**Confidential**

**Lawrence “Larry” O. Maggi**

Member, Washington County Commission

Democratic Candidate For Congress, PA-18

Research To Date: May 15, 2012



Executive Summary

Democrat Larry Maggi currently serves as a Washington County Commissioner. He was first elected in 2004, and is the current Board Chairman. Prior to his tenure on the Commission, Maggi served as the Washington County Sheriff---elected for the first time in 1997. From 1973-1997 Maggi was an Investigator with the Pennsylvania State Police. Maggi attended the California University of Pennsylvania and earned a Bachelors in Education. He received an honorable discharge from the United States Marine Corps in 1971.

Maggi is heavily embedded in the Washington County community. He serves on numerous boards, and is a member of multiple community organizations including the American Legion, Marine Corps League, Washington County Veterans Advisory Board, PA Troopers Association, The United Way and the California University of PA Alumni Board.

Maggi is married to Mary Jeanne Maggi. They reside in Buffalo Township, PA. They have three children; Bronwyn, Michele and Charlene, as well as two grandchildren; Ava and Ryan.

**Potential Vulnerabilities**

After a full review of Maggi’s public record, we feel that Larry Maggi is most vulnerable on the following fronts:

**Budget, Taxes and Government Spending**

* **Maggi supported a tax increase in 2010. In 2009, Maggi alluded that a sales tax increase was something he would “look at.”**
* **Since taking office, Maggi has raised taxes by 72%.**
* **In 2004, Maggi voted for a 22% tax increase.**
* **In 2012, Maggi supported a tax on gas drilling, the area’s fastest growing industry. The fee equals a $50,000 tax per well. Maggi stated that the natural gas industry should pay its fair share.**
* **Since taking office, Maggi has voted for $16,291,871 in new government spending. He has voted to increase spending by 31%.**
* **In 2009, Maggi supported President Obama’s Economic Stimulus Plan. The total cost of the program was $819 billion in new government spending.**
* **In 2005, Maggi did not support $3.5 million in budget cuts.**
* **As a Commissioner, Maggi has slashed funding for public works by 64% or $8 million.**
* **Under Maggi’s tenure on the Commission, Washington County residents are paying record highs for pension costs.**
* **As Sheriff, Maggi spent money changing the color of his deputies’ uniforms saying that the move would “command respect.” Maggi stated that brown wasn’t an “up color.”**
* **Maggi claims to have cut the annual Sheriff’s budget. However, after the funding for the office was re-appropriated to the County Commission, Maggi was criticized for actually increasing spending.**
* **Maggi supported increasing an income tax on prison inmates working outside of the prison.**
* **In 2009, Maggi agreed to begin property tax reassessments. The move would have potentially raised the property taxes on all Washington County residents.**
* **In 2007, Maggi supported a bond issue to cover debt.**

**Ethics**

* **In 2004, Maggi was found guilty of violating state ethics laws by using taxpayer funds to promote his political campaign.**
* **While campaigning for Sheriff, Maggi handed out campaign materials paid for with taxpayer dollars.**
* **Maggi supported a 32% (or nearly $19,000) increase in his Commissioner salary. In 2004, Maggi supported a pay increase. At the time, the county was struggling to balance its books.**
* **In 2012, Maggi supported a salary increase for government employees higher than the 3% previously agreed upon.**
* **As Commissioner, Maggi was reimbursed $30,000 in taxpayer-paid travel. Expenses including receipts for alcohol, donuts, lavish hotels for him and a guest, parking at an exclusive spa, attending an Octoberfest, attending a casino’s grand opening, cell phone use while on vacation, and a trip to Pittsburgh to see the Stanley Cup.**
* **Maggi attended meetings with unions and other political groups on the taxpayer’s dime.**
* **When Maggi took office as Sheriff, he hired his buddies and a former boss to taxpayer-funded positions.**
* **In 2005, Maggi supported a controversial tax deal allowing a large commercial developer to divert $23.6 million in real estate taxes for infrastructure costs. The developer, Steven B. Tanger, was a Maggi campaign donor.**
* **During his tenure as Sheriff, one of Maggi’s Deputies was fired for being a stripper. At the time, taxpayers were paying for the officer’s workers compensation claim.**
* **Although Maggi faced an inexperienced intern in his race for Sheriff in 1997, he spent over $80,000 on his campaign.**
* **In 2004, Maggi’s wife received a Washington County contract.**
* **Maggi was criticized for favoritism after three county employees were laid off.**
* **Hours after taking the majority, Maggi fired a county employee. A colleague called the move politically motivated.**
* **Maggi was criticized for cutting a colleague out of Commissioner meetings and hosting closed door sessions, potentially violating Pennsylvania’s Sunshine Law.**
* **While campaigning for Congress in 2002, Maggi dodged debates.**
* **Maggi supported legislation limiting the time a citizen could speak before the Commission.**

