



*Center for Beef Excellence  
Beef Bytes  
March 18, 2010*

Welcome to Spring!

Join Versant Strategies in celebrating National Ag Week (March 14-20). On Monday, the PA Pest Management Association held their annual legislative day in Harrisburg. They received front page attention in the Patriot News courtesy of Heidi, the bed bug sniffing dog.

Here's the full version:

<http://www.pennlive.com/statehouse/patriotnews/index.ssf?/base/news/1268696408254850.xml&coll=1>

Here's the initial, shorter web post which has a photo and a video:

[http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2010/03/heidi\\_a\\_bed\\_bug-sniffing\\_engli.html](http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2010/03/heidi_a_bed_bug-sniffing_engli.html)

Today, we are proud to host Senator Bob Casey, (member of the Senate Agriculture Committee) in the Versant Office for a reception commemorating National Ag Week.

As legislative activity picks up both here in Harrisburg and Washington DC, please let us know how we can help.

Sincerely,

MeeCee

*Articles of Interest*

3/18 Video clip on farm truck regulations

<http://www.wgal.com/video/22874807/index.html>

03-19-2010      [\*\*Ag Secretary Joins NE Ag Leaders to Seek UDSA Support for Local Dairy Farms\*\*](#)  
(Press Release)

03-19-2010      [\*\*Is our food safe? Local expert, supermarket official weigh in\*\*](#)  
More food product recalls in recent years illustrate troubles at processing plants, but also show that the industry responds better. By Dan Kelly Reading Eagle |More Most food poisoning was once thought to be caused by improperly handling or cooking fish, meat or other foods in the home.... - [READING EAGLE](#)

### [Meat-free for a better world](#)

03-18-2010

By VANCE LEHMKUHL Philadelphia Daily News 'YOU CARE more about animals than you do about people.' Advocates for animals hear this often, especially around the time of Saturday's Great American Meatout. In reality, eating animals causes a great deal more human suffering than going without. The amount of harm done... - [DAILY NEWS](#)

### [Growing concerns](#)

03-17-2010

BY MARY KLAUS mklaus@patriot-news.com Dairy farmer Ron Kopp grew up helping out on his family's Londonderry Twp. farm -- and so did his son, Adam. "There's never enough labor on a farm," said the Londonderry Twp. farmer, who milks 150 cows and farms 800 acres. "So your parents have you help out.... - [PATRIOT](#)

### [New rules will govern farm vehicle use in Pennsylvania](#)

03-16-2010

New rules governing some farm vehicles in Pennsylvania are expected to take effect by the end of the month. The rules, as first proposed by the state Department of Transportation in response to a directive from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, originally caused much angst in the farming community.... - [PATRIOT](#)

### [The ins and outs of cow podiatry](#)

03-16-2010

The cow's foot is a fascinating thing. You might not think so now, but hopefully you will agree after reading this. The cow and other ruminants are considered to have cloven hooves, which means basically that they have two toes. We refer to cow's toes as claws, although they don't... - [SOMERSET DAILY](#)

### [Critics question if ag preservation is fair to farmers -- and taxpayers?](#)

03-16-2010

Don Ranck said he hasn't changed his mind about Lancaster County's farm preservation program since it began three decades ago. "I don't see any redeeming value in it," the Paradise Township farmer and chairman of township supervisors said bluntly. "Let the marketplace work. Keep government out of it."... - [INTELLIGENCER JOURNAL](#)

### [Inside PDA for March 12, 2010](#)

03-15-2010

(Press Release)

### [Younger drivers will be banned from taking some vehicles on roads](#)

03-15-2010

Rick Ebert won't be able to rely on his son Jacob to haul some of the family's dairy cows a few miles away to put them out to pasture. It's not that Jacob won't do the work. It's that new transportation regulations about to take effect in Pennsylvania won't allow him to do it.... - [TRIB](#)

### [Hard times for N.J. dairy farmers](#)

03-15-2010

By James Osborne Inquirer Staff Writer Under a dilapidated farm building in Gloucester County, Owen Pool tugs at his sweat-stained "Got Milk?" cap, stretches out his bad knee, and tries to make sense of the dairy industry. Pool says he's losing money every time he milks a cow, thanks to a... - [INQUIRER](#)

### [Meat producers fed up, frustrated](#)

03-14-2010

CHICAGO — Dan Kotara's 35 years grinding meat into hamburger ended last year after a single positive test for a potentially deadly strain of E. coli. Unable to market thousands of pounds of meat, he rented a trash bin and doused the meat in black ink to render it unusable...  
- [TRIB](#)

### *Legislative Interests*

No legislative activity specific to the Center for Beef Excellence's interests to report this week.

