



THE Gavel



Volume 8
No. 5

The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus

State Representative Ronald G. Waters, *Chairman*

PLBC

WINTER 2012

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus (PLBC), I would like to thank you for taking the time to view our latest edition of *The Gavel*, Winter 2012. I consider it a privilege and an honor to keep you informed by providing this newsletter to update you on our accomplishments and the progress we are making to ensure minorities have an equal opportunity to succeed in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Inside this edition, you will find articles on the PLBC Marcellus Shale Site tour and Pennsylvania College of Technology Tours, PLBC "Education over Incarceration" Youth Town Hall meeting, the 2012 PLBC Scholarship Program and much more. To keep track of these issues and others or to become a friend of the caucus, please visit our website at www.pahouse.com/plbc and join our mailing list.

If you would like to share any comments or concerns, please visit our website at www.pahouse.com/plbc.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Kindest Regards,

Ronald G. Waters, Chairman
Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus
State Representative, 191st Legislative District



PLBC Youth Town Hall, Nov. 18



Students hand out information packets at the PLBC Student Town Hall.



Rep. Waters welcomes students to the Town Hall – Education over Incarceration. Rep. James Roebuck, seated to his left, watches.

Sen. Hughes hosts Infrastructure Summit

State Sen. Vincent Hughes hosted an Infrastructure Summit on Nov. 4 at Temple University. Hughes, a PLBC member, serves as Democratic chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

The summit's purpose was to discuss developing infrastructure in the state and local communities as a way to boost economic and job growth. Roads and

bridges, railroads, housing and utilities, as well as aging water and gas pipelines and updated electrical grid work are all types of infrastructure that need the most investment.

"It is critical that we act in concert to rebuild and invest," Hughes said. "There is no doubt that investment in infrastructure generates economic activity and jobs."

Hughes moderated the event, which featured panels of experts discussing a wide range of issues and benefits involved in the needed infrastructure work.

Featured panelists included U.S. Department of Transportation Undersecretary Roy Kienitz and U.S. Department of Labor Assistant Secretary for Policy William Spriggs.

PLBC hosts youth Town Hall

On Nov. 18, the PLBC hosted a youth town hall meeting at West Philadelphia High School. Chairman Waters, Vice Chairman Vanessa Lowery Brown and Democratic chairman of the House Education Committee James Roebuck, along with acting Philadelphia School District superintendent and CEO Leroy Nunnery and West Philadelphia High School Principal Mary Dean welcomed the students to the nearly-full auditorium to discuss how education can reduce crime and incarceration.

Youth United for Change and the Philadelphia Student Union moderated the evening.

The two-way communication allowed the students to speak their minds regarding their views of school and current regulations. The students expressed

their concern that current district rules make them all feel like criminals without improving safety. They feel that passing through metal detectors just to enter a building matched up with zero-tolerance rules can lead to criminal records and expulsions even for those just trying to protect themselves from violence started by others.

Youth United for Change defined zero tolerance as a group of policies where young people are criminalized for minor offenses and given mandatory exclusionary sentences for misconduct. Those policies include the Memorandum of Understanding, Student Code of Conduct and Reporting Protocol.

Much of the evening's discussion focused on restorative justice, an attempt to work with both victims

and offenders, where offenders take responsibility for their actions and make reparations to the victims, while the victims take an active role in setting the offenders' terms. The goal is to keep the person out of the criminal system while establishing the offense was against a person, not the state, in the hope of preventing repeat offenders.

Other speakers included Sam Staten Jr., business manager of Laborers' Local 332 of the Laborers' International Union of North America and Judge James M. Deleon of the Philadelphia Municipal Court.

Representatives from the Philadelphia Police Department and Commissioner Council were also present.

Philly singer wins Nation Builder award

Kathy Sledge, lead vocalist of the Philadelphia-based group Sister Sledge, was recently awarded the David P. Richardson Jr. Nation Builder Award by the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) in Chicago, Ill.

The annual award, named for the late Pennsylvania House member, honors African Americans who have made significant contributions to the political, economic and social progress of their race.

Although she is widely known for her singing, especially for the classic "We Are Family," Sledge was nominated by the PLBC for her work to preserve the arts and education in the community.

In 2007, she founded the "Love Will Project" in Elkins Park Middle School, Elkins Park, Pa., and the program's reach has extended as far as the Cobbs Cross Primary School Library in Antigua.

The "Love Will Project" films acts of altruism to restore, rebuild and renew lives around the world. She believes love makes the difference in the education of children both locally and around the world. Sledge uses her vast celebrity contact base to reach out to those in need.