**Washington County Negatives: Sheriff & Commissioner**

* **Maggi served as the prison board chairman while an inmate sued the warden, DA, two corrections officers and the county for being harassed, beaten and denied basic needs.**
* **While Maggi served as the prison board chairman, employees complained of abuses, security concerns and understaffing. Maggi admitted to having a limited knowledge of the situation.**
* **As Sheriff, Maggi had over forty union grievances filed against him.**
* **As Sheriff, Maggi investigated, but never charged, a local deadbeat who later stood accused of killing two people.**
* **Maggi knowingly accepted campaign cash from a man later convicted of running an illegal gambling ring. Maggi admitted he knew the man was corrupt, and even joked about the man’s guilt to the press.**
* **Maggi admitted to not closing a murder case. He never arrested a person who hired two men to kill Robert Dickinson in 1985. Maggi stated that a guilty person is “still out there”.**
* **Under Maggi’s tenure as Sheriff, an officer stole money from a citizen during a routine metal detector check.**
* **In 1999, under Maggi’s leadership, taxpayers paid nearly $7,000 for the Sheriff’s department to protect the Ku Klux Klan.**

**Personal Ambition / Professional Politician**

* **Maggi admitted to always having his eye on Congress.**
* **Maggi considered running for Commissioner in 1998.**
* **Maggi passed petitions for State Senator Stout’s seat upon his retirement in 2010.**
* **Maggi ran for Congress in 2002.**

**Working Families**

* **Under Maggi’s leadership, Washington County failed to re-apply for a HUD loan, resulting in dozens of individuals and families being forced from their homes.**

**Safety and Health**

* **A local Mayor criticized Maggi for not doing enough to curb the drug culture in Washington County.**
* **In 2009, Maggi supported allowing the Retirement Board to invest its pension fund in tobacco stocks.**

**Foreign Policy**

* **While running for Congress in 2002, Maggi supported the War in Iraq.**
* **While campaigning for Congress in 2002, Maggi supported waterboarding and other controversial Bush-Cheney era Homeland Security measures.**

**Gaming**

* **Maggi is pro-gaming and favored slots outside of casinos and in bars and restaurants.**

**Property Records/Tax Lien**

* **Please Note: During our candidate audit, Maggi admitted to having a lien placed in his name for property taxes on a property he owned in the 1970s. The lien was the result of documents being misfiled. Mr. Maggi has a letter lifting the lien. (1970s-1980s tax lien data has been requested)**

**Strengths and Platform Issues**

**Preface**

For someone who has been in the public eye for over 25 years, Larry Maggi has enjoyed the luxury of being in positions that do not mandate he solicit his political opinion. Even in his role as a Commissioner, he mainly deals with monetary, budget and contract issues. After reviewing his public record, we have found few examples of where he has offered a platform stance on a “congressional issue”---even as a candidate in 2002.

Where he has expressed an opinion, we have documented below.

**Strengths:** Besides Larry Maggi’s stellar career as a Marine, State Police Officer, Sheriff and Commissioner, we feel that the Maggi campaign team should highlight the following issue areas, which we feel are his greatest strengths:

**Jobs and Economy**

* **Under Maggi’s leadership, Washington County has the third-highest job growth of any county in the US over the last five years.**
* **Under Maggi’s leadership, residents in Washington County have enjoyed a 9% increase in wages.**

**Budget, Taxes and Government Spending**

* **As Commissioner, Maggi and his colleagues have stayed the course on taxes, only voting to increase the tax rate twice during his tenure.**
* **As Commissioner, Maggi and his colleagues have stayed the course on spending, only voting for double digit spending increases (as a percent) one time, and voting to cut total spending three times.**
* **As Sheriff, Maggi added new programs to the Department without adding costs to the county budget.**
* **In 2012, Maggi supported a state study creating across-the-board standards for property valuation, as well as a moratorium on court-ordered property reassessments---a move that potentially eases the tax burden on Washington County residents.**
* **In 2004, Maggi began a self-audit of Washington County spending.**
* **In 2008, Maggi supported government consolidation.**
* **Maggi supported using casino revenue for property tax relief.**
* **As Sheriff, Maggi ended the practice of budget overruns, saving the county tens of thousands of dollars a year.**
* **As Commissioner, Maggi has increased funding for firefighters, police officers and first responders by 50%, or about $5.5 million.**
* **As Commissioner, Maggi has increased conservation and development by nearly 450% or about $1.46 million.**

**Changing The Culture Of The Washington County Sheriff’s Office**

* **As Sheriff, Maggi ended the appointment of Deputies, a practice some labeled as political, and giving someone a “get out of jail free card. “**
* **As Sheriff, Maggi’s office was under budget every year in office, even though he increased spending for training, bulletproof vests and other programs.**