### *Weekly Letter*

It was an awfully busy week in the Federal City, with a wild weekend still on tap. President Barack Obama went all "Rock, chalk, Jayhawk" on the nation Wednesday, picking Kansas to take the NCAA men's hoops crown. He will presumably be watching basketball Sunday with a close eye on the U.S. House, where it is expected that health care reform will be debated/voted/not voted but passed anyway/some iteration of all of the above by Sunday night.

The U.S. Senate this week also passed a sweeping \$17.6 billion jobs bill, which was signed Thursday by Obama. Included are a slew of tax credits for businesses to hire new employees, which is nice, if we ever get back to needing any of those prospective employees. PA has its collective eyes on a much broader House bill, which would include a big chunk of cash for unemployment compensation.

Governor Ed Rendell continued his slog across the state this week, touting his plan to lower the sales tax while expanding the list of taxable items. This move would generate over \$500 annually, which the governor says is necessary to plug any number of holes on the horizon (pensions, stimulus money loss, pick one, there are more than enough.) Apart from some icy stares and a few catcalls, Rendell is not making much progress. Whistlewhistlewhistle. And to your left, we have a graveyard. Whistlewhistlewhistle.

While the governor was out preaching the word, it was probably best if you were not at the State Capitol on Tuesday of this week. It was a veritable mass of humanity, as competing rallies and press conferences packed every available inch of space. Death penalty opponents, tavern owners, opponents and supporters of same-sex marriage, disability rights advocates, Al Capone and reportedly a partridge in a pear tree all made an appearance. Free speech is apparently not under assault in Pennsylvania.

A state Senate Committee this week resurrected a proposed constitutional amendment to ban the aforementioned same-sex marriage. In a Commonwealth replete with budget issues, high unemployment, pension problems and a looming transportation funding crisis, we admit to being more than a bit mystified how this particular issue ended up on the agenda. The bill failed to get out of committee, however, which should be a signal to proponents that, after failing four times, maybe it is time to take up bowling or something.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced this week it will undertake a comprehensive \$1.9 million study on the effects of the fracking process used in natural gas drilling. Both the gas industry and the environmental community welcomed the announcement, each essentially saying the EPA would prove their own respective positions to be correct. What we found stunning is that the study will only cost \$1.9 million. When was the last

time any government bureaucracy did a study on anything that was that cheap? Most federal government bureaucrats won't get out of bed for less than \$3 million.

Consol Energy this week announced a deal to buy Dominion Resources for \$3.5 billion dollars, making Consol, heretofore a coal mining giant, an immediate player in the Marcellus Shale treasure hunt. Perhaps Consol decided it might be easier to drill a hole in the ground rather than send hundreds of men and tons of equipment under the ground to extract coal.

A Gettysburg developer says he is back in the hunt for the remaining resort slots license, making Gettysburg preservationists violently nauseous. Interestingly, however, despite the noise level created by the No Casino Gettysburg forces, a new poll showed that almost two-thirds of local residents favor the plan. Activists nonetheless said they would fight tooth and nail to prohibit a casino from being built near the historic battlefield. Those activists then went on to eat at a Cracker Barrel that is located about ten feet from where Pickett made the charge.

It was a loud and contentious week on the shores of the mighty Susquehanna this week as Harrisburg Mayor Linda Thompson flexed quite a few muscles, unceremoniously dumping school Superintendent Gerald Kohn. Kohn's transgressions, apparently, included increasing the school district graduation rate by 171% over his tenure (can you believe the nerve of this guy?) Thompson is expected to name a new school chief before the Education Empowerment Act expires in June, which could potentially strip her of oversight. For his part, Kohn responded, lawyer in tow, by saying "Oh yeah? You and what army?" Expect a long, nasty – and expensive – legal battle over this one. After all the legal wrangling is said and done, the \$300,000 buyout clause stipulated in the superintendent's contract may well pale in comparison to the lawyer's bills.

