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COMMITTEES  
MINORITY CHAIRMAN  
SUB-COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION  
JUDICIARY

New address:  
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Philadelphia, PA 19124  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
HARRISBURG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For additional information contact Jon Macks at 843-1700

O'DONNELL SUPPORTS HIGHER EDUCATION BILLS

State Representative Robert O'Donnell, D-Philadelphia, successfully argued for the favorable reporting from committee of two house bills which provide additional financial aid for college students.

O'Donnell, minority chairman of the subcommittee on higher education, has given strong support to the bills as reported in committee, and will work for their passage by the entire House in January.

House Bill 1472 is designed to increase the funds available for Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) loans. In addition, the bill provides for a reduction in the interest rate on the loans. The additional funds will be raised by the issuance of new revenue bonds. The loans would be guaranteed by the federal government.

"House Bill 1472 provides needed funds for college students,"

More

add one/O'Donnell

O'Donnell said. "The importance of higher education for our youth cannot be overstated. I strongly support bills such as this which will ease the financial burden on those going to college."

"Another positive aspect of this bill is that the funds will not come from our state tax dollars. The funds will come from those investing in the revenue bonds issued by PHEAA."

House Bill 419 raises the ceiling on the amount that the state can pay to community colleges on behalf of the sponsoring municipalities. These payments are used to reimburse the colleges for operating costs.

"Students at community colleges would face a large tuition increase without this additional funding," O'Donnell said. "Passage of the bill will benefit many neighborhood residents who attend Philadelphia Community College."

O'Donnell also supported an amendment to HB 419 which would bring the budget meetings of the Board of Trustees of Community Colleges under the "Sunshine Act." Meetings which are under this act are open to the public.

Release Date: 3/5/79

### "O'Donnell Bill to Aid Handicapped Students"

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell, D-Phila., has introduced a bill to alleviate the financial problems of the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf and three other schools for the deaf and blind. The bill also provides additional support for handicapped students in other approved private schools.

The bill will aid the four schools for the deaf and blind by allowing the schools to negotiate the students' tuition and maintenance reimbursement amounts with the Department of Education. The current law places a strict limitation on this amount.

"By allowing schools such as the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf to negotiate reimbursement amounts with the state, many of their current financial problems will be solved," O'Donnell said. "The standard to be used in negotiations will be 'reasonable and necessary' costs. This will help the schools while still setting a limit on the negotiations."

The bill also supplies additional funds for schools providing special education programs

"State support for these institutions has been lagging far behind the actual cost of operation." O'Donnell said. "By raising the maximum reimbursement allowed, the situation being experienced by the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf can be avoided in other schools."

O'Donnell, a member of the House Education Committee, said that the change in reimbursement level for the four chartered schools for the deaf and blind is to take effect immediately, because of the serious financial situation in those schools.

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
HARRISBURG

May 19, 1980

For Immediate Release

Contact Loretta Witt at 843-1700

O'DONNELL, ALPHONSO DEAL LEAD RALLY TO SAVE GET SET PROGRAM

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell, D - 198th, and Alphonso Deal, candidate for the state legislature in the 181st legislative district were the featured speakers at Friday's rally to save the Get Set Day Care Centers.

The Get Set centers could close if a Department of Public Welfare proposal goes into effect on July 1, 1980.

The rally, attended by an estimated several hundred parents, children and teachers, was held at the State Office Building at Broad and Spring Garden Streets.

O'Donnell began his remarks by urging the parents and children to attend a rally in Harrisburg this week. He pledged his continued support to the parents in their effort and said he would be with them at the Harrisburg rally.

O'Donnell told the crowd, "There is talk of division between blacks and whites in the Philadelphia legislative caucus and there is talk of division between Republican and Democrats in Harrisburg. But, when it comes to our children,



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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
HARRISBURG

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Press Release

May 19, 1980

there is no division and there must never be any division."

"When you get to Harrisburg, you must be loud and you must be clear. If your message to the Department of Welfare is loud, and if your message is clear, we can accomplish our goal."

O'Donnell is a member of the House Committee on Education and has consistently supported the goals of programs such as Get Set.