**Social Issues**

* **Maggi is pro life.**
* **Maggi favors 2nd Amendment Rights.**

**Government Bailout**

* **Maggi opposed a federal loan bailout to 84 Lumber. The loan could have been used to help a subsidiary of 84 Lumber build a casino.**

**Social Security and Medicare**

* **While running for Congress in 2002, Maggi proclaimed he’d stay the course on Social Security and Medicare and oppose tax cuts for the rich.**

**Environment**

* **Maggi opposed a controversial power line through southwest PA.**

Biographical Data

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| --- | --- |
| Name | Lawrence “Larry” Owen Maggi |
| Birthdate | 8/24/1950 |
| Professional Experience | Pennsylvania State Police, 1973-1997 |
| Political Experience | Washington County Commissioner, 2004-PresentCommittee: * Community Action Southwest
* County Health Partners
* County Commissioners Assoc. of PA
* Governor’s Advisory Board on Probation and Parole
* Washington County Conservation District
* Washington County Chamber of Commerce
* Pittsburgh Regional Alliance
* California University Council of Trustees

Washington County Sheriff, 1997-2003 |
| College | California University of PA, BA - Education |
| Military | United State Marine Corp – Honorable Discharge, 1971 |
| Community Involvement | Member, Claysville American LegionMember, Marine Corps LeagueMember, American Legion RidersMember, Washington County Veterans Advisory BoardMember, Washington County United WayMember, California University of PA Alumni BoardMember, PA State Troopers Assoc.Member, State Police Fraternal Order of PoliceMember, PA Sheriff’s Assoc.  |
| Family | Wife, Mary JeanneChildren: Bronwyn, Michele, Charlene, PaulGrandchildren: Ava, Ryan |

Potential Vulnerabilities

**Budget, Taxes and Government Spending**

**Highlights**

* **Maggi supported a tax increase in 2010. In 2009, Maggi alluded that a sales tax increase was something he would “look at”.**
* **Since taking office, Maggi has raised taxes by 72%.**
* **In 2004, Maggi voted for a 22% tax increase.**
* **In 2012, Maggi supported a tax on gas drilling, the area’s fasted growing industry. The fee is a $50,000 tax per well. Maggi stated that the natural gas industry should pay their fair share.**
* **Since taking office, Maggi has voted for $16,291,871 in new government spending. He has voted to increase spending by 31%.**
* **In 2009, Maggi supported President Obama’s Economic Stimulus Plan. The total cost of the program was $819 billion in new government spending.**
* **In 2005, Maggi did not support $3.5 million in budget cuts.**
* **Maggi slashed funding for public works by 64% or $8 million.**
* **Under Maggi’s leadership on the Commission, Washington County residents are paying record highs for pension costs.**
* **As Sheriff, Maggi made changed the color of his Deputy’s uniforms to “command respect”. Maggi stated that brown wasn’t an “up color”.**
* **Maggi claims to have cut the annual Sheriff’s budget. However, after the funding for the office was re-appropriated to the County Commission, Maggi was criticized for actually increasing spending.**
* **Maggi supported increasing an income tax on prison inmates working outside of the prison.**
* **In 2009, Maggi agreed to begin property tax reassessments. The move would have potentially raised the property taxes on all Washington County residents.**
* **In 2007, Maggi supported a bond issue to cover debt.**

**Maggi supported a tax increase in 2010.** “Washington County property owners will be seeing an increase in their county tax bills for the first time in six years. On Thursday, the Washington County commissioners unanimously adopted a 2010 budget that calls for a 3.5-mill tax increase. The vote raises the rate to 24.9 mills to pay for a $67.4 million spending plan.” (Observer Reporter, 12/18/09)

**Since taking office, Maggi has raised taxes by 72%.** The Washington County tax rate in 2003 was .01592---the county collected $20,536,800 in taxes based off of the county assessment. That figure increased to a rate of .02285 and a levy of $35,303,250 by 2012, a 43.5% increase in the tax rate and a 71.90% in the tax levy. (Washington Clerk Records)

**In 2004, Maggi voted for a 22% tax increase.** “The inevitable happened Thursday: Washington County commissioners voted to raise taxes. As anticipated, votes cast by Commissioners Bracken Burns and Larry Maggi made way for the passage of the county's 2004 budget, which includes a $57.7 million spending plan. The new tax rate is 21.4 mills. The budget, which called for a 3.9-mill increase, needed to be approved Thursday or the county would have been unable to meet the first payroll of the New Year.” “But Mr. Neville, 47, a former two-term Peters councilman, takes issue with the commissioners for a 22 percent county property tax increase in 2004…” (Observer Reporter, 1/16/04, Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 10/21/07)