Anytime you think Pennsylvania's budget woes are bad, cast your eyes to the soon-to-be desolate wasteland known as the Garden State. This week, newly-minted Governor Chris Christie announced his first budget, and Oy, Vey! New Jersey's public schools will see an \$800 million reduction this year, and aid to local governments will plummet by \$440 million. And those were the easy cuts. What you are witnessing is the first road test of new conservative state budgeting. It will not take long to see if the car is solid or a Toyota racing out of control.

Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl likes Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter's proposed sugary drink tax so much he has proposed one for the Steel City. Pittsburghers reacted about as positively as Philly denizens. The tax, says Mayor Luke, could generate \$25 million annually for the cash-strapped city. Over on the city's North Side, a spokesman for H.J. Heinz said "Stay away from the pickles and ketchup, pal."

And speaking of Philly's sugary drink tax plan, it seems that some members of council have an even better idea of how to generate \$107 million annually. That would be to jack up the city property tax by 10-12%. There probably aren't enough expletives to properly explain the reaction of the typical south Philly homeowner today.

Back to the west, Pittsburgh is also launching an all-out bid to land The Google as a tenant, as the Internet giant looks for test markets for a new product that will allow people to surf the Internet at roughly four times the speed of light. Which means your home page will open 3 hours before you wake up and surf itself.

Barely 3 months into official competition, 27% of PPL customers have now officially switched electricity suppliers, a number that stunned even the PUC. This news has not slowed down the folks who keep saying that competition has utterly failed. Why bother looking at facts when you can run around with giant props, holding press conferences

and screaming about something you know nothing about? These are some of the same folks who said that rural electrification was just a fad.

Highmark, Inc this week announced it was suing the Pennsylvania Insurance Department for getting all up in its business. Highmark does not like the idea of Insurance Commissioner Joel Ario asking for all kinds of information on what he feels might be anti-competitive practices by the Blues in PA. Highmark is asking Commonwealth Court to tell Ario to beat feet.

The House is slated next week to take up and pass the state budget – minus that pesky little thing called a revenue plan – a full 100 days before the budget deadline. That is not a misprint, although we cannot be sure if the world will or will not end the next day, so you may wanna hold off on any really large purchases until we are sure. Our gang will be on the Hill and on the Internet, slicing and dicing the plan for you.

That is all for this week. Enjoy the weekend!

### *Around the Capitol*

**SESTAK CHALLENGING PRIMARY PETITIONS** -According to an article in the Pittsburgh Tribune Review, Joe Sestak, a congressman and Senate candidate, is challenging the petition of a political unknown who, like Sestak, is seeking to get his name on May's Democratic primary ballot to challenge five-term incumbent Arlen Specter. Sestak's challenge, filed Tuesday in Pennsylvania's Commonwealth Court and the state election bureau, said Joseph Vodvarka's petition does not contain enough valid voter signatures to qualify and should be set aside.

**MORE STATES CUTTING BENEFITS FOR PENSIONERS, FUTURE WORKERS, PANEL TOLD** -After an expert in state pension plan trends told a Senate panel that more states were moving from guaranteed-benefit pension plans to investment-based plans, two organizations told the Senate Finance Committee Pennsylvania should not follow. Steve Herzenberg of the Keystone Research Center said the Legislature's focus on solving the \$4 billion looming funding gap for government employees and teachers was misplaced. Instead, Herzenberg said, the state's policy focus should be on getting better pensions to the four in 10 Pennsylvania families who have inadequate pensions - less than 75 percent of annual income - or none.

**SESTAK TO SPEAK AT MONDAY'S PENNSYLVANIA PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON** -U.S. Rep. Joe Sestak, D-Delaware, will be the featured speaker for Monday's Pennsylvania Press Club luncheon. He is challenging U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter in the Democratic primary for one of Pennsylvania's two U.S. Senate seats. Sestak will speak at the Hilton Harrisburg & Towers on Monday starting at 12:30 p.m., then answer questions submitted by the audience. The moderator for the event will be Capitolwire's Peter L. DeCoursey. The Pennsylvania Press Club hosts monthly luncheons with prominent newsmakers and statewide candidates. The cost is \$25 per person.

### *Legislative Developments*

- **House Session Schedule**  
March 22, 23, 24

April 19, 20, 21, 26, 27, 28  
May 3, 4, 5, 24, 25, 26  
June 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30

- **The House** stands in recess until Monday, March 22, at 1:00 p.m. or to the call of the Chair.

