



# THE Gavel



# PLBC

The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus

State Representative Ronald G. Waters, *Chairman*

SUMMER 2011

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*. I consider it a privilege and an honor to keep you informed by providing this newsletter to update you on the work we have accomplished 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 our Black History Program, Delta Days, 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](http://www.pahouse.com/plbc) and join our mailing list.

If you would like to share any comments or concerns with the caucus, please visit our website at [www.pahouse.com/PLBC](http://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



## Pa. Legislative Black Caucus celebrates Black History Month



*The Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus celebrated Black History Month with its annual Black History Program in the Capitol Rotunda. The program celebrated African Americans and the Civil War. Included in the celebration was a historical reenactment of Harriet Tubman by Dr. Daisy Century.*

The Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus celebrated Black History Month on Feb. 8, 2011, with its annual Black History Program in the Capitol Rotunda.

The program celebrated African Americans and the Civil War. Included in the celebration was a historical reenactment of Harriet Tubman by Dr. Daisy Century.

“African Americans comprised 10 percent of the entire Union Army during the Civil War,” said state Rep. Ronald G. Waters, the PLBC chairman. “The courage of these men, the sacrifices they made, and the hardships endured, deserves our unbridled gratitude. The intent of today’s program was to offer a small token of thanks to the many African American soldiers and heroes of the American Civil War.”

As part of the program, the Lincoln University Concert Choir presented both the Black National Anthem and a musical selection. The Steelton Elks’ Steppers also were on hand to perform.

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## PLBC celebrates Black History Month *(continued from page 1)*

"I consider it a privilege to host the 2011 Black History program," Waters said. "The men who fought in the Civil War helped to destroy slavery and inaugurate universal freedom in the United States. Through today's event, we have helped to pay tribute to their everlasting contribution to our nation."

Following the program, the PLBC held a luncheon for attendees.

## Legislators observe National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day at Capitol

State legislators and community leaders held a news conference on Feb. 7, 2011, followed by a policy roundtable, at the state Capitol to highlight National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day.

Rep. Tony Payton, D-Phila., said: "The AIDS crisis was not left behind in the '80s and '90s, and the statistics prove it. This is one of the deadliest diseases in the world, but the power to prevent it is in our hands. We need to do more to educate people about this terrible disease, encourage them to get tested, and to show tolerance and compassion for those who have been diagnosed."

Rep. Ronald G. Waters, D-Phila./Delaware, chairman of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus, said: "HIV/AIDS can affect all of us, even indirectly through friends and family. Rather than suffer through the heartache of a loss, which could happen to anyone, isn't it better to prevent the virus? Yes, there are medications that are helping many people with AIDS to live longer lives, but these drugs are expensive."

Other speakers at the news conference included state Sen. Vincent Hughes, D-Phila./Montgomery; Janice Kopelman, deputy secretary for health promotion and disease prevention, Pennsylvania Department of Health; and Cindy Stewart, CEO, Family Health Council of Central Pennsylvania.

The policy roundtable topic was: "Keeping our focus and attention on where we are as a Commonwealth as it relates to investing in effective strategies and support in preventing, treating, and educating our citizens on HIV/AIDS: What can we do better and what are we doing that is working?"

Roundtable panelists included Payton, Hughes, Kopelman and:

- Anthony Anderson, F.A.I.T.H. Initiative coordinator, Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force;
- Oladoyin Desalu, executive director, Southwestern Pennsylvania AIDS Planning Coalition;
- Albertha Graham-Ellison, vice president and project director, Educating Teens about HIV/AIDS Inc.;
- Philip K. Goropoulos, president and CEO of Alder Health Services, formerly known as the AIDS Community Alliance of South Central Pennsylvania; and
- Tamara Allen-Wurst, AIDS coalition manager, Family Health Council of Central Pennsylvania.

The House of Representatives adopted a resolution (H.R. 17) sponsored by Rep. Jake Wheatley, D-Allegheny, designating the day as National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day in Pennsylvania.

"It is important that African Americans in Pennsylvania and across the United States get educated about, get tested for, get involved with and get treated for HIV/AIDS. Prevention is the best solution," said Wheatley, who organized the day's events.

Additional information on the nationwide observance is available at [www.blackaidsday.org](http://www.blackaidsday.org).