Kathy Sledge is the youngest of five daughters of Edwin and Florez Sledge. She joined three of her sisters in forming the vocal group, Sister Sledge. She was only 20 in 1979 when "We Are Family" became one of the biggest-selling singles of all

time, and the rallying cry for that year's World Series champion Pittsburgh Pirates.

The Honorable David P. Richardson Jr. served in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, representing the Philadelphia area from his election in 1972, at age 24, until his sudden death in August 1995. At the time of his first election, he was the youngest person ever elected to the state House.

He served the NBCSL as its third president, and the award was renamed in his honor after his death.



Kathy Sledge speaks at the NBCSL Nation Builder Awards Ceremony in Chicago, Ill.

2012 PLBC Scholarship program open

Applications for the 2012 PLBC scholarship program are being accepted until Feb. 17. The PLBC will award five \$1,000 scholarships to graduating high school seniors who currently attend school in the Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh or Chester Upland school districts, are classified as a minority, and plan to enroll in an accredited two- or four-year college in Pennsylvania.

Scholarship applicants will be evaluated on grades, with a minimum 3.0 grade-point average required, a statement of career and educational goals, school and community participation, work experience, family income and any unusual personal or family circumstances. Applications are available from the PLBC website, www.pahouse.com/plbc, but only the first 250 applicants will be considered.

"Higher education is the best way to develop a career with long-term financial security," Waters said. "The PLBC is proud to be able to continue to offer these scholarships to give some students a helping hand on that road."



PLBC members present the 2011 PLBC scholarship winners.

PLBC toured Marcellus Shale site

On Oct. 21, members of the PLBC along with Harrisburg Mayor Linda Thompson visited the heart of the Marcellus Shale region to study the effects of drilling on the environment and the economy.

The tour, which began at Williamsport's Pennsylvania College of Technology, was arranged by Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Michael Krancer, who also toured with the delegation.

Pennsylvania College of Technology is the home of the Marcellus Shale Education & Training Center. It provides the most up-to-date education and training for those looking for a career in the shale drilling industry. The school provides hands-on training in many of the trade and safety positions needed for the growing industry.

Williamsport is the center of a possible drilling boom, where unemployment has fallen from 10 percent to 7.4 percent recently.

The tour to the drilling site provided the opportunity to see a drilling operation at work, where we could see the safety and environmental controls already in place and allow us to make our own observations on the industry.

The PLBC also thanks State Sen. Gene Yaw (R-Bradford/Lycoming/Sullivan/Susquehanna/Union) for arranging the visit to the college.



Anandarko Petroleum staff members in their blue uniforms welcome the PLBC group at the beginning of their tour. Rep. Michelle Brownlee, Vice Chair Vanessa Brown, DEP Secretary Michael Krancer, Harrisburg Mayor Linda Thompson, Sen. Gene Yaw and Chair Ronald G. Waters are ready to begin their tour.

PLBC honors Rev. Terrence D. Griffith

The Rev. Terrence D. Griffith, pastor of the The First African Baptist Church in Philadelphia, was installed as president of the Black Clergy of Philadelphia & Vicinity for 2012-13 on Jan. 29 at his church.

Griffith was called to his congregation in June 2001. He previously served as a senator in the Grenada Parliament, and since 2009 served the Black Clergy as first vice president in charge of voter registration and political affairs.

The PLBC will present Griffith with citations from the House and PLBC recognizing his achievements and work to improve life in the inner city.

The Black Clergy of Philadelphia & Vicinity formed in 1981 in response to a school strike in the city. Their goals are to improve life in the Philadelphia area through social justice and non-violence. Black Clergy are active in the peaceful surrender program, which encourages those with summonses and arrest warrants to surrender peacefully at a participating church or mosque.

They have also pressured local television stations to increase minority hiring on both sides of the camera.



PLBC information

For more information scan this QR Code with your smart phone to link to the PLBC website. Remember, the work we do is with you in mind, so your feedback is valuable.

PLBC MAILING LIST



If you would like to be placed on our mailing list, please fill out the form and mail it back to the address below or online at www.pahouse.com/plbc.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

Farewell to two members



Jewell Williams



Kenyatta Johnson

It is with both pride and regret that we wish two PLBC members farewell. Rep. Jewell Williams, who served the 197th District since January 2001, was elected in November to serve as sheriff for the City of Philadelphia, while Kenyatta Johnson, who served the 186th District since 2009, was elected to represent the Second District on Philadelphia City Council at the same time. They worked tirelessly to serve their constituents as House members, and there is no doubt they will continue to provide outstanding work in the City of Philadelphia. The PLBC wishes you both well.

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