Joint Legislative Conservation Committee will hold a meeting at 12:00 p.m. on Monday, March 22, 2010

House Appropriations will hold an Off the Floor meeting on Monday, March 22, 2010 in Room 140 Main Capitol. Agenda will be announced.

House Rules will hold an Off the Floor meeting on Monday, March 22, 2010 in Room 140 Main Capitol to consider **HR 642 (Godshall)** Resolution recognizing the hour between 8:30 p.m. & 9:30 p.m. on March 27, 2010, as "Earth Hour" in PA & directing that all nonessential lighting in the State Capitol Building & the Governor's Residence be turned off during that hour; **HB526 (DeLuca)** Amends the Model Act for the Regulation of Credit Life Insurance and Credit Accident and Health Insurance further providing for premiums and refunds.

House Health and Human Services will hold an informational meeting at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, March 23, 2010 in Room G-50 Irvis Office Building on Pulmonary Fibrosis.

House Insurance will hold a meeting at 9:30 a.m. on Tues. March 23, 2010 in Room 302 Irvis Office Building to consider **HB 246 (Mundy)** Amends Medical Care Availability & Reduction of Error (Mcare) Act further providing for declaration of policy, Mcare Fund, medical prof. liability insurance by the joint underwriting assoc., approval of insurers & Dept. of Health functions; **HB 247 (Mundy)** Amends Health Care Facilities Act reenacting & amending provisions relating to def., powers & duties of the Dept. of Health & State health services plan; regs.; certificate of need & issuance of license & payments; repealing sunset provisions; **HB 2154 (DeLuca)** Amends The Insurance Company Law further providing for immunity from liability; and making related repeals; **HB 1750 (Barbin)** Amends Titles 18 (Crimes & Offenses) & 40 (Insurance) further providing for insurance fraud; consolidating Article XI, further providing for purpose, definitions, Trust Fund, powers & duties of licensees & their employees & making a repeal;

House Local Government will hold a meeting at 9:30 a.m. on Tues. March 23, 2010 in Room 39, East Wing to consider **HB 2345 (Freeman)** Amends the Second Class County Code further providing for vacancy in the office of county commissioner; **HB 2346 (Freeman)** Amends the County Code, further providing for vacancy in the office of county commissioner; **HB 2347 (Freeman)** Amends the Second Class Township Code, repealing provisions relating to removal of township officer for failure to perform duties; **HB 2348 (Freeman)** Amends the Borough Code, repealing provisions relating to right of council to declare seat of member vacant for failure to attend meetings; **HB 2349 (Freeman)** Amends the First Class Township Code, repealing provisions relating to failure of township officer to perform duties; **HB 2351 (Freeman)** Amends an act providing that incorporated town councils have the right to declare vacant seats of councilmen or presidents for failure to qualify & attend meetings or vote upon questions before council; & repealing provisions; **SB 569 (Pileggi)** Act providing for an extension of approvals granted by a government agency during the period beginning after December 31, 2008, and ending before July 2, 2013.

House Urban Affairs will hold a meeting at 9:30 a.m. on Tues. March 23, 2010 in Room 205 Ryan Office Building to consider **HB 1201 (Harper)** Amends the Mobile Home Park Rights Act, adding definitions; and providing for

written disclosures prior to sale or rental of mobile home lots; **HB 1587 (Wagner)** Amends The Landlord and Tenant Act adding a prohibition relating to adding rent rebates; **HB 2212 (Taylor, R.)** Amends Mobile Home Park Rights Act further providing for short title, for definitions and for disclosure of fees; and making editorial changes; **HB 2302 (Thomas)** Amends the Assessors Certification Act further providing for non-applicability.

House Game and Fisheries will hold a meeting at 10:00 a.m. on Tues, March 23, 2010 in Room 205 Ryan Office Building **HB 2233 (Staback)** Amends Title 30 (Fish), in preliminary provisions, further providing for definitions; in PFBC, further providing for deputy waterways conservation officers; in fishing licenses, further providing for possession & display of licenses; **HB 2267 (Miller)** Amends Title 34 (Game), in protection of property and persons, further providing for target shooting debris; **HB 2316 (Staback)** Amends Titles 18 (Crimes & Offenses), 30 (Fish) & 34 (Game), in assault, further providing for the offense of aggravated assault; and, in enforcement, further providing for interference with officers of the PA Game Commission & of the PFBC.

