United Methodist Advocacy in Pennsylvania

April 28, 2017

Following is my UM Advocacy report for April 2017:

Pennsylvania legislative activity is at a peak during the springtime. Of course, budget matters were at the forefront—though certainly not exclusively. Recent legislative, judicial and other political activity that might be of interest to United Methodists are described below.

Notable in my work this month: Met with the Interfaith Justice Coalition (Pennsylvania faith-based political advocates), phone conference with staff at General Board of Church & Society and further efforts on GBCS health care initiative, met with Congressman Mike Doyle regarding federal hunger programs, met with POWER (Philadelphians Organized to Witness, Empower & Rebuild) staff regarding fair funding for education, phone conference with WPAUMC Poverty Team, supported environmental concerns roundtable at the state Capitol, participated in a news conference supporting the water bank ministry of the Woodlands Community in Butler County.

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Water for Woodlands

On April 24, I participated in a news conference where I handed a presentation check to Rev. Lee Dreyer of White Oak Springs Presbyterian Church in Renfrew, Butler County, PA. The news conference was a cooperative effort of the White Oak Springs water bank, the Thomas Merton Center of Pittsburgh, Friends of the Harmed and the MORALtorium group.

The MORALtorium group—an informal group of faith-based advocates and environmentalists—conducted a crowd-funding effort to raise money to support the White Oak Springs water bank. More than $5,000 was raised from the crowd-funding effort and will be used entirely to buy water for the water bank. I have been a member of the MORALtorium group since it was formed in January 2016.

The White Oak Springs water bank provides free water for the nearby Woodlands Community. The water supply of the Woodlands Community has been severely contaminated, coincidentally with the onset of an adjacent fracking operation.

The news conference was covered by TV stations WTAE and WPXI, as well as the Butler Eagle newspaper.

211 Call Centers

House Bill 211 is scheduled for a legislative committee vote at the end of April. This bill would create a grant program in support of United Way’s “211” call centers, providing for enhanced service and statewide access.

Like “911” for calling for emergency help, “211” is a telephone clearing house directing people to help and resources on a myriad of social programs. When I was a church pastor in Allegheny County, I myself used or referred people to “211,” extensively.

Kristen Rotz, president of United Way PA, contacted me and a few other faith-based advocates requesting support in the beginning phase of the legislative process for HB211. I offered to provide help and allowed her to use the name of United Methodist Advocacy in PA on supporting documentation for the bill.

Republican Budget

On April 4, the Republican-controlled House of Representatives approved a budget bill, HB 218, that was unveiled the previous day. The 114-84 vote was divided along party lines, with all Democrats and two Republicans voting against the bill. The $31.52 billion budget bill now goes to the Senate.

House Majority Leader Dave Reed (R-Indiana) said of the bill, “We begin the process, at this moment, at this hour, on this day, of restructuring and reinventing how government operates in this state.”

House Appropriations Committee minority chairman Joe Markosek (D-Allegheny) expressed Democratic opposition by observing, “This Republican budget proposal cuts into the bone that many of us agree is already bare.”

Governor Wolf proposed a $32.3 billion budget in February, which also included income measures. Wolf warned that the Republican budget proposal would put about 1,500 state employees out of work, with prisons taking the deepest job cuts. The administration produced an internal budget office analysis that indicated nearly 650 layoffs would occur at the Department of Corrections. House Republican spokesman Steve Miskin said the 1,500 estimate was news, but noted the proposed prison cuts were designed to "put pressure on the Department of Corrections to be innovative and make changes."

The state's authorized workforce in the current budget year is about 81,000 people. Gov. Wolf has proposed lowering that to about 78,000 in the next fiscal year, through attrition and elimination of vacancies. But, under the $31.52 billion budget that passed the House, the Wolf Administration projects additional job cuts that would amount to nearly 2 percent of the state’s workforce.
The governor and legislative leaders are dealing with a projected deficit of about $3 billion, and it's unclear whether they will lower expenditures, increase taxes or enact some combination.