* **In 2009, Maggi alluded that a sales tax increase was something he would “look at”. “**To help Pennsylvania's counties ride through the economic recession, Gov. Ed Rendell yesterday proposed allowing counties except Allegheny and Philadelphia to impose an additional sales tax of up to 1 percent as a means of generating revenue…At the moment, the state sales tax is 6 percent in most counties, except Allegheny and Philadelphia, which have a 7 percent sales tax….. Washington County Commissioner Lawrence Maggi aired similar sentiments, saying, "it's something that we would look at, but I'm always wary of raising new taxes."…The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, Mr. Maggi added, discussed the proposal with Mr. Rendell in recent months, but those discussions were conditioned on a sales tax increase offset by a property tax reduction.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 2/5/09)

**In 2012, Maggi supported a tax on gas drilling, the area’s fasted growing industry.** “Still, the good news about the local energy sector won't prevent commissioners from supporting a proposed ordinance to establish an impact fee for drilling, each of the three commissioners said. ‘We're looking at enacting an ordinance for the impact fee in Washington County," Commissioner Diana Irey Vaughan said. "I feel it's something Washington County needs to do to be responsible." Mr. Maggi and Commissioner Harlan Shober agreed, saying that although the new law establishing fees and new drilling guidelines may not be ideal, it's all that local counties have to work with. (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 3/1/12)

* **The fee is a $50,000 tax per well.** (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 2/10/12)
* **Maggi stated that the natural gas industry should pay their fair share.** "We are friendly toward (the industry)," he said, "but we still feel that they should pay their fair share." (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 10/6/11)

**Since taking office, Maggi has voted for $16,291,871 in new government spending. He has voted to increase spending by 31%.** Total spending in Washington County the year prior to Maggi’s first term as Commissioner was $52.6 million. The 2012 budget called for spending of $68,891,871—an increased of 31.17%. (Washington County Records).

**Budget Overview: Spending**

* $68,891,871 for 2012 (2012 budget, Observer Reporter, 12/15/11)
* $66.9 million budget for 2011 (2011 budget, Observer Reporter, 12/17/10)
* $67.4 million budget for 2010 (2010 budget, Observer Reporter, 12/18/09)
* $61.2 million general fund spending (2009 budget, Observer Reporter, 12/19/08)
* $58.4 million budget (2008 budget, Observer Reporter, 12/21/07)
* $56.5 million general budget (2007 budget, Observer Reporter, 12/22/06)
* $57.6 million general fund (2006 budget, Observer Reporter, 12/22/05)
* $58.2 million budget (2005 budget, Observer Reporter, 12/17/04)
* $57.7 million spending (2004 budget, Observer Reporter, 1/16/04)
* $52.6 million spending (2003 budget, Clerk Records)

**In 2009, Maggi supported Obama’s Economic Stimulus Plan.** “The Washington County Redevelopment Authority could be eligible for up to $1.15 million from the economic stimulus package Congress approved in January…. The stimulus money appears to be in addition to the $4.25 million from federal taxpayers the agency will be receiving for the Community Development Block Grants around August. Another expected infusion of cash is $850,000 for the HOME renovation program…. Commission Chairman Larry Maggi heard money was coming the county's way. "We're ready," Maggi said. "We have some bridges that are ready, we have some road-paving jobs that are ready, we've got some projects at the airport, parks and stream-cleaning projects. "If some of those other states don't want to use the money, we're going to use it." (Observer Reporter, 3/24/09)

* **The total cost of the program was $819 billion in new government spending.** “The House approved an $819 billion stimulus package on [a near party-line vote yesterday](http://projects.washingtonpost.com/congress/111/house/1/votes/46/), a plan breathtaking in size and scope that President Obama hopes to make the cornerstone of his efforts to resuscitate the staggering economy.” (Washington Post, 1/29/09)

**In 2005, Maggi did not support $3.5 million in budget cuts.** “Washington County property owners will not see a tax increase in 2005 because the $58.2 million budget, adopted by a 2-1 vote Thursday, maintains the rate at 21.4 mills. There was no discussion among the three county commissioners about the budget, which Diana Irey, the lone Republican on the board, voted against. Harry Sabatasse of Burgettstown told commissioners before their vote that he wanted them "to stop the pay increases that every elected official gets at the county automatically. “Irey said after the meeting that she earlier declined to comment because if she did so at that point, "it would have been nothing more than grandstanding. The work involved in the budget was done in trying to get my colleagues to see the cost reductions. "She said she did not want her silence to be interpreted as a lack of work behind the scenes, and produced an eight-page memo proposing $3.7 million in budget cuts for which she said she received no response from the other two commissioners, Larry Maggi or Bracken Burns. (Observer Reporter, 12/17/04)

**Maggi slashed funding for public works by 64% or $8 million.** In 2003, Public Works was allocated in the budget as a total expense of $11,756,263. In 2012, the funding decreased by 64.23% to $4,204,788, $7,551,475 million cut. (Washington County Clerk Records)

