

RockTheCapital.org

July 23, 2007

Contact:

ericepstein@comcast.net

Eric Epstein, Coordinator

(717)-541-1101

Twelve Alternative Budget Cutting Proposals

\$300,290,839.54

- 1 Liquidate leadership accounts and refund FYI 2008 appropriations: \$219 million + \$60.5 million = \$279.5 million**
- 2 [Or reduce legislature spending by 20%: \$57.2 million annually]**
- 3 Eliminate BIG: \$10.6 million one-time refund**
- 4 Eliminate PSAs: \$6.24 million in annual savings**
- 5 Reduce PHEAA funding by the amount spent on Board perks and frivolous litigation costs: \$1.215 million**
- 6 Reduce PHEAA funding by the amount spent on “lobbying fees.” Minimal annual savings: \$1 million**
- 7 Reduce judicial office space spending by 20%: Minimal annual savings: \$684,000**
- 8 Reduce Penn State University’s annual allocation by the amount of Graham Spanier’s annual base salary: \$545,016**
- 9 Reduce Turnpike funding by amount spent on “lobbying fees.” Minimal annual savings: \$312,000**
- 10 Eliminate John Estey’s part-time job working for the state: \$147, 443.**
- 11 Rep. Mark Cohen’s refund for using tax payer dollars for his book buying sprees and New York weekends: \$34,000**
- 12 Senator Mellow promised refund of the “unvouchered expenses” he kept: \$13,380.54**

Sources:

1 Liquidate special and unaudited leadership accounts of \$219 million. This FYI 2008 account appropriations are as follows:

- Senate \$38.5 million for "caucus operations" - same as last year.
- House \$20.1 million for "special leadership account."
- Speaker's office gets \$1.9 M up \$1 million from last year.

2 Reduce the legislature spending by 20%: \$57.2 million

Pennsylvania ranked second in total legislative spending of \$286 million in 2005, according to the NCSL figures. That's a conservative figure that doesn't include an estimated \$25 million spent on boards and commissions under the Legislature, according to Pennsylvania budget documents.

One driver of the cost is the size of Pennsylvania's legislative staff, which was second-largest in the nation in 2003, according to the NCSL. Pennsylvania's legislative staff more than doubled from 1,430 in 1979 to 2,947 in 2003. (*Pittsburgh Tribune*, May 10, 2007)

3 A small Beaver County development agency has spun into a \$10.6 million outfit controlled by a powerful Democratic lawmaker and financed exclusively by Pennsylvania taxpayers. In the case of the Beaver Initiative for Growth, the power lies exclusively with [former] state Rep. Michael Veon, of Beaver Falls -- the second-ranking Democrat in the House -- and state Sen. Gerald LaValle, of Rochester, another veteran Democrat. (*Tribune Review*, February 26, 2006)

4 Eliminate PSAs: \$6.24 million.

House Democrats spent about \$1.6 million -- not \$671,000 as they had disclosed earlier -- on taxpayer-financed public service announcements, which critics say are a tool to help lawmakers get reelected.

The change brings the House total to about \$6 million spent on public service ads during the 2005-06 legislative session, according to figures released Friday. (*Pittsburgh Tribune*, March 10, 2007).

Senate maximum PSA = 50 x \$4,800 or \$240,000.

5 Reduce PHEAA funding by amount spent on Board perks (\$860,000) and money spent by PHEAA to block release of public accounting (\$409,000). Savings \$1.215 million

6 Reduce PHEAA funding by amount spent on lobbying fees.” Minimal annual savings: \$1 million

The PA Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) pays more than \$1 million a year to eight lobbying firms, including \$235,000 to a single lobbyist.

7 Reduce judicial office space spending by 20%: \$684,000.

Pennsylvania taxpayers spend \$3.42 million a year to house 43 appeals judges in personal offices, often at some of the swankiest addresses. (Tribune-Review Sunday, January 15, 2006)

8 “When it comes to presidential salaries, Penn State stands as a leader among the nation's public universities.

“University President Graham Spanier's \$545,016 base salary this year ranks him No. 3 among the 183 public colleges and university systems included in a survey released yesterday by the Chronicle of Higher Education.

“That represents a 5.5 percent pay raise from his salary last year of \$516,600, an increase of \$28,416. (*Patriot News*, November 21, 2006)

9 Reduce Turnpike funding by amount spent on lobbying fees : Minimal savings: \$312,000.

The PA Turnpike Commission pays Bravo Group more than \$26,000 *per month* to lobby the legislature and governor not to privatize the Turnpike.

10 Mr. Estey will continue to receive the same salary, \$147,443. That will also be Mr. Fajt's new salary, according to Chuck Ardo, a Rendell spokesman. As revenue secretary, he received, \$124,940.

Mr. Ardo said the change in titles "is in no way a demotion for Mr. Estey. He will continue to be a full-time member of the governor's staff, an equally valued member of the staff and a close adviser to the governor."

Mr. Estey will work out of an office in Philadelphia, however, instead of the governor's main office at the state Capitol. (*Post-Gazette*, April 17, 2007)

11 Rep. Mark Cohen (D-Philadelphia) a 34 year veteran of the legislature read 800 books over at a cost to tax payers of of \$28,200. (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 2, 2006)

“If you want recent, there was last week's disclosure that he'd turned in bills for \$2,000 for attending the annual Pennsylvania Society blowout in New York in 2004, 2005, and 2006. More about this in a moment.”

“If you want massive, go back to 1990 when the *Daily News'* John Baer reported that Cohen had racked up expenses of \$104,000 in a 20-month period. Put Cohen in a blond wig, hand him a Chihuahua and you've got Paris Hilton.” (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 11, 2007)

Mr. Cohen only spent \$3,800 last year restocking his library at the tax payers' expense.

1 2 Senator Mellow (D-Lackawanna) voted for the 2005 pay raise and accepted \$13,380.54 in “unvouchered expenses.” “There is no reason legally why I should give it back, so I'm not,” said Senate Minority Leader Robert J. Mellow. “The raises were established law for four months, and similar ones were upheld by the courts, he added.” (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 1, 2005)

Senator Mellow agreed to pay the money back when queried by Eric Epstein of *RocktheCapital.Org* on July 5, 2007 during a press conference in the Rotunda. As of July 16, 2007, the Senate clerk has no record of Mr. Mellow attempting to pay the money back.