*Rep. Payton speaks at a Capitol news conference about the importance of getting tested for HIV and AIDS. State legislators and community leaders later held a policy roundtable in Harrisburg to highlight National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day.*

# 2011 PLBC scholars awarded



*PLBC Chairman Ron Waters, D-Delaware/Phila., presents awards to the recipients of the 2011 Pennsylvania Black Caucus scholarship program.*

Rep. Ronald Waters, D-Delaware/Phila., chairman of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus, commended the 2011 PLBC scholarship winners on their outstanding achievement.

The scholarships went to students who were ethnic minorities, have a grade point average of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, and who are active in their schools and communities. The students must have chosen to continue their higher education in Pennsylvania.

“Chosen from 113 applicants, these eight students represent the best of this year’s high school seniors from throughout the Commonwealth,” Waters said. “As the PLBC scholarship only goes to students who choose to stay here in Pennsylvania, these students are helping reverse the ‘brain drain’ we are experiencing as promising young people leave to study elsewhere.”

The following students received \$1,000 college scholarships:

- LaToye Bethea, attending Penn State University Park, Psychology – resides in the districts of Rep. Rosita Youngblood and Sen. Shirley Kitchen, Philadelphia;
- Britney Davis, attending Villanova University, Chemical Engineering – Rep. Vanessa Brown and Sen. Vincent Hughes, Philadelphia;

- Diana Hernandez, attending Duquesne University, Nursing – Rep. Mike Sturla and Sen. Lloyd Smucker, Lancaster;
- Jabril Muhammad, attending University of Pennsylvania, Materials Engineering – Rep. Dwight Evans and Sen. LeAnna Washington, Philadelphia;
- Raya Saba, attending Moravian College, Pre-Med – Rep. Joe Brennan and Sen. Patrick Browne, Allentown;
- Crissy Tang, attending Penn State University Park, Mass Communications – Rep. Ryan Aument and Sen. Lloyd Smucker, Lancaster;
- Tony Tran, attending Drexel University, Biology – Rep. Maria Donatucci and Sen. Anthony Williams, Philadelphia;
- Jaela Wesley, attending Drexel University, International Studies – Rep. Joe Preston and Sen. Jim Ferlo, Pittsburgh.

“Each scholarship winner earned the award based on their commitment to academic excellence and their communities, and it is my distinct privilege to recognize the achievements of the scholarship awardees,” Waters said.

The PLBC serves to advance the interests of African Americans and minorities in Pennsylvania and the state legislature. Its members work to promote its mission of diversity and inclusion among all ethnic groups.

## 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 above or online at [www.pahouse.com/plbc](http://www.pahouse.com/plbc).*

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## Parker: 'Delta Days' event great success in Harrisburg

State Rep. Chelle Parker, D-Phila., announced the May 3, 2011, "Delta Days" event at the state Capitol was a great success, bringing more than 50 members of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. to Harrisburg to advocate with legislators and network with fellow members. Sorority members came from chapters all over the state, including Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Lancaster, and met with their local legislators to discuss education and youth programs statewide.

"The distinguished women of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority represent some of the progressive leaders in our Commonwealth. With the state facing devastating budget cuts to our most needy and vulnerable, I am very proud the Deltas have taken a stand for the most disadvantaged among us as part of their visit to Harrisburg today," Parker said.

While in Harrisburg, members met with their local legislators, networked with alumnae and current members, and participated in one of the largest rallies held at the Capitol in recent years. Sorority members also attended a working lunch with members of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus to discuss issues with House members to gain understanding of some of the issues facing people of color in the Commonwealth.

The sorority participated in a rally held on the Capitol steps, which drew thousands of citizens in opposition to Gov. Tom Corbett's proposed budget. The budget will decimate public and higher education and hits disadvantaged citizens especially hard.

"I am overwhelmingly proud of my fellow Sorors for taking a stand today against cuts to our most vulnerable citizens and children," Parker said.

The legislators attending the working lunch were Parker and members of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus, including Rep. Ronald Waters, chairman; Reps. Thaddeus Kirkland, Curtis Thomas, Louise Williams Bishop, James Roebuck, Jake Wheatley, Margo Davidson, Tony Payton, Kenyatta Johnson, Joseph Preston and Jewell Williams; and representatives from Sen. Anthony Williams' office .