**Under Maggi’s leadership on the Commission, Washington County residents are paying record highs for pension costs. “**When Washington County taxpayers had to make a $2.4 million contribution this year to the county employees pension fund, it was a record amount. The amount taxpayers will be required to hand over next year makes $2.4 million seem small. The figure the county commissioners received this month is $3.5 million, Commission Chairman Larry Maggi said Thursday following the county’s quarterly retirement board meeting.” (Observer Reporter, 5/24/10)

**As Sheriff, Maggi made changed the color of his Deputy’s uniforms to “command respect”. Maggi stated that brown wasn’t an “up color”. “**In the past seven months, a lot has changed in the Washington County Sheriff's office. Larry Maggi, who took over as sheriff in January, is setting out to change the image of the office with everything from new programs to a new look for his county deputies. Earlier this month, the standard brown uniforms that sheriff deputies have been sporting for at least the past 25 years were replaced with ''LAPD Blue''-colored ones. Maggi said that studies done on color perception revealed that most people thought of the color brown as dull and uncomfortable. ''Brown was never related to respect or high esteem,'' he said of the studies. ''Certain colors represent authority and respect…..''I'm forming a committee of men who wear the uniforms. It's a morale thing. Studies have been done on colors and, psychologically, brown is not an up color.'' (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 7/19/98, 1/11/98)

**Maggi claims to have cut the annual Sheriff’s budget. However, after the funding for the office was re-appropriated to the County Commission, Maggi was criticized for actually increasing spending.** “(Trooper Robert) Kmett said the office's financial picture isn't as bright as Maggi makes it out to be because workers' compensation claims, previously paid from the sheriff's budget, now come out of the county's general fund. County officials changed the method of funding compensation claims for a variety of offices, including the sheriff's office. If claims were still paid from the sheriff's budget, the commissioners would have to give Maggi more money each year, the county budget office said.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 5/9/01)

**Maggi supported increasing an income tax on prison inmates working outside of the prison. “**Beginning Monday, work-release inmates and weekend prisoners at Washington County Jail will be paying more for the privilege of working outside the facility. The Washington County prison board unanimously approved the first change in the work-release fee schedule in 10 years. During that period, programs such as furlough-into-service and community service have been added. It takes more people just to run the program said Warden Joseph Pelzer. Work-release prisoners who have been paying 23 percent of their gross wages to the jail will next week be assessed 27 percent. Those who earn minimum wage will be paying $42 a week, up from $40. Top earners at the jail will be paying $280 instead of the previous $200. The fee a weekend-only prisoner pays when entering the jail will be $50, up from $40. Pelzer said after the meeting that those who employ inmates are required to provide a copy of a pay stub to the jail. It is up to the employee to remit the required amount to the facility. “Is that enough asked Larry Maggi, chairman of the prison board.” (Observer Reporter, 4/16/10)

**In 2009, Maggi agreed to begin property tax reassessments. The move would have potentially raised the property taxes on all Washington County residents.** “It's part of a system that has been called "antiquated," but nonetheless, property reassessments are on their way to Washington County as a result of a recent court order…. The judge's ruling was prompted by a 2008 lawsuit brought against the county by the McGuffey and Washington school districts. The cash-strapped districts sued to force the county to update the value of properties. The county has not conducted a reassessment since 1981….."It's a lot of money for a system that's antiquated," said commissioners' Chairman Larry Maggi. "And the slammer is that 90 percent of people's taxes are going to go up. “Two years ago, Mr. Maggi and his fellow commissioners, Diana Irey Vaughan and J. Bracken Burns, settled the lawsuit by agreeing to begin work on a reassessment…” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 6/9/11)

**In 2007, Maggi supported a bond issue to cover debt. “**Facing several major projects, the Washington County commissioners are preparing for a bond issue that is expected to generate about $6 million. The money will be used to pay for improvements in the 911 call center and public safety department not covered by a $9.3 million grant given last year by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency; repair of the courthouse roof; development of the north side of the county airport and the building of three new hangars; replacement of the Hanlin Station railroad bridge on the Panhandle Trail; and improvements at both Mingo Creek and Cross Creek county parks…. Commission Co-Chairman Larry Maggi said after Wednesday's agenda meeting, "We're in the beginning stages of refinancing. There's still a lot of preliminary work that needs to be done." (Observer Reporter, 5/17/07)