One Perspective on the State Budget

John Baer has been a political columnist for the *Daily News* in Philadelphia for thirty years. I enjoyed a recent piece that he wrote and wanted to share it. Following are excerpts:

First, in a new analysis this week, Pennsylvania gets a “D” for fiscal management; it has a financial hole so deep that paying it off would cost each taxpayer $16,800.

That’s bad. But the trend is worse. Our taxpayer burden has more than doubled since 2009, contributing to an overall low-down national ranking of 38th among states. This is from Truth in Accounting, a nonpartisan, nonprofit, Chicago-based analytics group founded in 2002 that studies every state. Its findings are based on each state’s Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), an audit of fiscal conditions that’s deemed far more reliable (read: honest) than annual state budgets.

“We don’t even analyze budgets,” says Truth in Accounting CEO Shelia Weinberg. “Budgets are calculated according to political math.” That’s a nice way of saying what I usually say: Our budgets are phony-baloney.…. You’ve maybe heard wailings about a $2 billion to $3 billion state deficit? Well, using CAFR findings, the Truth in Accounting analysis puts the state’s unpaid bills and real fiscal hole at $74.2 billion…

I’d note that since our state constitution mandates balanced budgets, our taxpayer burden should be zero. But then most states pay no attention to balanced-budget budget mandates. Past reports from Truth in Accounting show 40 states passing budgets without enough money to pay their bills (New Jersey’s rated worst). States use accounting tricks such as hiding real costs of compensation, pension and health-care benefits, or counting borrowed money as revenue…. State Auditor General Gene DePasquale last week wrote to Republican and Democratic leaders offering a comprehensive legislative audit “to help you provide the maximum level of transparency and openness to taxpayers,” pretending, I suppose, legislative leaders have any interest in that. At a news conference, he mentioned focusing on lawmakers’ $118 million reserve accounts (or big, fat slush fund), which total $18 million more than the prior year at a time the state cries fiscal crisis. The slush fund is roughly a third of the legislature’s $300 million budget…. DePasquale, according to his office, has gotten no official response.

So it goes: governance without openness in a state with futile fiscal management.

Minimum Wage

As part of his state budget proposal, Gov. Wolf included raising the minimum wage to $12 an hour. The current minimum wage in Pennsylvania is $7.25—enacted in 2009 to match the federal minimum wage. 29 states have higher minimum wages than Pennsylvania, including every state surrounding Pennsylvania.

The Republican majority in the General Assembly has resisted raising the minimum wage. Groups such as the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry and the Pennsylvania Restaurant & Lodging Association also oppose a raise in the minimum wage, saying that such an increase would lead to job losses and hurt small businesses. They also argue that not every low-wage worker is an adult supporting a family, for example, some are teenagers from middle-class households.

The Wolf Administration claims that raising the wage to $12-an-hour would eliminate $50 million from public benefit costs. The bulk of those savings would come from approximately 100,000 people who would no longer be eligible for Medicaid. Ted Dallas, Secretary of the Department of Human Services
said, “It would be transformative at DHS if the governor’s [minimum wage] proposal were adopted. There are a lot of folks who work, but they don’t make enough money, so they still qualify for benefits.”

A review by the state’s non-partisan Independent Fiscal Office (IFO) noted that people in Pennsylvania with incomes up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level — about $16,642 per year for one person — are eligible for Medicaid. Someone working full time at the current minimum wage would earn only $15,080 annually. A person working full time at a $12-an-hour wage would earn $24,960 annually and would no longer be Medicaid-eligible. The fiscal office’s report called the projected savings “reasonable” considering the availability of Medical Assistance services.

In addition to reducing costs from safety-net programs, the governor’s budget also estimates that state revenues would increase as a result of higher returns on income and sales taxes — though the Independent Fiscal Office’s analysis says the benefits would be lower than the governor’s estimates.

