

REP. TANGRETTI REMARKS

GREENSBURG ROTARY

JULY, 1993

(USUAL GREETINGS)

Along with my many other colleagues in the legislature, I have the highest regard for the Rotary as an organization as well as for the individual achievements of its members.

One of the things that has sometimes intrigued me about your organization is the derivation of its name -- Rotary International -- and the meaning of the club's symbol which appears to be part of a mechanism -- the drive wheel that makes it run.

I've always taken the name and the symbol to mean that the Rotary consists of people who make things "go", leaders who make things happen in business and in the community.

Whether or not that is the intended meaning, it seems to me to be an appropriate one.

It's usually meant as the highest praise to say of someone that they have the ability to "make things happen."

And I don't know of any better goal for an individual or an organization than to be a force for improvement in the life of a business or a community. The Rotary is just such an organization.

I'd also like ^{to} present a case for the state legislature as a body that "made things happen" this year.

Good things, in my estimation, though some might have other interpretations.

But look back a short time -- before this year's session -- and recall that the term most often used to describe the legislature then was "gridlock."

It was "gridlock" over this and "gridlock" over that. And, regrettably, much of it was true. Though in some instances, the term might have been intended as a compliment from those who think legislative gridlock isn't such a bad thing if it keeps us from passing the bills ^{perhaps} they don't like.

Practically nobody among the general public gets excited about the number of bills that are passed by the legislature in a six-month period, or in a year, or in a two-year session.

The outcome most Pennsylvanians are interested in isn't the quantity of bills that are passed, it's the quality. *Naturally*

But even numbers can tell you something about the level of legislative activity this year. And looking at those figures, as of June 30, a total of 65 bills was either signed into law or placed in the governor's hands. *See B*

*which was her budget &
long to*

In comparison with the last legislative session, 1991-92, there were only 11 bills either signed into law or placed in the governor's hands in the comparable six-month period.

Not only were the numbers higher, the legislature also produced substantial and significant statutes that respond to the needs of the times.

Let me offer a quick summary, and I ask your indulgence if it sounds a little like a litany of "The Legislature's Greatest Hits."

I'm presenting this because it's information you don't often get from the media that covers the state Capitol. They do their job, and it's a necessary and important job.

But what comes across in the media often has more to do with personalities and ^{WAMS} politics than with the unspectacular but real-life complexities of legislation and the legislative process.

Keeping that in mind, and keeping in mind that you have to go back to work today mentally alert, I'll not to get into a lot of mind-numbing detail of the bills I'm going to talk about.

But here's a thumbnail sketch of some of the bills that were passed this year that I think are important:

You remember, and in May you probably voted on, the constitutional amendment to reform the way judges are disciplined. Those reforms were among the first actions taken by the legislature this year. And in the May primary they were approved overwhelmingly by the voters -- scrapping the old judicial discipline system in which judges judged each other.

Given the nature of what's happening in our Supreme Court it ~~should~~ ^{can't come} too soon.

Also in May, one of the earliest state budgets in modern-day history was approved a month before deadline with no new or additional taxes.

I'm particularly pleased about that having been appointed this year to the House Appropriations Committee where the budget originates...and having two years ago proposed a series of reforms to the budget process that started the legislature thinking about how we can improve the annual budget exercise. *and to*

some degree was partially the reason for the adoption of the Early Budget. Because the House adopted voluntary time constraints for budget introduction and sanctions against members if not passed on time.

Also passed this year was a major reform of state funding for local schools guaranteeing a certain dollar amount for the education of each child and reducing the gap in resources between the poorest and wealthiest school districts.

*\$130 School Equity Proposal
where approx 9 per pupil varies from \$3500 - \$11000 - and where there's a split in Comm. Cat*

And just last month, ^{as you know} a resolution was reached in the workers' compensation reform that had been stalled in the General Assembly for the better part of three years. ^{But} Although the bill did not mandate the rollback in insurance rates that I and many others had sought, it offers some tools -- like a cap on medical costs -- for moderating future rates for workers'

and which resulted in my negative vote

*113% of medical costs capped
anti-inflation provisions*

as well as:

- : anti-fraud provisions
- : Self-insurance pools
- : Changes in rate increase requests
- : Small Business Advocate would have legal standing in rate cases with insurance com.
- : We/UC of set
- : Redefinition in Mini-Benefits

compensation insurance.

A potentially far-reaching plan for a high-tech communications network was authorized -

- without the automatic rate hikes sought by some of its proponents. This is a system that could greatly expand the communications capabilities of businesses and households with an information carrying potential that far surpasses what we now have in place.

and they is the limit

Along with your professional interests, members of the Rotary are also active, concerned citizens who want to participate fully in government decisions.

One of the bills passed this year strengthens the state's Sunshine Law by giving citizens the right to speak at local government meetings. Before, you had a right to be informed of a meeting and attend it -- meaning you could be seen but not necessarily heard. Now you have a right to actively participate.

The first six months of the legislative year also saw the passage of a law that makes stalking a criminal act with tough penalties for those convicted of the offense; a requirement *add a bill that* that certain purchase contracts must be written in plain language; important changes in

domestic relations law, and further advances toward cleaning up the lower Susquehanna River and the Chesapeake Bay.

None of this implies a sense of complacency or that we intend to coast through the rest of the session.

Looking to the schedule ahead, local tax reform looms as an issue the General Assembly is likely to face during the balance of

the two-year session.

*If you'll recall in 1989 there was a referendum vote for tax reform that was defeated soundly - Too complicated - Special interest oppose - Concept dollar for dollar re-duction - Prop 71 other sales re-
ment*

Providing broader access to quality

health care is another issue that's almost

certain to occupy the legislature, as is the

*Ad Setting broad parameters
and State filing in Hanks -*

*Man's company
I may Gov's
Proposed:
Health Security Corp
1. Establin benefits
Package -
2. designation of
health service
Regions.
3. Funding process
for.*

concern for improving the state's business
climate.

We may get a chance again to consider

a reduction in the state's corporate net income

NE cover

tax and other business taxes that were

discussed and then shelved in the Senate last

month.

*in exchange for the Elect Power Utility
Tax - Problem is opening up Tax code -
No discipline -*

I'm hoping we can pass a bill I've

introduced to set aside 25 to 40 percent of the

state's procurement contracts for small,

independently owned and operated businesses

... because I believe it's the small business

sector that holds the greatest promise for

job creation in Pennsylvania.

As I mentioned when I began my remarks, the term Rotary suggests movement, purpose and progress -- qualities you and your organization possess in abundance.

Those qualities are the opposite of a static complacency that is content with things just as they are.

In working for improvement, whether in the Rotary or in the legislature, we know we are not above criticism nor are we immune from error.

We have the satisfaction of knowing, though, that we are striving in the tradition of our predecessors who also had to weigh the positive and negative consequences of their actions as they understood them in their times.

With the benefit of hindsight we know that in their commitment to improvement and progress they made the right things happen much more often than not.

And our fondest hope is that future generations of Rotarians and Pennsylvanians may say the same thing about us.