

March 5, 2010

Chamber Of Commiseration

LENGTH: 637 words

All six candidates met for a Philly Chamber of Commerce forum 3/4, and they "kept the focus squarely on voters' wallets as they vowed to make the state friendlier to business, trim" gov't "spending and deal with a coming explosion in public pension costs."

They "also offered prescriptions for the state's infrastructure funding woes, but differed over whether crime-stricken communities should have the authority to set their own gun ordinances." '04 SEN nominee/[Montgomery Co. Commis./ex-Rep. Joe Hoeffel \(D\)](#): "I believe we have to improve the quality of life in Pennsylvania to attract business investment and keep people here."

AG Tom Corbett (R) said discussions about gov't spending "can't be limited" to the exec branch. Budgets for the legislature and the judiciary are also fair game as the state looks to raise badly needed revenue." Corbett: "We will build a foundation for the 21st century. It will either be built on concrete and be strong, or it will be built on sand."

Everyone "called for changes in the state's business tax structure, including a reduction in the corporate net income tax, elimination of the capital stock and franchise tax levied on a business' physical assets and expansion of the cap on net operating losses that businesses are allowed to claim for tax purposes."

Aud. Jack Wagner (D): "We have too many public pension plans, the largest number in the country. First and foremost, we need consolidation of local pension plans."

State Rep. Sam Rohrer (R): "The reality is we cannot fix problems before we understand where we are. Budget-wise, we are insolvent. We do not have the money to pay our bills. The pension is not part of the budget, and it cannot be passed along in tax increases. You have to modify the system."

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Several candidates said they do not have a Plan B if the Federal Highway Administration rejects the state's application to convert I-80 into a toll road. State Sen. Anthony Williams' (D): "If the Obama administration decides to turn

its back on Pennsylvania, I'd be shocked. But let's talk reality. We are making highways less safe. Every time I go to Harrisburg, I pay a toll. There are no free lunches. We have to maintain highways with an appropriately dignified tool."

Hoeffel "called for a boost in the gasoline tax to help the state meet its transportation needs" (Micek, Allentown Morning Call, 3/5).

All of the candidates sounded so "pro-business" that Corbett quipped: "Quite honestly, I feel like I'm at a Republican convention as this goes on" (Brennan, Philadelphia Daily News, 3/5).

Eerie Eeyore Effect

Williams' files his campaign financing report 4/6, and the "deep pockets behind Williams" are board members of "conservative libertarian groups that promote school choice," the **Cato Institute** and the Institute for Justice (Brennan/Lucey, Philadelphia Inquirer, 3/5).

The election "has yet to make much noise. And even when it does get going, it might be overshadowed" by the SEN race. Quinnipiac Univ. Peter Brown: "It's a good bet the Democrats running for governor could walk into any shopping mall in Pennsylvania and not be recognized."

Dems "are in a downcast mood." That "frame of mind, which is restraining fund-raising, as one reason" the primary hasn't really taken off.

Franklin and Marshall College pollster Berwood Yost "said the quiet was almost eerie." Yost: "I guess it's kind of the silent phase of the campaign," he said.

Unless Dem fund-raising has picked up, only Allegheny Co. Exec Dan Onorato (D) "might have enough money to run ads consistently" in the Philly market. Corbett mgr. Brian Nutt said Corbett "would do some advertising before the primary" (Infield, Philadelphia Inquirer, 3/4).