The governor has said a wage increase would boost the economy, and net $100 million a year in new revenue. The IFO’s report shows the number probably wouldn't be that high. Director Matthew Knittel suggested that $40 million in new revenue is a more likely estimate.

The IFO also says the higher wage would cost the commonwealth about 54,000 jobs. That's about four percent of the total number of positions that would be affected by the hike. Knittel noted that that number sounds more extreme than it actually is, because it wouldn't happen all at once and attrition would likely account for a significant portion.

A spokesman for the governor said that "every state surrounding Pennsylvania has raised their minimum wage and there is no evidence that those increases led to a loss of employment."

The nearly five-dollar hike Wolf is proposing would boost Pennsylvania's minimum wage from the lowest in the northeast, to the highest.

*The Pennsylvania Council of Churches has released a resolution in favor of raising the minimum wage. Attached separately is a pdf copy of this resolution.*

**Addictive Products and the Budget—Sen. Corman**

Senate Majority Leader Jake Corman (R., Centre)—a United Methodist—argued that legislators should not be relying on “addictive products” to pay the state’s bills.

With 2½ months to go before the end of the fiscal year, the General Assembly needs to determine how to raise funds to balance the spending proposals in the state’s budget.

In an interview, Corman noted that the state in recent years had made significant changes to alcohol policy, such as allowing wine to be sold in certain grocery stores. "I can't imagine we're going to do any more liquor expansion," Corman said. "Maybe something around the edges, but certainly nothing overly significant."

House Republican leaders have pointed to the expansion of gambling and additional loosening of state control of alcohol sales as ways to fill a significant part of the budget gap.

But, Corman said he was becoming concerned that the state in recent years has continued trying to balance its budget on addiction. "We shouldn’t drive gaming, liquor, and tobacco sales, which are very addictive products, based on budgetary needs,” he said. “We should drive them based on public policy that surrounds each one of them individually."

**Opposition to new DHHS**

On April 4, the Republican-led House of Representatives passed HB 218, a budget bill that takes for granted the merger of several state departments to form the Department of Health and Human Services. The merger was proposed by Gov. Wolf as a cost savings effort. However, three GOP committee leaders oppose the merger. [The details of this merger can be found in my January 2017 report.]
The three Republicans who oppose the bill, because of the assumed merger, are Reps. Matthew Baker (R-Tioga), Gene DiGirolamo (R-Bucks) and Tim Hennessey (R-Chester), heading the committees on Health, Human Services and Aging, respectively. They are concerned that the departments to be merged will lose their voices and have weakened programming.

Supporters of merger argue that consolidation will streamline services and create a one-stop shop for consumers’ needs. House Majority Leader Dave Reed (R-Indiana) has called on the General Assembly to “reimagine” and “reinvent” government by considering consolidations of agencies and finding efficiencies within the state structure.

This budget bill was passed mostly along party lines and is currently under review by the Senate. The projected date for the merger is July 1, this year.

**Opposition to Planned Parenthood**

U.S. Congressman Scott Perry (R) has asserted that he does not like government-funded health care, especially if it provides birth control or abortion services. Perry represents York and Adams counties.

Both Perry and state Sen. Scott Wagner (R-York)—a 2018 PA gubernatorial candidate—contend that federal and state funds that have gone to Planned Parenthood should instead be allocated to health centers that don’t provide abortions.

However, federal law does not allow for federal funds to support abortions, except in cases of rape, incest or to save a woman’s life. But, Perry and Wagner say that government support of Planned Parenthood allows the service to then use non-governmental funding to pay for abortions. Both men suggest that other health care providers could absorb the clientele of Planned Parenthood.