**Ethics**

**Highlights**

* **In 2004, Maggi was found guilty of violating state ethics laws by using taxpayer funds to promote his political campaign.**
* **While campaigning for Sheriff, Maggi handed out campaign material paid for with taxpayer dollars.**
* **Maggi supported a 32% (or nearly $19,000) increase in his Commissioner salary. In 2004, Maggi supported a pay increase. At the time, the county was struggling to balance its books.**
* **In 2012, Maggi supported a salary increase for government employees higher than the 3% previously agreed upon.**
* **As Commissioner, Maggi was reimbursed $30,000 in taxpayer-paid travel. Expenses include receipts for alcohol, donuts, lavish hotels for him and a guest, parking at an exclusive spa, attending an Octoberfest, attending a Casino’s grand opening, cell phone use while on vacation, and a trip to Pittsburgh to see the Stanley Cup.**
* **Maggi attended meetings with unions and other political groups on the taxpayer’s dime.**
* **When Maggi took office as Sheriff, he hired his buddies and a former boss to taxpayer-paid positions.**
* **In 2005, Maggi supported a controversial tax deal allowing a large commercial developer to divert $23.6 million in real estate taxes for infrastructure costs. The developer, Steven B. Tanger, was a Maggi campaign donor.**
* **During his tenure as Sheriff, one of Maggi’s Deputies was fired for being a stripper. Taxpayers were paying for the officer’s workers compensation claim.**
* **Although Maggi faced an inexperienced intern in his race for Sheriff in 1997, he spent over $80,000 on his campaign.**
* **In 2004, Maggi’s wife received a County Contract.**
* **Maggi was criticized for favoritism after three county employees were laid off.**
* **Hours after taking the majority, Maggi fired a county employee. A colleague called the move politically motivated.**
* **Maggi was criticized for cutting a colleague out of Commissioner meetings, and hosting closed door sessions, potentially violating Pennsylvania’s Sunshine Law.**
* **While campaigning for Congress in 2002, Maggi dodged debates.**
* **Maggi supported legislation limited the time a citizen could speak before the Commission.**

**In 2004, Maggi was found guilty of violating state ethics laws by using taxpayer funds to promote his political campaign.** In a sworn statement, Maggi admitted to holding at least two work sessions in the county office that were political and campaign related. Maggi violated Section 1103-A of the Ethics Act when he used county resources to mail campaign letters. He also violated Section 1103-A when he utilized county employees for help with his re-election campaign. (PA State Ethics Committee, File Docket 03-032)

**While campaigning for Sheriff, Maggi handed out campaign material paid for by the taxpayers.** “Last week, the question was raised if Washington County Sheriff Larry Maggi had crossed a line by distributing material bearing his name at county expense. The county purchasing director challenged a purchase order from the sheriff for pencils and badge stickers costing a total of $697. Maggi also distributes coloring books for children that include a large picture of himself. The county paid $1,890 for 5,000 copies of the books. Commissioners John Bevec and Diana Irey last week accused Maggi of asking the county to finance his campaign by paying for the materials. For his part, Maggi said he has been distributing the coloring books since he became sheriff in 1998, with no objection from the commissioners' office.” (Observer Reporter, 11/12/02)

**Maggi supported a 32% (or nearly $19,000) increase in his Commissioner salary.** One year prior to Maggi’s tenure on the Commission, in 2003, a Commissioner’s salary was $58,543. In 2012, Maggi’s salary increased to $77,385. Maggi accepted an $18,842 pay increase. (Washington County Clerk Records)

* **In 2004, Maggi supported a pay increase. “**But Mr. Neville, 47, a former two-term Peters councilman, takes issue with the commissioners for a 22 percent county property tax increase in 2004 and for voting county employees, including themselves, an annual 3 percent pay raise. If elected, he would support neither, Mr. Neville said.The chairman of commissioners -- this year Mr. Burns -- earns $66,890 annually, while the other two earn $65,890 a year.The commissioners couch the increase not as a raise, but a cost-of-living adjustment that is given to all county employees. Mrs. Irey voted against the wage adjustment, and against the tax increase.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 10/21/07)
* **At the time, the county was struggling to balance its books.** The newly elected Washington County commissioners and row officers accepted not only new terms in office Monday but also salary increases. The perpetual annual increases, which were approved Dec. 3, 2002, automatically took effect Monday, at a time when the county is struggling to make ends meet and resolve its 2004 budget with a minimal tax increase. After unanimously approving the 3 percent salary increases more than a year ago, the commissioners were accused of pushing the raises through without properly notifying the public…. The increases now put the commissioner chairman's salary at $61,299, while the other two commissioners will receive $60,299. Although Commissioners Bracken Burns and Larry Maggi are sharing the chairmanship, Burns will receive the additional compensation. (Observer Reporter, 1/8/04)

**In 2012, Maggi supported a salary increase for government employees higher than the 3% previously agreed upon.** One month after the annual salary board reorganization, Washington County officials reshuffled positions and granted raises to some employees beyond the 3 percent already adopted, retroactive to Jan. 1.“There was already money that was in the budget,” said Commission Chairman Larry Maggi after the meeting.” (Observer-Reporter, 2/3/12)

