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Rep. Art Hershey (R-13)

Talking Points on the Job of a Legislator and State Government Branches

April 26, 2002

- Good Morning/Afternoon.
- Hi, everyone! It's really good to be here with you today, and I want to thank ? for inviting me.
- Since I became a member of the House of Representatives I've been privileged to speak to a number of groups. I particularly enjoy talking with young people, so I'm very glad to be with you today.
- I have been asked to talk about my job as a state legislator.
- As a state legislator -- along with 202 other representatives and 50 state senators -- it's my job to develop the laws that govern our state.
- Making law involves a lot of research, reading, study, discussion and debate.
- When we think about the laws we live by, we realize that our state -- all of society for that matter -- including your home and your school is governed by a certain set of rules or laws.
- We need laws, or rules, to make sure things don't get out of control. If there were no laws, things would be a mess in our towns and cities.
- We need laws to make certain our state is in order, and that Pennsylvania is a good place in which to work and live.
- We need laws so everyone knows their responsibilities, and also is treated fairly.
- And we need to write laws that everybody can understand, so we have to use clear and simple English.

Steve Cruse
~~Steve Cruse~~

~~Art Hershey~~
~~Art Hershey~~

- In the general assembly of Pennsylvania where I work as a legislator, 253 men and women make the laws of Pennsylvania. There are 203 members in the house representatives and 50 members in the state senate.
- In the house, each member represents between 58,000 and 60,000 people, while in the senate, members serve about 250,000 people.
- Together, the house and senate are called the general assembly -- or, as some people say, Pennsylvania's "lawmaking department."
- We are all elected by the voters to serve all the people of Pennsylvania. And that includes you, your family, your teachers, their families, and all your neighbors.
- Sometimes enacting a bill into law can take a long time because an issue can be pretty complicated or controversial...which means we have to think about the issue and talk a lot about it before voting to make it a law.
- Do you know that in the House of Representatives, when we vote on bills, we push a button on our desk that signals a "yes" or "no" vote?
- Our vote is automatically recorded on a large tally board so the votes can be quickly counted to see if the bill passed or failed.
- Additionally, bills can be suggested by anyone -- legislators, the governor, state agency heads, citizens. And some are good ideas.... some not so good.
- However, only a legislator can introduce an idea as a bill before the General Assembly.
- Writing, studying and voting on bills are an important part of the job for any state legislator.

- However, we must spend time in our districts, too. So, when I'm not at the state capitol in Harrisburg, I'm back home – meeting with the people I represent and speaking to groups, just like I'm doing here today.
- I get a lot of mail from the people who live in the 13th district in Chester County, which I represent. For them, I'm their closest connection to state government. This part of my job is also important.
- Area residents often call when they need help with the state bureaucracy – something that is often referred to as “cutting through the red tape.”
- Some ways in which I might help include getting a copy of a birth certificate for someone, or providing an application form for a driver's license or for a college loan.
- It's a pretty busy job with a lot of different responsibilities. But, it's a job I enjoy very much and which I take very seriously. All of us in the general assembly feel it is a privilege to serve our state in this way.

State Government

- It is important to know that the General Assembly is only one branch of government.
- The other branches are the Executive Branch, which puts laws in place and enforces them.
- This branch is where Governor ~~Mark Schweiker works~~ *Ed Rendell will work after the 1st of the yr.*
- The other branch of government is the Judiciary Branch, which are the judges.
- There are many kinds of judges, from district justices at the local level, who hear traffic cases and small claims, to the county Courts of Common Pleas, to several state appellate courts including the Commonwealth and Superior Courts, all the way up to the state Supreme Court. When the judges on the Supreme Court make a ruling, it is

generally the final word on state law, although decisions can sometimes be appealed to high courts at the federal level if that is appropriate under the law.

- All three branches, Legislative, Executive and Judiciary, must work together to make, pass, and uphold the law.
- By doing this no one branch has more power than the others, they all keep track of one another and make sure the laws that are passed in Pennsylvania are fair and just.

District Office Introduction

- Now before I take any questions, I have asked one of my office assistants to tell you a little bit about what she does in the district office.
- Agnes had been working with me for ___ years. Please welcome Agnes O'Toole.

NOTE: ONCE AGNES IS FINISHED SPEAKING ASK THE CHILDREN IF THEY HAVE ANY QUESTIONS AND PASS OUT ANY BOOKLETS OR OTHER INFORMATION THAT YOU BROUGHT ALONG.

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