House Appropriations will hold an Off the Floor meeting on Tues. March 23, 2010 in 140 Main Capitol. Agenda will be announced.

House Aging and Older Adult Services will hold an informational meeting on Wed. March 24, 2010 in Room 205 Ryan Office Building for an informational budget meeting to solicit input from administration officials on aging-related aspects of the Governor's proposed 2010-11 state budget.

House Education will hold a meeting at 9:00 a.m. on Wed. March 24, 2010 in Room G-50 Irvis Office Building to consider **HB 467 (Boyle)** Act establishing a Statewide academic scholarship program to be known as the Reliable Educational Assistance for College Hopefuls Scholarship; & providing for the powers & duties of the PA Higher Education Assistance Agency; **HB 483 (Longiotti)** Amends the Public School Code further providing for funding for charter schools; **HB 2320 (Pallone)** Amends the Public School Code further providing for cyber charter school requirements and prohibitions, for cyber charter school enrollment and notification and for applicability; **HB 2328 (Tallman)** Amends the Public School Code further providing clarification regarding charter school student transportation requirements for public schools; **HR 674 (Roebuck)** Resolution directing LBFC to study & to issue a report on the status & success of states' efforts to implement School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support in public schools & efforts to implement School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support in PA.

House State Government will hold a meeting at 9:00 a.m. on Wed. March 24, 2010 in Room 60 East Wing an informational meeting on the United States Supreme Court's recent ruling in Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission to determine the impact the ruling has on current state law and future efforts to reform PA campaign finance law

House Republican Policy Committee will hold a public hearing at 9:00 a.m. on Wed. March. 24, 2010 in Room 418 Main Capitol for a joint public hearing with the Senate Republican Policy Committee focusing on the State Employees Retirement Commission.

House Professional Licensure will hold a meeting at 9:30 a.m. on Wed. March 24, 2010 in Room 39 East Wing to consider:

- Reg. 16A-4929
- Reg. 16A-5723
- Reg. 16A-6315

House Environmental Resources and Energy will hold a meeting at 10:00 a.m. on Wed. March 24, 2010 in Room 39, East Wing to consider **HB 1341 (George)** Act authorizing municipalities and the Department of Environmental Protection to conduct sewage sludge testing on certain lands; and providing for reports to the General Assembly; **HB 2109 (Hornaman)** Amends Titles 53 (Municipalities) & 68 (Real & Personal Property) providing for a temporary exemption for alternative energy systems; **HB 2235 (Vitali)** Act providing for a moratorium on leasing State forest lands for the purposes of natural gas exploration, drilling or production; imposing duties on the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; and providing for report contents.

Joint Legislative Budget and Finance Committee meeting will be held at 10:00 a.m. on Wed. March 24, 2010 in Hearing Room 3, North Office Building to release reports on a review of the Commonwealth's Growing Greener II initiative; the feasibility of establishing a statewide blighted property registry; and the impact of slots gaming on the PA State Lottery.

House Appropriations will hold an Off the Floor meeting on Wed. March 24, 2010 in Room 140 Main Capitol the agenda will be announced.

Joint Legislative Conservation Committee will hold a meeting at 10:00 a.m. on Wed. March 24, 2010 in Celebration Hall, 2280 Commercial Blvd., State College for a Forestry Task Force Meeting.

House Republican Policy Committee will hold a public hearing at 1:00 p.m. on Thurs. March 25, 2010 in TEK Park, 9999 Hamilton Boulevard, 1st Floor Multipurpose Room, Breinigsville Joint public hearing with the Senate Republican Policy Committee focusing on the Public School Employees Retirement System

House Commerce will hold a public hearing at 1:30 p.m. on Thurs. March 25, 2010 in Lincoln Park Performing Arts Center, 1200 Midland Avenue, Midland for a public hearing on economic development and job creation

House Commerce will hold a public hearing at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, March 26, 2010 in Old Economy Village, 270 Sixteenth Street, Ambridge (Note 2x time change) for a public hearing on the Main Street Program.

- **Senate Session Schedule**

March	22, 23, 24 (Budget Hearings: 1, 2, 3, 4)
April	12, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21
May	3, 4, 5, 24, 25, 26
June	7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 28, 29, 30

- **The Senate** stands in recess until Monday, March 22, at 1:00 p.m. or to the call of the Chair.