ROBERT W. O'DONNELL  
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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

For Immediate Release

January 23, 1981

Contact: Jon Macks at 843-1700

O'DONNELL INTRODUCES BILL TO ABOLISH SCHOOL BOARD

State Representative Robert O'Donnell, D-Philadelphia, has introduced a bill to abolish the School Board and replace it with a School Committee appointed by the mayor.

The announcement of O'Donnell's action came at a press conference at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel last Wednesday. Several other legislators who are co-sponsoring the bill attended the conference.

The bill provides that the School Committee will have the powers of the current board, plus two additional responsibilities. The Committee will have the responsibility of developing a plan for the financial reorganization of the School District and presenting it to the General Assembly by July 1, 1981. In addition, the Committee must present a plan for a permanent management structure by December 31, 1981.

The bill provides a "backup" administrative structure in the event that the legislature fails to act on the Committee's plan. This structure would permit each succeeding mayor to appoint 4 members of the Committee at the beginning of the term. The remaining 5 members of the Committee could be appointed two years later.

O'Donnell said that this structure, patterned on the recommendations of the Charter Revision Committee, is designed to give a new mayor a degree of input into the governing structure at the beginning of his term. The check on this grant of power is that a mayor will not be able to appoint a majority on the Committee until midway through his term.

O'Donnell said that he hopes for passage of the bill in the early spring. He has discussed it with other House leaders and is working to get full support of the Philadelphia caucus. A large number of Philadelphia legislators have already agreed to co-sponsor the bill.

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

For Immediate Release

April 2, 1981

Contact: Jon Macks at (717) 783-1593

O'DONNELL LOBBIES FOR SPECIAL ED FUNDS

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell, (D-198th), introduced an amendment on the House floor which appropriated \$30 million for the payment of special education excess costs for the current fiscal year.

Approximately \$20 million of the \$30 million appropriation would have gone to the Philadelphia School District. O'Donnell's amendment received bipartisan support, including the support of the entire Philadelphia legislative delegation; the amendment was narrowly defeated, by a vote of 94 to 101.

"I'm disappointed that the amendment didn't pass," O'Donnell said. "However, the fact that the vote was close and that there was bipartisan support is very encouraging."

"As the need for this money becomes more pressing, the likelihood increases that we can obtain the needed votes. However, if the perception continues that the Governor will veto such an appropriation, we may continue to fall short by a few Republican votes."

O'Donnell plans to introduce a similar amendment before the end of the fiscal year.



FOR RELEASE TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13 - 10 AM

CONTACT: Phil Murphy (717)783-1593

HARRISBURG -- State Representative Bob O'Donnell, (D-Philadelphia) announced today the introduction of a three-bill legislative package in Harrisburg aimed at breaking the deadlock in the month-long Philadelphia school strike.

The first bill, which amends the "distressed district" provision of the School Code, would require the immediate dismissal of the present school board and replace the current members with a three-person "Special Board of Control." O'Donnell, the Chairman of the Democratic Caucus in the House, says he believes the presence of a new team will be helpful in getting the negotiations off dead center.

"Additionally," said O'Donnell, "the bill gives the new board the authority to raise new revenues up to \$35 million. I am hopeful that the combination of new faces and a possible infusion of new money might resolve this impasse."

Two additional bills in the three-part package would appropriate the \$24 million in special education funds which the district is owed by the state. O'Donnell noted that this is the money promised by Governor Thornburgh last week in Philadelphia, and as such would have the support of the Governor's Office.

"I am also hopeful" said O'Donnell, "that the Governor would assist in passage of the third bill, which would release about \$9 million in the so-called density subsidy."

The legislation would also require that the new board come to the General Assembly with a plan for the long-term reorganization of the district. "I am under no illusion that what I propose is a cure-all," said O'Donnell. "What I do hope is that its passage will give us some short-term breathing room and a reasonable prospect for a long-term resolution of the finance and governance of the district."

(MORE)

O'DONNELL - Page 2

O'Donnell, who is now serving a fourth term from his Germantown-East Falls district, says he is optimistic the bill will attract bipartisan support and be acted on quickly by the Education Committee and the whole House.