Statewide, annually, 90,000 people receive health care through Planned Parenthood. Nearly half the Planned Parenthood clinics in Pennsylvania are located in medically under-served areas. Sari Stevens, Executive Director for Planned Parenthood PA Advocates, noted, ”In three counties, we are the only provider of subsidized family planning services.” Furthermore, she opined, “We are an integral part of the health care delivery system and saying that our significant patient population would just be absorbed by the already overburdened health care system is simply reckless.”

Wagner is a co-sponsor of a bill that would prohibit the Pennsylvania Department of Health and Human Services from contracting with or funding any entity that maintains or operates a facility where abortions are performed. That bill, SB300—introduced by Sen. John Eichelberger (R-Blair)—was voted out of committee on April 25. The bill would place Planned Parenthood health centers at the bottom of a four-tiered state funding system for women’s health care providers, and only if they don’t provide abortions.

Critics have said the bill would prevent low-income women from accessing such critical services as cancer screenings, pregnancy tests and birth-control. ”They don’t do lots of things that families need, women need,” Eichelberger said. When pressed during debate on the bill, he conceded that he didn’t know what services Planned Parenthood provided.

Gov. Tom Wolf announced that he will veto the bill and called on Senate leaders to stop its progress. It’s unclear whether all Planned Parenthood clinics would be cut off from funding under this legislation, because not all offer abortion procedures. Of the 32 Planned Parenthood health centers in Pennsylvania, less than half offer abortions on-site.

**Berks Detainees denied by Supreme Court**

[We have been following events at Berks since last August]

The U.S. Supreme Court has refused to review a petition by fourteen Central American women and their young children to have their asylum cases considered outside of federal immigration courts. The Supreme
Court’s denial has drawn criticism from some constitutional scholars who say the case should have been heard to clarify the rights of immigrants facing deportation. The women and children are among the people being detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at the Berks Family Residential Center in Berks County. They have been there for over a year-and-a-half while their case has been under appeal. The women are in the USA because they fled Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador in 2015, seeking asylum. They claim that their lives and those of their children were endangered in the violent setting of their home countries.

Aliens who illegally cross the U.S. border are able to make a request of asylum to Customs and Border Patrol agents—which is what the women did. The next step is for agents to interview the immigrants to determine the credibility of their claims. If accepted the immigrants move on in the system. If denied they are placed in deportation proceedings. Based on their interview the women were adjudged to be ineligible for asylum. But, their lawyers contend that the women indeed have credible grounds for asylum and that their interview was poorly conducted. The fourteen women, and others, appealed to an immigration judge. But, the appeal was not granted—there are too few immigration judges to handle the enormous caseload.

Attorneys from the American Civil Liberties Union, who picked up the case, argued to the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that deportation of these women and children is unconstitutional under the writ of habeas corpus. This means that those who the government wants to imprison or deport have the right to have their case heard by a judge. The court denied the appeal. The case was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, where the American Bar Association filed supporting documents arguing that the circuit court ruling denying habeas rights represented a dangerous precedent. The Supreme Court refused the case. The Supreme Court only accepts about one percent of petitions it receives.

Following the Supreme Court's rejection, the women's prospects for remaining in this country have been greatly diminished. Attorneys are back to requesting that the plaintiffs have their cases determined by an immigration judge, but immigration courts are not required to extend that opportunity.

In a separate case, a decision is still pending as to whether the Berks Family Residential Center can continue to operate as an immigration detention facility, after the revocation of its license by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

A Complicating Factor at Berks

What happens when a child brought into the country illegally earns legal status, but the parent who brought that child hasn’t? U.S. Judge Lawrence Stengel ruled that the government cannot transfer or deport four Central American women and their children detained in the Berks Family Residential Center while that question is debated. The four children, between the ages of 3 and 16, have earned "Special Immigrant Juvenile Status." State courts can grant that designation to immigrant children who have been "abused, abandoned or neglected" by at least one parent and who would be endangered in their home counties. These women and children were part of the group represented in the petition rejected by the U.S. Supreme Court. [See entry above.] Judge Stengel forbade the government from transferring or deporting the women and children until a hearing scheduled for May 19.
Guns in Schools

On April 25, the state Senate approved Senate Bill 383 by a margin of 34-16. The bill now goes to the House for consideration.