* Many county positions received a salary increase including the court audit attorney, juvenile justice technology specialist, adult probation supervisor, Building and Grounds Director, County Detective. (Observer-Reporter, 2/3/12)

**As Commissioner, Maggi was reimbursed $30,000 in taxpayer-paid travel. Expenses include receipts for alcohol, donuts, lavish hotels for him and a guest, parking at an exclusive spa, attending an Octoberfest, attending a Casino’s grand opening, cell phone use while on vacation, and a trip to Pittsburgh to see the Stanley Cup.**

According to Washington County records, Maggi was reimbursed $28,489.70 in travel expenses. (Washington County Clerk Records)

Expenses Include:

* $105 at the Crown Plaza in Harrisburg on 1/17/05
* $202.30 for a room “for two” at The Inn At Reading on 7/23/04
* $67.72 for travel and $7.00 for valet parking at Nemacolin Woodlands Resort and Spa, 2/23/07 (Receipt states: “For SPC Retreat).
* $32.98 on food and drinks (Coors Light) at the Bourbon Street Station in 1/2005.
* Lunch at the Hotel Hershey in 11/2007, 11/21/06
* $23.94 at the Forebay Lounge in Hershey on 8/10/05
* $42.72 for donuts at Krispy Kreme, Donut Connection and Shop N’Save on 10/25/07, 4/11/05, 9/3/09, 6/3/04
* $10.16 for Cinnabons on 11/21/04 and 1/9/05
* $19.40 at Canonsburg October Fest
* $4.68 for “casino grand opening” on 6/12/08
* $28.45 for “mtg w/ cup personnel” in Pittsburg on 5/30/09 (Same day as Game 1 of the Stanley Cup Finals – Pittsburgh vs Detroit. Game was held in Detroit)
* $236.31 to Verizon for cell phone use while on vacation in North Carolina, 9/20/04 (Washington County Clerk Records)

**Maggi attended meetings with unions and other political groups on the taxpayer’s dime.** According to Washington County records, Maggi met with the following individuals and expensed the travel to the taxpayer’s of Washington County.

* 9/5/05 Meeting with “Labor Union” in Pittsburgh – reimbursed $29.10
* 4/6/08 “Labor Meeting” in Canonsburg – reimbursed $10.10
* 4/23/06 “Labor Meeting” in Canonsburg – reimbursed $8.80
* 2/10/08 Meeting with United Labor in Canonsburg- reimbursed $10.10
* 10/16/09 Meeting with SEIU (location unreadable on voucher) – reimbursed $21.50
* 11/14/07 Meeting with NAACP in Washington – reimbursed $27.65
* 5/2/08 Meeting with NAACP in Washington – reimbursed $4.04
* 5/1/09 Meeting with NAACP in Meadowlands – reimbursed $5.50
* 5/5/06 Meeting with NAACP in Meadowlands – reimbursed $3.56
* 12/12/07 Meeting with Labor Council in Washington – reimbursed $1.94
* 12/13/07 Meeting with Steelworkers Union in Charleroi – reimbursed $24.25
* 4/6/08 Meeting with
* 5/11/08 Meeting with United Labor in Canonsburg – reimbursed $10.10
* 2/4/09 Meeting with (Ironworkers) Local 3 in Pittsburgh – reimbursed $33.00
* 7/9/10 Meeting with UMWA (United Mine Workers Association) event in 10 Mile Creek – reimbursed $25.00
* 10/5/10 “UMWA career ctr open” in Ruff Creek – reimbursed $15.00
* (Washington County Records)

**When Maggi took office as Sheriff, he hired his buddies and a former boss to taxpayer-paid positions.** “After demoting the three lieutenants, Maggi hired as captains two of his longtime colleagues, one a retired state police sergeant and the other a retired Washington police lieutenant. As chief deputy, he hired his old boss at the state police.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 5/9/01)

**In 2005, Maggi supported a controversial tax deal allowing a large commercial developer to divert $23.6 million in real estate taxes for infrastructure costs. “**Four members of Trinity Area school board told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette they supported or were inclined to support a controversial financing proposal for the Victory Centre development in South Strabane, nearly the majority needed to participate in the plan. One board member supporting the proposal, Gerald D. Chambers, said he believed a majority, at least five of nine school directors, had decided to vote for the plan. If so, Tanger Outlet Centers and Bass Pro Shops have won a big part of their fight to divert $23.6 million in real-estate taxes for infrastructure costs. Two of the three Washington County commissioners said they would vote to participate in the plan, while the township's position remained unclear last week. The school board's vote, set for Aug. 4., is particularly important because the school district would forfeit the lion's share, about 79 percent, of the taxes developers want to use for power line relocation, sewer construction and other infrastructure work…. Commissioners J. Bracken Burns and Larry Maggi said they supported the plan, providing the majority needed to implement it at the county level. Commissioner Diana L. Irey said she had lingering questions and cautioned against rushing to a vote.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 7/24/05)