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10/14/81

I. "FIRST CLASS SCHOOL DISTRICT DISTRESSED DISTRICT ACT."

This bill amends the current "financially distressed school district" provisions of the School Code of 1949 by creating a separate distressed status for districts of the first class. Under current law, a district which is unable to pay its bills can be declared distressed by the Secretary of Education. He then appoints one person to a three-person special board of control and the Court of Common Pleas of the county where the district is located appoints the other two. This provision is retained, and a new criterion for "distressed" is added by defining a first class distressed district to be one which is unable to fund a contract negotiated under Act 195. In districts other than those of the first class, the board of school directors is retained; in this bill, they are dismissed.

All special boards of control have taxing authority; districts of the first class are limited to a maximum of the revenues yielded by 6 mills of property tax.

Finally, this bill mandates that the special board come to the General Assembly within 120 days with a plan for the refinancing and future governance of the district.

II. "SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDS"

This bill appropriates the sum of \$24 million to the Philadelphia School District as partial payment of the Special Education monies due and owing to the district. The figure reflects the amount Governor Thornburgh indicated the Commonwealth was willing to make immediate settlement on.

III. "SUPERDENSITY PAYMENTS"

This bill removes the ceiling from the superdensity payments made to Philadelphia. The ceiling was inserted into last year's General Appropriation bill but was never given statutory authorization in the subsidy sections of the School Code. Removing the ceiling would release approximately \$9 million of superdensity funds to the district.

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 27, 1982

CONTACT: ROB DUNHAM, 843-1700

HOUSE PASSES STUDENT LOAN BILL

The Pennsylvania House of Representatives this week passed a bill that would provide low interest loans for undergraduate and graduate students in Pennsylvania.

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell, a co-sponsor of the legislation, called its passage "extremely important for students and middle income families frozen out of tuition assistance by the Reagan administration cuts in aid to higher education."

O'Donnell attacked the federal policy requiring students to pay interest on their loans while attending college as "discriminatory and burdensome. This bill would allow students nine months after they leave school before requiring them to repay their loans."

O'Donnell said the bill "would permit the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency to float bonds, receive revenues, and make loans to students, banks, colleges, and universities. Banking institutions would be required to lend the money to any bona fide student.

"The maximum loan would be set by agreement between the bank or the school and the PHEAA board," O'Donnell explained. "The interest on the loans would be approximately 9 to 10 percent."

Representative O'Donnell said "these loans will protect students and their families from the Reagan cuts and guarantee students continued access to educational opportunity."

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
HARRISBURG

June 16, 1983

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: ROB DUNHAM, 843-1700

O'DONNELL ATTACKS SPECIAL ED VETO

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell (D-Germantown), the House Majority Whip, today attacked Governor Thornburgh's line item veto of \$3.2 million for severely handicapped children.

The subsidies, introduced by O'Donnell as an amendment to the legislature's emergency deficiency budget bill, were targeted for unreimbursed special educational services provided by state approved private schools over the past two fiscal years. Germantown's Green Tree School is one of those schools denied subsidies as a result of the veto.

"The Governor has the power to veto specific line items in budget bills," O'Donnell said. "That he would use that power to single out special education is sad indeed.

"State law requires that every child in the Commonwealth must receive basic and secondary education, including those whose handicaps are so severe they require specialized schooling," O'Donnell explained.

"It also requires that schools receive 100 percent reimbursement for the costs of educating those children. The funds vetoed by the Governor represent the difference between the costs the schools have incurred over the past two fiscal years and the actual monies they've received so far from the state."

"It is very frustrating to steer an important measure such as this through the House and Senate only to have the rug pulled out from under us by the Governor," O'Donnell said.

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
HARRISBURG  
July 15, 1983

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: ROB DUNHAM, 843-1700

BUDGET NEGOTIATORS SAVE SCHOOL FUNDS

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell (D-Germantown), the House Majority Whip, today attacked Governor Thornburgh's veto of the Democratic budget and economic development proposals.

O'Donnell charged that the Governor's vetoes, which eliminated \$1.2 billion for social programs, "were taking the Reagan new federalism to its logical extreme.

"The Democratic initiatives were totally slashed," O'Donnell said. "Not only did the Governor eliminate our plans for economic development and aid to the unemployed, he also blocked our efforts to preserve funding for family planning programs and community legal services. He also sharply reduced funds for domestic violence and rape crisis programs and for emergency food assistance. Times are extremely hard right now, and unemployment is unacceptably high. These line-by-line vetoes were extremely mean-spirited."