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. has more than 200,000 members across 900 chapters. The sorority was founded in 1913 at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

Parker is the youngest African American woman ever to be elected to the state House of Representatives, and has served the citizens of the 200th Legislative District since 2005.



*The women of Delta Sigma Theta during "Delta Days" at the Capitol sponsored by Rep. Chelle Parker.*



**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.

## Pa. Legislative Black Caucus holds voter education forum

The Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus, along with WURD 900 AM, hosted a voter education forum entitled "The Role of Government."

The forum was held May 12 at Haddington Multicultural Services for Older Adults Inc. in Philadelphia.

The program was carried live during the "Al Butler Show" on WURD. Each panelist gave a brief overview of their specific office, followed by questions from the moderator and the audience.

Panelists included:

- Rep. Waters, chairman of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus
- Rep. Vanessa Lowery Brown, vice chairwoman, Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus
- Augusta Clark, former Philadelphia City Council member (addressed city council office)
- Alexander Talmadge Jr., former Philadelphia City commissioner (addressed election commission)
- Judge Thomasine Thynes, president judge Philadelphia Traffic Court (addressed traffic court judge)
- Sheila Randall, staff member, Philadelphia City Register of Wills' Office (addressed the register of wills Office)
- former Gov. Edward G. Rendell, a former Philadelphia mayor (addressed the mayor's office)
- Judge Renee Cardwell-Hughes, Court of Common Pleas judge of Philadelphia County (addressed judgeships)
- Linn Washington, Philadelphia Tribune (addressed the sheriff and overview of offices on the ballot)
- Marcia Gelbart, Philadelphia Inquirer (addressed the sheriff and overview of offices on the ballot).



*Pictured left to right: Rep. Louise Williams Bishop, Rep. Vanessa Lowery Brown, Ms. Geneva Black, Director of the Haddington Center, Rep. James Roebuck and Rep. Ronald G. Waters. Front, Ms. Augusta Clark, former Philadelphia City Council Member.*

## PLBC Education Hearings opportunity to promote educational equality

The PLBC held a series of education hearings, entitled, "A Civil Right for Pennsylvania's Children: High Quality Universal Education," in April. The hearings were held in Philadelphia at the University of Pennsylvania, Cheyney University and at the state Capitol in Harrisburg to discuss the governor's proposed budget cuts to education. Other topics that were discussed included: school climate, disciplinary policies, and other student support services.



*Rep. Waters spoke up for exonerating the records of individuals who were wrongfully incarcerated during a Capitol news conference. Waters' legislation would provide exonerated inmates an avenue to follow without having to mount yet another prolonged and costly lawsuit to get the record of the wrongful conviction expunged from their record.*



*Rep. Waters joins Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter in honoring Ducky Birts (seated) at the fifth anniversary celebration of the Ducky Birts' Scholarship Banquet on April 16. They are joined by Samuel Staten, Jr., of Local 332 of the Laborers' International Union of North America, far left; and Darryl Milling, center.*

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## 2nd Annual Taste of Pennsylvania Reception headed to D.C. Sept. 23



This year the Congressional Black Caucus will hold its 41st Annual Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., Sept. 21-24 at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. Legislators and staff from across the country will travel to discuss the latest developments and innovations in governing on the state level, to share ideas, brainstorm solutions and develop an action agenda for the coming year. Last year, the PLBC successfully organized a legislative reception to highlight all the things that make Pennsylvania famous.

More details to come on this special event! Save the date!

## 2011 PLBC Officers/Members and Staff



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Ron Waters  
*Chair*



State Representative  
Vanessa Lowery Brown  
*Vice Chair*



State Representative  
Michelle Brownlee  
*Secretary*



State Representative  
Kenyatta Johnson  
*Treasurer*



State Representative  
Louise Williams Bishop



State Representative  
Margo Davidson



State Representative  
Dwight Evans



State Senator  
Vincent Hughes



State Representative  
Thaddeus Kirkland



State Senator  
Shirley Kitchen



State Representative  
John Myers



State Representative  
Cherelle Parker



State Representative  
Tony Payton, Jr.



State Representative  
Joseph Preston



State Representative  
James Roebuck



State Representative  
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State Senator  
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