Senate Government Management and Cost Study Commission will hold a meeting at 10:30 a.m. on Monday, March 22, 2010 in Hearing Room 1, North Office Building to hear testimony of cost saving ideas for the Commonwealth.

Senate Appropriations will hold an Off the Floor meeting on Monday, March 22, 2010 in Rules Committee Conference Room to consider **SB 5 (Erikson)** Act establishing the Community-Based Health Care (CHC) Program

in the Department of Health; providing for hospital health clinics and for a tax credit; and making an appropriation; **SB 1059 (Robbins)** Amends the First Class Township Code further providing for township manager; **SB 1060 (Robbins)** Amends the Second Class Township Code further providing for township manager; **SB 1061 (Robbins)** Amends an act authorizing council of any incorporated town to create office of town manager, & prescribe powers & duties, further providing for the office of town manager & for powers & duties of a town manager; **SB 1062 (Robbins)** Amends the Borough Code further providing for the office of borough manager and for powers and duties of a borough manager; **SB 1063 (Robbins)** Amends the Third Class City Code providing for the office and powers and duties of a city administrator or manager; **HB 67 (Markosek)** Amends Title 75 (Vehicles) defining "interactive wireless communications device"; for junior driver's license, learner's permits & suspension of operation privilege; prohibiting interactive wireless communications devices.

Senate Transportation will hold a meeting at 10:00 a.m. on Tues. March 22, 2010 in Hearing Room 1, North Office Building to consider **SB 771 (Rafferty)** Amends Title 75 (Vehicles), in driving after imbibing alcohol or utilizing drugs, providing for limitations on discovery; **SB 1072 (Robbins)** Act designating U.S. Route 62 in Mercer County as the Mercer County Veterans Highway; **SB 1144 (Kasunic)** Act designating the bridge in the Borough of Somerset over Barclay Run as the Trooper Stephen R. Gyrke Memorial Bridge; **SB 1157 (Piccola)** Act designating State Route 283, from the PA Turnpike Interchange in Lower Swatara Township, Dauphin County, to State Route 30 in Manheim Township, Lancaster County, as the 283rd Field Artillery Battalion Highway; **SB 1180 (Mellow)** Act designating the Donora-Webster Bridge in Donora, Washington County, as the Lieutenant Governor Ernest P. Kline Memorial Bridge; **HB 117 (Harper)** Act authorizing the Department of Transportation to sell land under certain conditions; and making a related repeal; **HB 2003 (Murt)** Act designating the bridge in the Borough of Hatboro (now designated as Bridge Management I.D. No. 46/0263/0050/0057) over Pennypack Creek as the PFC Joseph J. Lannon, Jr., USMC Memorial Bridge; **HB 2070 (Markosek)** Amends Titles 42 (Judiciary) & 75 (Vehicles) further providing for Commonwealth portion of fines, etc. & for municipal corporation portion of fines, etc.; defining "interactive wireless communication device"; prohibiting use of device; **SR 146 (Musto)** Resolution directing the Legislative Budget & Finance Cmte to conduct a study of the feasibility of providing passenger rail service btw. Wilkes-Barre & Scranton in conjunction with proposed Scranton to New York City rail service.

Senate Banking and Insurance will hold a public hearing at 9:00 a.m. on Wed. March 24, 2010 in Hearing Room 1, North Office Building on **SB 204 (Pippy)** Amends the Unfair Insurance Practices Act further providing for unfair acts.

Senate Communications and Technology will hold a public hearing at 9:00 a.m. on Wed. March 24, 2010 in Room 8E-B East Wing a Joint public hearing with the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee on the "State's 9-1-1 Emergency Response System and its Funding"

Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness will hold a public hearing at 9:00 a.m. in Room 8E-B East Wing for a joint public hearing with the Senate Communications and Technology Committee on the "State's 9-1-1 Emergency Response System and its Funding"

Senate Urban Affairs and Housing will hold a meeting at 10:00 a.m. on Wed. March 24, 2010 in Rules Committee Conference Room to consider **SB 1245 (Kitchen)** Amends Title 53 (Municipalities), in optional affordable housing funding, further providing for affordable housing programs fee in cities of first class; **HB 422 (Freeman)** Amends the Housing Authorities Law, further providing for powers of authority.

