



The Bulletin

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Pennsylvania Leadership Conference, Polling Numbers Point to Conservative Resurgence

Perhaps the loudest applause at the recent Pennsylvania Leadership Conference was for Fred Anton's explanation of why the two-day event was not a meeting of the Republican Party but of conservatives. "Freedom and limited government are our principles. Those aren't the objectives of the Republican Party. The focus of the party is always the next election. Their principles become marginalized," Anton said. The standing ovation from the over 800 in attendance was a demonstration of a conviction the Republican Party can no longer afford to ignore.

"Traditionally, conservatives always felt a little disrespected in the Republican Party," said PMA Executive Director David N. Taylor. "If this conference is any indication, that's certainly not going to be the case moving forward."

Other signs the GOP should note:

- Repeated standing ovations for conference speakers warning that we are losing our economic freedom to European style cradle-to-grave polices.
- Republican Presidential Candidate Newt Gingrich: "I have nothing against the Chevy Volt. I just don't want to be told I have to buy one."
- Pennsylvania Senator Pat Toomey giving us a primer on capitalism: "Capitalism is not only a sound economic system but it's a moral one as well. It encourages us to add value to other people's lives."
- President of Americans for Tax Reform, Grover Norquist: "We may not agree on everything but we do agree we want to be left alone."

The sentiment at the conference is supported by numbers in the field.

Long-time Pennsylvania political pollster Jim Lee says his polling shows a powerful influence of the conservative movement on voters. "Fifty percent of the Republicans in the races we're polling are calling themselves very conservative," Lee said. "Even in some Democratic areas fifty percent of the voters are identifying themselves with the Tea Party."

Lee says he expects the conservative resurgence to play out in the April 24 primary. His polling has Rick Santorum up by 17 points. "I know some pollsters have the race closer, but we are not seeing that at all," he said. "Rick is not just getting to the minds of those who want less government, but he's appealing to the hearts of a lot of blue-collar people who want to work and be left alone. The numbers are showing it really is about economic freedom."

Wage Increases in PA Shale Counties Lead the Nation

At the Pennsylvania Leadership Conference, Senator Pat Toomey correctly pointed out that conservatives sometimes lose the debate over whether Marcellus Shale drilling is good for Pennsylvania by focusing exclusively on the numbers. But focusing on the following wage statistics in Marcellus Shale counties is hard to resist.

Between 2008-2010, Bradford and Washington counties not only led Pennsylvania in the increase in the average annual wage, but were in the top 100 in the nation. In Bradford County, the average wage increased 5.7 percent to \$36,674 (33rd in the nation). In Washington County, wages 4.42 percent to \$42,491 (94th in the nation). G. Scott Thompson, a reporter with American Business Journals, said he extracted the numbers from statistics compiled by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. The results were recently published in the Pittsburgh Business Times.

Other PA counties showed wage increases as well:

- Butler saw a 4.17 percent increase to \$40,711 to rank No.108 in the nation
- Fayette County saw a 3.51 percent increase to \$32,675 to rank No. 201
- Westmoreland County saw a 2.93 percent increase to \$37,315 to rank No. 330
- Allegheny County's average wage per job rose 2.64 percent to \$36,355 to rank No. 417
- Beaver County's average wage per job increased 1.98 percent to \$37,716 to rank No. 619.

Federal Health Care Mandate Has Few Friends in Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Senate this week approved a resolution that amends the state Constitution to exempt Pennsylvanians from the federal health care law that requires all Americans to carry insurance.

The resolution is another sign that from the beginning, Pennsylvania officials, business leaders and voters have been at the forefront in opposing the two-year old law. "It's not a coincidence that in 2010 four U.S. House members flipped from Democratic to Republican. All four Democrats voted for the health care law," said PMA's David N. Taylor.

On another front, Governor Tom Corbett, when Attorney General, was quick to join 25 other states to file the federal action to have law declared unconstitutional. The Supreme Court heard oral arguments last week.

The National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) is another key party in the federal action. State director of the Pennsylvania NFIB, Kevin Shivers, said that over 90 percent of his members oppose the law. "We already have instances where our members have been forced to drop health care coverage because they can't afford it under the provisions of the law," Shivers said.

Shivers said if the rest of the law takes effect (most provisions are scheduled to go into effect 2014 and 2015) some of his members plan to pay the penalties incurred for not providing the insurance, or go out of business. "It's not that they don't want to provide insurance. They simply can't afford to pay for it," Shivers said.

The Supreme Court plans to rule on the law in June.



House to Vote on Prevailing Wage Reform Week of April 2...Maybe

House Republicans are now shooting for the week of April 2 to run a bill that will cut taxpayer costs by reducing the number of capital projects that fall under the Prevailing Wage Law.

Caucus sources indicate that a vote or two either way could determine the fate of the bill, HB 1329.

“There is some talk about weakening the bill to get the votes they need,” said Stephanie Larkin, Director of Government Affairs for PMA. “Our position is that we’ve already compromised – pass HB 1329 the way it’s written.”

The legislation raises the floor from \$25,000 to \$185,000 of public money funding construction projects where workers must be paid the prevailing wage – typically the regional union wage.

The bill has the full support of business, local governments and school districts.