The bill will allow personnel in schools to have access to firearms on school property, assuming the personnel have valid concealed carry permits and maintain current certification in the use and handling of their firearms. The intention is to clarify existing state law in Section 912(c) of Title 18 the Crimes Code. The bill’s primary sponsor, Sen. Don White (R-Indiana) said that the measure will improve the safety of students, teachers and school staff.

Sen. White noted that the bill would not force school boards to participate, but allow them to establish a policy. For example, the Blue Mountain School district in Schuylkill County has allowed two staff members to carry firearms on school property since 2013.

Gov. Tom Wolf strongly opposes this legislation and his spokesman, J. J. Abbott, said the Governor will veto the bill.

Gun control group CeaseFirePA submitted a letter to the Senate Education Committee stating the group’s opposition to SB383. “We do not believe the provisions of SB383 – provisions that enable school faculty and personnel to be armed and/or have access to firearms during the school day – will make students, faculty or school personnel safer; to the contrary, we believe SB383 will place lives squarely in danger.” CeaseFirePA argues that the bill is not prescriptive enough in regard to how firearms would be stored and secured.

The Pennsylvania State Education Association, the state's public teachers union, called the bill "misguided" and would not make schools safer.

The Pennsylvania School Boards Association did not take a position on the legislation, but stated that SB383 adds to the security options available to local school boards, and that school directors “generally prefer to have more options available to them, not fewer.”

Sanctuary Campuses?

On April 19, the state Senate Education Committee voted 9-3 to move Senate Bill 273 out of committee for consideration by the full senate. The bill would prevent state funding of colleges and universities that declare themselves to be “sanctuary campuses.”

No state-owned or related universities have declared themselves as “sanctuary campuses.” However, the University of Pennsylvania and Swarthmore College have said that they will provide sanctuary for illegal immigrants. The bill’s primary sponsor, Sen. John Rafferty (R-Montgomery) said, “If you’re going to be teaching our students that they can pick and choose what laws are going to be enforce or not enforced, then you shouldn’t be coming to the state for money.”

Legislature Downsizing

Pennsylvania has the largest full-time legislature in the nation with 253 members. The idea of reducing the size of the Pennsylvania legislature has been around for decades. [See my January 2017 report for more details and an explanation on the process to accomplish this downsizing.] Currently, House Bill 153 is the next step in reducing the size of the state legislature.

The bill would reduce the size of the House from 203 to 151 members, while leaving the Senate at 50 members—giving Pennsylvania the fifth largest House in the United States. It is assumed that this reduction would save tens of millions of dollars each year and provide a more efficient legislature.

Pennsylvania spends an average of more than a million dollars per lawmaker (once salaries, pensions, staff, offices, travel and per diems are tallied).
Rep. Jerry Knowles (R-Schuylkill) is sponsoring the bill and Speaker Mike Turzai (R-Allegheny) and Majority Leader Dave Reed (R-Indiana) are the lead co-sponsors. Mr. Knowles believes a smaller body will lead to more consensus. The districts will be about a third larger, but modern technology makes it easier for today’s lawmakers to stay in touch with their constituents.

Rep. Daryl Metcalfe (R-Allegheny) feels the same way. He chairs the State Government Committee and is waiting for a signal from House leaders to take the bill to the floor. Mr. Metcalfe was once on the other side of this issue. “I know this is something the electorate wants to have put before them,” he said.

Pennsylvania’s US Representatives all Christian

Pennsylvania’s Congressional delegation is more Christian than its constituency, according to data collected by the Pew Research Center. The state's 20 delegates to the United States House and Senate are 100 percent Christian, compared to the state's adult population, which is 73 percent Christian. In fact, The whole of the 115th Congress is more Christian than the U.S. population as a whole. The majority of the nation's federal lawmakers (91 percent) describe themselves as Christians, compared with 71 percent of U.S. adults, according to Pew.

