



Legislative UPDATE

REFORMING STATE GOVERNMENT

From State Senator John Pippy

SPRING 2006

The effort to improve state government should be an ongoing one. New ideas about how we can create a more streamlined, open legislative process are constantly emerging.

Here's a roundup of some of the reform measures being considered by the General Assembly. Please feel free to visit my website at www.senatorpippy.com or contact any of my offices listed on the back for more information on these and other legislative proposals or state programs.

John Pippy
Senator John Pippy

Reducing the Size of the PA Legislature

One way to streamline government and save tax dollars is to reduce the size of the state Legislature.

I have introduced Senate Bill 890 to trim the House of Representatives from 203 members to 121, and the Senate from 50 members to 30. A smaller legislature will mean the number of people that each lawmaker represents would increase. House districts would grow from about 65,000 constituents to 100,000, and Senate districts would increase from 265,000 to 400,000. In order to accomplish this change, the Pennsylvania Constitution would

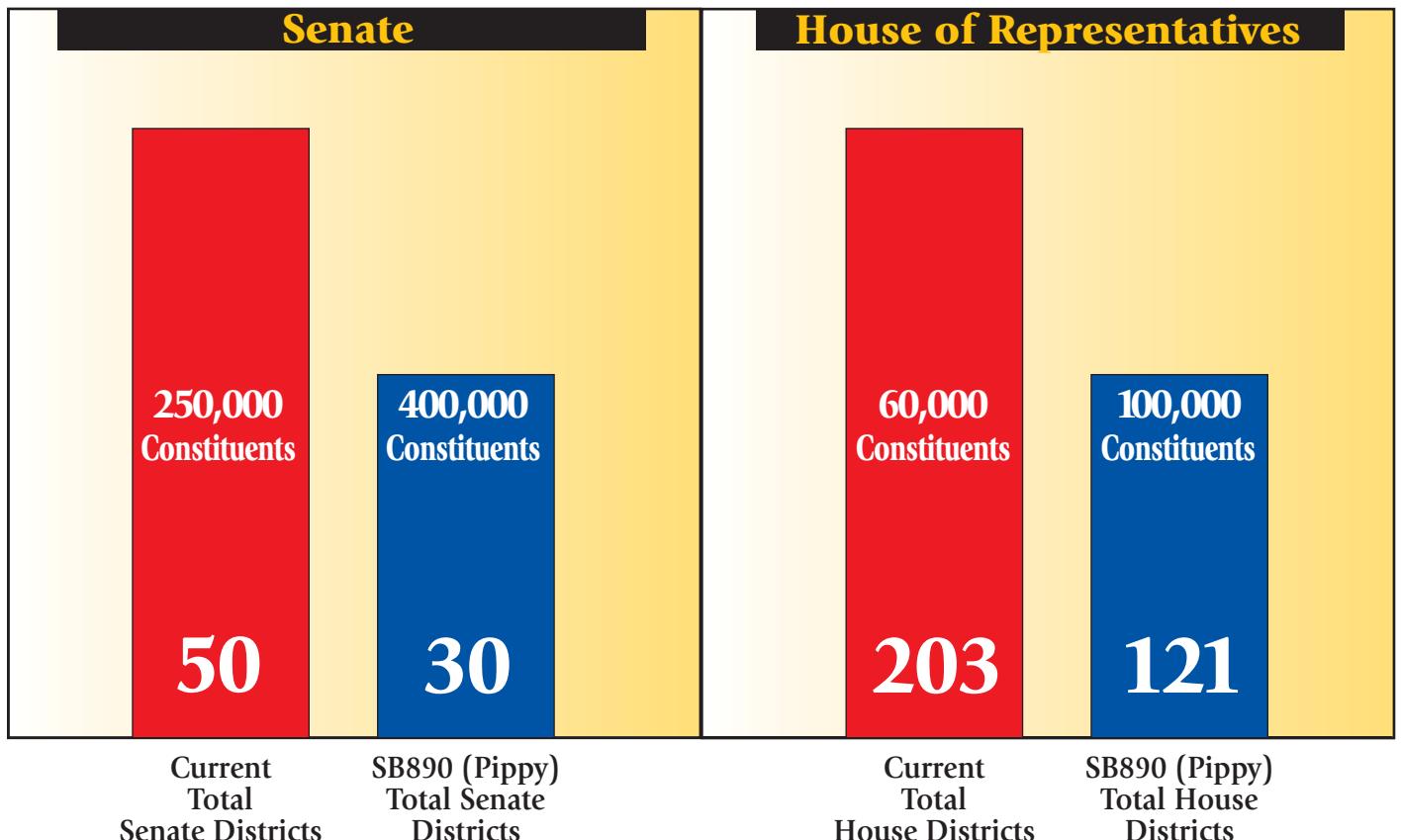
need to be amended. SB 890 must be passed by both chambers in consecutive, two-year legislative sessions. After successful passage, the measure will be placed before voters for approval. The bill is designed to take affect after the 2010 Census, which is the traditional time that House and Senate districts are redrawn to reflect population shifts. If we begin the process now, there will be enough time to amend the Constitution before redistricting occurs. In light of this timeline and the need to move the bill during this legislation session, I'm pressing to have public

