameras. ☺

**2006 Meeting Dates****Membership Meetings:****Monday, February 6****Monday, April 3****Monday, June 5****Monday, October 2****Monday, December 4****(Holiday Gathering — time/place TBD)**

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS ARE HELD
11:30AM—12:30PM
ON THE THIRD FLOOR
OF THE FIREHOUSE RESTAURANT,
606 N. 2ND STREET, HARRISBURG.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**David Callahan**

PA PARTNERSHIPS FOR CHILDREN

John Callahan

PA BANKERS ASSOCIATION

Eric Failing

PA LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

Christina Mihalik

PA CREDIT UNION ASSOCIATION

David Rodbart

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THE HOSPITAL & HEALTHSYSTEM ASSN OF PA

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Campaign finance reform must accompany lobbyist disclosure effort

Published in the Sunday Patriot-News, Harrisburg, PA ~ Sunday, March 19, 2006 ~ by Brian Barno

I read the headlines, "Lobbyists Gone Wild! State Government Out of Control!" So, I've kept my eyes open at the Capitol during budget hearings for the guys with the fedora hats.

I just haven't seen it. What I've seen are lobbyists and the clients they represent geared up for a tough budget battle. Many represent social service, drug/chemical rehab organizations, small schools, colleges and small businesses struggling to protect their clients.

I applaud House Speaker John Perzel's recent lobbying reform initiative. However, if our goal is to have better and more open government, lobbying reporting requirements are not enough -- they have to be linked with campaign finance reform.

If you're a member of a church, volunteer organization, or fire department, or if you hunt or fish or belong to any group, you're likely to be represented by a lobbyist in Harrisburg. Lobbyists provide information on thousands of bills that legislators are confronted with every session, including how they impact constituents. Providing this information is more than exercising our right to petition the government -- it is a critical part of the legislative process.

Let's be clear. I have no sympathy for Jack Abramoff. He brought discredit to the lobbying profession and the thousands of legislators, staff members and public servants who work hard everyday to do the people's business. Abramoff, and those who broke the law with him, need to be punished. A U.S. Justice Department spokesman said the department is committed to making sure that people know "government is not for sale." Amen.

The lobbyists I work with are folks of high integrity. They want good schools, vibrant businesses and strong communities like the rest of us. Members of the Pennsylvania Association of Government Relations spend countless hours supporting programs such as the YMCA's Youth in Government, where they teach and encourage young people to be involved in government.

Lobbyists are your neighbors -- they serve on your church council, volunteer with the Scouts and coach youth sports. While it might shatter the illusions of the headline writers and talk radio hosts, lobbyists don't have three heads.

The public has the right to know expenditures that influence legislative or administrative action. PAGR supports meaningful lobbying reporting, including full, first-dollar disclosure of these expenditures. The rent, utilities and health care costs of our co-workers are irrelevant to finding out how much individuals or groups are spending to influence the governmental process. However, when you total these numbers, you get a grand figure that can be posted in newspaper headlines.

But let's not mislead people about the benefits of lobbying disclosure. You can have all the reporting you want, but the mother's milk of politics is campaign dollars. If you want to look at influencing government, you have to address campaign finance reform.

Legislators don't vote for or against an issue because of a dinner -- no matter what's on the menu.

U.S. Sen. Richard Durbin, D-Ill., said it well: "Why is it that we warm up to these lobbyists? It isn't for a meal. ... We know when it comes to finance our campaigns, we're going to be knocking on the same doors."

It's the small and large businesses, labor unions and trade associations that are paying for these campaigns. The constant pressure to raise money keeps quality people from running for office and drives good people away from public service. Fundraising takes time away from the policy issues these legislators were elected to address.

The Pennsylvania General Assembly needs to make campaign finance reform part of any legislative reform agenda. We applaud the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce for setting voluntary campaign limits for mayoral candidates. Chamber President Mark Schweiker said, "It's a matter of good government and sound principle."

The chamber drew a line in the sand and said enough is enough. We challenge the Legislature and business leaders to do the same.

Meeting Notice

**Monday, April 3, 2006
11:30 AM — 12:30 PM
Firehouse Restaurant
606 N. 2nd Street • Harrisburg**

OUR GUEST WILL BE:

Brian Preski

Chief of Staff, Speaker's Office

**Please
RSVP**

ALL MEMBERS WILL BE CHARGED \$10.
ALL GUESTS OF MEMBERS WILL BE
CHARGED \$20.
PLEASE **RSVP BY March 31** TO
717-540-4391 OR INFO@PAGR.ORG.
THANK YOU.

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PO Box 116
Harrisburg, PA 17108

The mission statement of the Pennsylvania Association for Government Relations, Inc. (PAGR) is to promote the purpose and effectiveness of the lobbying profession consistent with the public interest. Further, association members encourage high standards of personal and professional conduct among all lobbyists. ☉