Senate Republican Policy Committee will hold a public hearing 1:00 p.m. on Thurs. March 25, 2010 in TEK Park, 9999 Hamilton Boulevard, 1st Floor Multipurpose Room, Breinigsville Joint public hearing with the Senate Republican Policy Committee focusing on the Public School Employees Retirement System.

### *Other Articles*

#### **[Pa. Turnpike inspector says he's saved \\$1 million](#)**

03-19-2010 By Paul Nussbaum Inquirer Staff Writer The Pennsylvania Turnpike's new inspector general, hired to root out corruption and waste at an agency long regarded as a patronage haven, has forced the termination of 32 turnpike workers during the last year. That's nearly 2 percent of the 2,000-person workforce.... - [INQUIRER](#)

#### **[Local guest writer: I-80 motorists don't have exclusive right to equity argument](#)**

03-19-2010 Over the past few years, as the federal government has evaluated Pennsylvania's application to convert Interstate 80 into a toll road, opponents, generally from here in Pennsylvania's northern tier, have consistently decried I-80 tolling as unfair. But I take exception to such a... - [WB CIT. VOICE](#)

#### **[5 questions about the health-care legislation](#)**

03-19-2010 The House will probably vote Sunday on the health-care reform bill approved by the Senate in December, plus a separate package of changes negotiated by the two chambers that is designed to make the bill more palatable to House Democrats. The measure would cover more than 32 million uninsured... - [WASH. POST](#)

#### **[House leaders announce \\$940 billion health-care compromise bill](#)**

03-19-2010 By Lori Montgomery and Paul Kane Washington Post Staff Writer Friday, March 19, 2010; A01 Pushing toward a Sunday vote that could transform the nation's health-insurance system, House leaders announced a \$940 billion compromise Thursday that would extend coverage to the vast majority of Americans, cut... - [WASH. POST](#)

#### **[Rep. J. Evans: Statewide Vehicle Laws Provide Consistency for PA Drivers](#)**

03-18-2010 (Press Release)

#### **[Dept. of State: Deadline to Register to Vote in PA's May Primary is April 19](#)**

03-18-2010 (Press Release)

#### **[Ravenstahl proposes tax on sugary drinks](#)**

03-17-2010 By Joe Smydo, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette If Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl has his way, sales of sugary drinks one day might be refreshing the city treasury. Mr. Ravenstahl on Tuesday said he's interested in emulating Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter's plan to impose a 2 cents-per-ounce tax on the sale... - [POST-GAZ.](#)

#### **[Pepsi pulling sugary drinks from worldwide school menus](#)**

03-17-2010 NEW YORK -- PepsiCo plans to remove sugary drinks from schools worldwide, following the success of programs in the United States aimed at cutting down on childhood obesity... - [AP](#)

**Today's Top 10: Ways to go green**

03-16-2010

By Mary Ann Fiebert, Community Journalist Here are the Top 10 ways to go green, as in the environment, not St. Patty's Day: 1. Start with the thumb. 2. Grow your own herbs in the sunny kitchen window. Nothing pops the taste of a meal like fresh herbs. 3. Start your outdoor garden now with seeds. Nothing like fresh home grown... - [DELCO TIMES](#)

**Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell promotes plan to amend state sales tax**

03-15-2010

Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell has been traveling around the state, stumping for his plan to lower the state sales tax from 6 percent to 4 percent but expand what is taxed. Rendell has tried, without much success, to make headway in an uphill battle to garner support from lawmakers — none of... - [PATRIOT](#)

**Spice shelf draws feds' scrutiny over food contaminants**

03-14-2010

WASHINGTON -- The Food and Drug Administration is re-examining the safety of a culinary staple found in every restaurant, food manufacturing plant and home kitchen pantry: spices. In the middle of a nationwide outbreak of salmonella illness linked to black and red pepper -- and after 16 separate U.S. recalls since 2001 of... - [POST-GAZ.](#)

**Anticipation building for I-80 toll decision**

03-14-2010

HARRISBURG - The plan to levy tolls on Interstate 80 to generate hundreds of millions of dollars of revenue for road and bridge projects in Pennsylvania won't go forward unless Washington gives it a green light. The Federal Highway Administration must decide whether to accept or reject... - [WB CIT. VOICE](#)