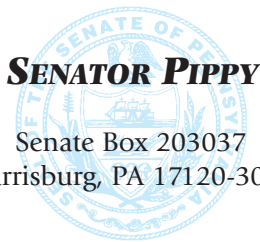
hearings scheduled to discuss the bill, with the hope that a vote on the measure will be held as soon as possible.

STEPS FOR AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION

- Senate passage in 2005-06 Session
- House passage in 2005-06 Session
- Senate passage in 2007-08 Session
- House passage in 2007-08 Session
- Voter approval in 2008 or 2009
- Census performed in 2010
- New districts created in 2012

General Assembly After SB 890 Reforms





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Strengthening PA Gaming Ethics with Rep. Tom Stevenson

Last year, I introduced Senate Bill 1209, which established a comprehensive list of ethical safeguards to strengthen Pennsylvania's gaming law. The bill was passed by the Senate and the House but was ultimately vetoed by the governor.

Earlier this year I reintroduced the legislation as Senate Bill 862. The

bill would prohibit any public official, executive-level public employee or party official, or the spouse or minor of the official, from holding a financial interest in a licensed entity during their tenure and for one year thereafter. Current law allows public officials to hold up to one-percent ownership in gaming-related compa-

nies. The bill also sets new ethical standards for the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board, the panel established to regulate gaming in the Commonwealth. Approved by the Senate in November, SB 862 was amended and passed by the House with the help of Rep. Tom Stevenson (R-42) and others, and is back before the Senate for concurrence and final approval.

Shedding Light on Lobbyist Activity

The Senate has approved Senate Bill 1, the "Lobbying Accountability Act," to give the public a complete and clear account of lobbying activity in Pennsylvania. Lobbyists would have to register every two years and report their spending four times a year. In addition to the ongoing work in the Senate, similar legislation is also being considered by the

House of Representatives. House Bill 700, sponsored by Rep. John Maher (R-40), is currently before the House State Government Committee.

In the meantime, the Senate has adopted rules requiring lobbyists to report and make public any spending that affects the Senate. Citizens can read the reports online under "Topics of Special Interest" at www.pasen.gov.

Ending Windfall Tax Hikes with Rep. Mark Mustio

Legislation to protect Allegheny County taxpayers from being hit with extreme tax hikes following countywide reassessment was signed into law in November. The new law (Act 71) requires municipalities and school districts in Allegheny County to establish revenue-neutral millage rates in the tax year immediately following the reassessment. After the revenue-neutral millage rate is established, elected officials may take a second, public vote to increase or decrease

taxes, but the increase can be no more than 5 percent. Any municipality or school district that violates these limitations would have to refund with interest any excess taxes paid by the taxpayers.

Rep. Mark Mustio (R-44) and I sponsored this legislation in our respective chambers - House Bill 1743 and Senate Bill 726. Following Rep. Mustio's success in the House, I was able to move House Bill 1743 through the Senate to be signed by the governor.

Other Reform Measures

Please visit www.senatorpippy.com for details.

- The Senate acted to move forward historic legislation that would limit state government spending to inflation and set aside surpluses in a new fund to reduce the state Personal Income Tax.
- The Senate approved legislation stating government can only take pri-

vate property through "eminent domain" when it is absolutely necessary and only for a truly public purpose. Further, in those rare instances where such a taking is necessary, individuals must be fairly compensated.



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