In spite of these vetoes, Democratic budget negotiators were able to counter some key cuts in aid to the city and school district of Philadelphia, O'Donnell said. "Through negotiations on the supplementary budget package, we were able not only to restore these cuts, but to gain additional funding. The supplementary budget calls for a new formula for the distribution of state aid to local school districts. This formula will result in \$27 million more for our public schools.

"The combined new dollars for our city and schools are in excess of \$65 million," O'Donnell said.

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
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HARRISBURG

September 22, 1983

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: ROB DUNHAM, 843-1700

O'DONNELL PLEDGES SUPPORT FOR KELLY SCHOOL

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell (D-Germantown) met today with William C. Seiberlich, principal of the John B. Kelly School, to discuss the needs of Kelly School and pledge his support for all-day kindergarten services and additional enrichment programs at the school.

O'Donnell, who was instrumental in the recent reversal of a school district decision to move the Westside Parents Cooperative Nursery from Calvary Church, expressed his concern about school district cuts in programs offered at Kelly School.

"As is often the case, the school district attempted to dismantle many of the special programs offered at the Kelly School while Mr. Seiberlich was on sabbatical," O'Donnell said. "It is important that we work together to restore as many of these programs as we can, and fight to prevent additional cuts in the future."

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
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HARRISBURG

March 23, 1984

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: ROB DUNHAM, 843-1700

O'DONNELL SAVES PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL AGE PARENTS

The City Department of Public Welfare has reversed its decision to slash \$100,000 from the budget of the Comprehensive Services for School Age Parents program, State Representative Bob O'Donnell announced today.

The reversal marks the second time in less than a year that O'Donnell has intervened on behalf of the program to restore its City funding. Last April, the Department of Public Welfare had cut \$500,000 in social service subsidies to the program. With O'Donnell's assistance, those cuts were also reversed.

Miriam F. Mednick, coordinator of the Comprehensive Services for School Age Parents program, said the restoration of funds "saved our program from closing" and thanked the Germantown legislator for his "caring commitment to help pregnant teenagers and their families."

O'Donnell called the program "extremely valuable, both for the kids it helps and for the City. The teenagers are able to stay in school while at the same time learning to cope with the special problems associated with parenting.

"This program often makes the difference between a student's becoming self-sufficient or getting stuck on welfare," O'Donnell said.

# Legislative Report

## State Representative

### Robert W. O'Donnell



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September 26, 1985

This week, State Representative Ron Cowell and I will be introducing a bill that would designate the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf as a regional community resource center for the hearing-impaired.

In addition to being an excellent school for deaf children, PSD provides important resources for the 300,000 hearing-impaired adults in the Delaware Valley. The school operates an information and referral service, gives counseling to deaf people and their families, offers sign language courses to the general public, and assists hearing-impaired people in selecting doorbells, telephones and other electronic services.

By officially recognizing PSD as a community resource center for the deaf, the bill would make it easier for the school to obtain additional public funding and foundation grants, and would help this fine institution expand the already high quality services it offers the community.

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Now that the legislature is back in session, my office will resume sending you "This Week in Harrisburg" to keep you informed of the goings-on here in the Capitol. I hope you had a productive and enjoyable summer.

ROBERT W. O'DONNELL  
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November 14, 1985

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Ben Schuster, 843-1700

REPRESENTATIVE O'DONNELL SUPPORTS LIBRARY BILL

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell(D-Germantown) supported a bill which passed the House this week that would place a \$30 million bond issue before the voters for the purpose of constructing, establishing, or modernizing libraries across the state.

Representative O'Donnell said, "Many libraries in Pennsylvania are in dire need of capital funds to repair or replace their buildings which have suffered from lack of adequate maintenance in recent years. Last year only \$1 million dollars in federal funds were available for library capital projects throughout the entire Commonwealth. Up until now there have been no capital funds available from the state".

If passed by the Senate and approved by the voters, the proceeds of this bond issue would be provided to local libraries in the form of loans. None of these funds would go for general operating costs.

Representative O'Donnell added, "Libraries are an irreplaceable source of information at a time when information is the number one resource enabling individuals to prepare themselves for economic success in our society. The number of books in print has doubled in the last ten years. Local libraries must be physically able to handle that increase as well as a similar growth in video cassettes, computer terminals, and lifelong learning materials."

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