Unemployment Compensation Fix

[This entry follows an issue detailed in last month’s report]

The state House passed a short-term fix to the state's unemployment compensation system, providing $15 million to apply toward calling back more than 200 employees to help expedite the processing of jobless benefit claims.

The House voted 189-4 to send an amended version of Senate Bill 250 back to the Senate for consideration. The Senate approved the changes and Governor Wolf signed the bill into law.

The measure falls short of the long-term funding fix to the unemployment compensation system that the Wolf Administration would like. However, it will help to improve the level of service that the Department of Labor & Industry—which oversees the unemployment compensation system—will be able to provide, after more than 500 employees were laid off in December.

Two New Casey Opponents

The number of challengers to Democratic U.S. Senator Bob Casey in the 2018 election has increased by two.

Early in April, state Rep. Jim Christiana (R-Beaver) announced his candidacy for U.S. Senate. During his candidacy announcement Christiana said, “Washington continues to fail us … Senator Casey and other Washington politicians are more concerned with partisan grandstanding than working together toward reforms and results.”

The 33-year-old Mr. Christiana is a five-term state representative who lives near his hometown of Beaver, where he was elected to the borough council as a 21-year-old college student.

On April 24, real estate investor Jeffrey Bartos announced his candidacy for the Republican nomination. Mr. Bartos, 44, of Montgomery County, has never run for office, but considered running last year for the U.S. House. He has connections to Pennsylvania’s southeastern business community and Republican political establishment.

Bartos is depicting himself as a conservative and an outsider. He is allying himself with Donald Trump. He said, “Bob Casey’s left Pennsylvania behind, he’s become Washington.”
Christiana and Bartos have added their names to a list that includes state Rep. Rick Saccone (R-Allegheny), Berwick Borough councilman Andrew Shecktor, and Libertarian Dale Kerns of suburban Philadelphia.

**Maternity Leave and Rep. Turzai**

On April 10, Pennsylvania House Speaker Mike Turzai (R-Allegheny) declared that he supports paid maternity leave for House employees. He said the chamber should institute a paid maternity leave policy. But, both caucuses need to approve a new benefits policy, observed his spokesman Neal Lesher. “This is the speaker saying on the record that he's not opposed to implementing a paid leave policy,” Lesher said.

The House Democratic Caucus permits up to 12 weeks of paid leave to a mother or father for the birth or adoption of a child. The first two weeks are paid parental leave, but employees must use other accrued leave time and sick days for remaining time off, said House Democratic Caucus spokesman Bill Patton.

Rep. Jim Christiana (R-Beaver) has recommended paid maternity leave for House Republican employees. [see my December 2016 report]. Mr. Turzai made his announcement a few days after Rep. Christiana declared his intention to run for U.S. Senate. Previously, Turzai opposed maternity leave, as did (does?) the House Republican leadership team.

Christiana has pressed for a policy change to permit all female employees 12 weeks of paid maternity leave with 100 percent of their salary after delivery of a child. He said he was pleased to hear Turzai announce support for a new policy. In a January interview, Christiana said he believed Turzai had been critical of the House Republican leadership's stance on the issue.

In his recent statement, Turzai said he supports the maternity leave policy “after an extensive review of our benefit policies, as well as those offered by other employers in both the private and public sector.”

**Gambling**

The General Assembly continues to have difficulty passing legislation involving an expansion of gambling in Pennsylvania. [This is an ongoing issue that we have been following.]

On April 18, the Senate Community, Economic and Recreational Development Committee moved out a bill from the House (HB271) to fix the state’s local share assessment on casinos.

The local share assessment is a system that provides for municipalities and counties that host casinos to receive a fee. Host municipalities have taken in hundreds of millions of dollars through this system during the past decade.

