



State Senator **Pat Vance** Legislative Report

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Vance Continues Scrutiny of DEP's Chesapeake Plan

In early 2005 the Governor unveiled "Pennsylvania's Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy," which was created by the Department of Environmental Protection, without specific legislative or regulatory authorization and without adequate participation from the public. Because this strategy could have a significant effect on central Pennsylvania, I sponsored a Senate Resolution requesting a moratorium while more public input was obtained. In response to the resolution and requests from the public, the department has convened a series of stakeholder meetings and workgroups.

In addition, earlier this year at a meeting hosted by Rep. Jerry Nailor and myself, questions and concerns about the Department of Environmental Protection's Chesapeake Bay Tributary

Strategy were very much in evidence. Nearly 300 citizens and public officials turned out to listen to DEP Secretary Kathleen McGinty explain the program and answer questions.

The strategy, affecting only the 31 counties in the Susquehanna River Basin, aims to achieve significant reductions in the pollutants that have degraded the bay. These pollutants come from a variety of sources: agriculture, storm water runoff, wastewater treatment plants, septic systems, forested lands and atmospheric deposition.

While I agree that Pennsylvania must do its part to clean up the bay, DEP's original plan needs some work. For example, wastewater treatment plants contribute 11 percent of the total nitrogen and 18 percent of the total

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Sen. Pat Vance, center, and Rep. Jerry Nailor, right, speak to North Middleton Township manager Deborah Ealer, left, prior to a meeting they hosted on DEP's Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy. Nearly 300 people attended the meeting to question DEP Secretary Kathleen McGinty.



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Two Vance Bills Move Forward

In most cases it takes a lot of time and effort before a bill passes both chambers of the General Assembly and can be signed into law by the governor. Two pieces of legislation I introduced have begun to see some movement.

Senate Bill 332, which I have been working on for almost two years, passed the Senate about a year ago and has begun to move forward in the House. The legislation would create a simplified procedure for parents in Pennsylvania to register the adoption of a child from another country. Foreign adoption procedures vary from county to county in Pennsylvania resulting in some parents encountering burdensome costs and paperwork.

Senate Bill 1188 would restructure Pennsylvania's prescription drug program for low-income seniors so that it would work seamlessly with the federal Medicare prescription drug program. This legislation will help prevent confusion for seniors and make sure the benefits PACE and PACENET recipients have received for years will continue in conjunction with the new federal plan.

DEP's Chesapeake Plan

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phosphorus to the bay, but will bear a disproportionate share of required reductions in pollutants under DEP's plan. This could significantly increase sewer rates and affect development and new sewer hookups. In addition, the state says it will create a nutrient trading program to assist wastewater treatment plants in achieving goals. However, DEP has yet to facilitate execution of such a program thus causing further questions and concerns.

Implementation of pollution reduction efforts in the Chesapeake Bay watershed will have a broad effect in Cumberland and York Counties. While there have been some encouraging signs of progress in the recent stakeholder meetings, it is important that the department carefully consider the input it has received and incorporate it into its plans. I will continue working to see that public input is considered and acted upon so that we comply with any federal obligations in the most cost effective and common sense manner.



Rep. William Gabig and Sen. Pat Vance speak at the Randall D. Shughart Post Office Building Dedication Ceremony on Memorial Day in Newville. Shughart died in 1993 during the Battle of Mogadishu in Somalia while saving the life of the pilot of a downed U.S. Blackhawk helicopter. The pilot he saved, Michael Durant, is seated in the right of the photo. Shughart's actions inspired the book and movie "Black Hawk Down."

Fiscal Responsibility Remains Vance Priority

There has been much public discussion over the past year on the cost and effectiveness of the Legislature. Public service should be an honor and one that a legislator must not abuse.

Throughout my service in the Legislature, I have never voted to increase legislative pay or pensions, or taken unvouchered expenses. I do not lease a car, take per diems or accept mileage reimbursement to drive to the Capitol or my district office. As I have always maintained a frugal lifestyle, I carry that through to my professional life, which includes avoiding the use of taxpayer funded district-wide mailings beyond an annual newsletter.

As legislators, we need to be accountable and make sure the legislative process allows meaningful public participation. This includes requiring that legislation be reviewed during waking hours and not at 2 a.m.

In addition, the Legislature has been working to pass a proposal to amend Pennsylvania's Constitution to place spending limits on the Commonwealth. Senate Bill 884, which I have cosponsored, would restrict state spending growth and place a certain portion of surpluses in the Rainy Day Fund and a separate fund for tax relief purposes.

Through reform by the Legislature, I am optimistic that the public will be able to play a larger role in government and see changes its seeking come to fruition.

Electronic Newsletter Introduced

Our efforts to seek additional cost-effective ways to communicate with constituents are ongoing. The Internet, in particular, is increasingly useful for broad-based communication.

We will soon begin a periodic electronic newsletter. The newsletter will be available on my Web site, www.senatorvance.com. In addition, if you would like email notification of the posting of the newsletter, please send an email to vancestaff@pasen.gov.