Last September the state Supreme Court ruled the local share assessment to be “a non-uniform tax,” prohibited by the state constitution. The ruling is a result of a suit filed by Mount Airy Casino in Monroe County, challenging the fee formula as putting a greater burden on small casinos with lower revenues. The court has given the Legislature until May 26 to fix the law.

In the hands of the Senate, beside addressing the local share assessment, HB271 will attempt to fill a $100 million dollar hole in the current year’s state budget.

The majority chair of the Senate Community, Economic and Recreational Development Committee, Sen. Mario Scavello (R-Monroe) said, “First we have to fix the [local share] lawsuit – that has to be done…anything that will get us to where we need to be to make up that $100 million is what I’m looking for – if we don’t address it, it’s a $200 million problem in the next year’s budget.”

However, Scavello does not want further gambling provisions to be contained in the bill. He wants additional gambling legislation to be contained in a separate bill. But, the House GOP isn’t on the same page with Scavello. “I’m not aware of any conversations about doing two separate bills,” said House GOP spokesman Steve Miskin. “Why do two bills when you can do one?”
In the previous session, the Senate was cool to the idea of using expanded gaming to generate revenue for the state budget, and the mood does not appear to have changed. Sorting this out is a necessary step in the process of creating next year’s budget, for which time is running short.

**Attempt at Liquor Sales Expansion**

On April 25, the state House passed four bills designed to move Pennsylvania closer to expansion and privatization of liquor sales: HB438, HB975, HB991 and HB1075. The bills now go to the Senate were their fate is uncertain. Governor Wolf opposes the bills.

Senate Majority Leader Jake Corman (R-Centre) said that he did not envision any significant liquor expansion. The Governor stated that he wants to give Act 39 time to play out. Last summer’s Act 39 expanded the sale of alcohol, but its effects have yet to be evaluated.

Speaker of the House, Rep. Mike Turzai (R-Allegheny) has been a leading proponent in the movement to dismantle and privatize the state’s system of liquor and alcohol sales.

**Trouble for/by Lt. Governor**

In April, Lieutenant Governor Mike Stack was investigated by the state Office of Inspector General. The issue is that multiple and consistent claims about mistreatment of state employees have been raised against Mr. Stack and his wife, Toyna.

The Stacks have been accused of berating and threatening the state troopers who provide security for them, as well as staff who maintain their official state residence. After meeting with Stack several times, regarding these complaints, Governor Tom Wolf asked the Office of Inspector General to begin an inquiry.

The Lt. Governor and his wife live in a state-owned house at Fort Indiantown Gap, 20 miles east of the Capitol. The cost to staff and maintain the lieutenant governor’s residence is about $450,000 per year.

Mr. Stack is a former state senator from Philadelphia and was elected lieutenant governor in 2014. In Pennsylvania, candidates for governor and lieutenant governor run separately in the primaries and hold what are considered to be independent offices.

The investigation resulted in Gov. Wolf—on April 19—removing the state police protection and limiting the housekeeping staff provided for the Stacks. This was an unprecedented move.

The Governor released a three-sentence letter addressed to Mr. Stack informing him of the decision: "After consultation with the Commissioner of the Pennsylvania State Police and the Secretary of General Services, I write to inform you that, effective immediately, you and Mrs. Stack will no longer be afforded the protective detail provided to you as a courtesy by the Pennsylvania State Police. In addition, the Department of General Services will provide limited cleaning, grounds keeping and maintenance at The State House and only under supervision at prearranged times," wrote Wolf. "I do not delight in this decision, but I believe it a necessary step to protect Commonwealth employees."

The Governor hand-delivered the letter to Stack. Mr. Stack responded in a statement three hours later, saying that he agreed with the decision. He said he and his wife acknowledged that their behavior was "unacceptable" and called it a symptom of a larger problem that he was committed to addressing. He said he also apologized to Wolf for "any embarrassment this situation has caused."