* **The developer, Steven B. Tanger, was a Maggi campaign donor.** The Developer of the Tanger Outlet Center contributed $250 to Maggi’s campaign. (Candidate Audit, documents pending)

**During his tenure as Sheriff, one of Maggi’s Deputies was fired for being a stripper. Taxpayers were paying for the officer’s workers compensation claim. “**A former sheriff's deputy who stripped on stage under the name "Dimitri" has been sentenced to three to 12 months in prison for worker's compensation fraud. Authorities said Andreas Veneris worked as a stripper after reporting that he could not work for the Washington County Sheriff's Department because of a back injury. Veneris, 34, of Finleyville was sentenced Friday by Washington County Judge Paul Pozonsky and also was ordered to repay the county $6,649 in benefits. Attorney General Mike Fisher said Veneris falsely reported that he hurt his back while chasing a suspect in January 1997. He actually hurt himself in motorcycle accident one year earlier, Fisher said. Veneris left work on disability in March 1997 and told county officials that he could not work. However, he was spotted dancing at Gloria's Hindquarter Room in suburban Pittsburgh in 1998. That's when the county sheriff, Larry Maggi, started an investigation and fired Veneris. Veneris told investigators that he also danced at private parties. His pay at Gloria’s was $20 per night plus tips.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 4/28/01)

**Although Maggi faced an inexperienced intern in his race for Sheriff in 1997, he spent over $80,000 on his campaign. “**On Nov. 4, Maggi faces Brian Gillespie, a 23-year-old Chartiers resident who has been an active Republican since he was 18, but is seeking elective office for the first time…. But Gillespie questioned why Maggi has spent $ 80,000 on his primary and general election campaigns, and what that bodes for his ability to manage the department budget. ''The sheriff's office has a history of being over-budget,'' he said. ''How can you justify spending that much money and say you want to make the department fiscally responsible when your campaign isn't?'' (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 10/26/97)

**In 2004, Maggi’s wife received a County Contract. “**Maggi abstained from the vote to give his wife a government contract.As required by the state ethics law, a Washington County commissioner abstained Thursday from voting on re-hiring his wife as a nursing consultant for a county agency. Mary Jeanne Maggi, a registered nurse since 1968, submitted the lowest bid of $29 per hour as a 10-hour-per-week consultant for Aging Services of Washington County.” (Observer Reporter, 12/3/04)

**Maggi was criticized for favoritism after three county employees were laid off. “**A call was issued Thursday to the Washington County commissioners for an investigation into alleged favoritism in the county's tax revenue office. "I'm here as a taxpayer. I feel there are some things that need to be looked into in the tax office," Diane Bova, a county maintenance employee who used to work in the tax office, said at the commissioners' meeting. "I hope you go in and take a look at things." She suggested that procedures for contracts, agreements and assessed values be reviewed. Bova was one of three tax office employees to be bumped from their jobs in March when the commissioners approved the elimination of three positions in the revenue department. The move was part of the county's restructuring of the office, which included the appointment of recorder of deeds Debbie Bardella as director of revenue and director of the county's tax claim bureau. Reorganization of the office was expected to save taxpayers almost $225,000 a year. Bardella replaced veteran director Ken Barna, who resigned in January.” (Observer-Reporter, 10/8/04)

**Hours after taking the majority, Maggi fired a county employee. A colleague called the move politically motivated. “**Within hours of being sworn into office, Washington County Commissioner Diana L. Irey accused her colleagues of following through on a "political vendetta" by erasing former human services director George Krcelich from the county payroll. "It's very likely it was a political vendetta," Irey said shortly after the commissioners' reorganization and salary board meetings. Commissioners Bracken Burns and Larry Maggi denied that the decision to eliminate the post created last month and filled by Krcelich on Friday was politically motivated. Instead, they contend that the elimination of the position by the salary board was necessary, in light of the county's tight financial status, especially since no 2004 budget has been approved.” (Observer Reporter, 1/6/04)

**Maggi was criticized for cutting a colleague out of Commissioner meetings, and hosting closed door sessions, potentially violating Pennsylvania’s Sunshine Law.** Washington County Commissioner Diana L. Irey has made it her business the past eight-plus years to meet with county employees who had questions, comments and concerns about the government. Now, Republican Irey says, a "grapevine" of workers and political observers is helping to keep her informed as she ekes out a role as minority commissioner in the administration of Democrats J. Bracken Burns and Larry Maggi. In what she termed a payback for making Burns odd man out last term, and what others would call politics as usual, Irey said Burns and Maggi had cut her out of the government. She said they'd excluded her from meetings, canceled meetings without informing her, failed to inform her of initiatives and slowed to a trickle the paperwork reaching her office.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 4/11/04)

**While campaigning for Congress in 2002, Maggi dodged debates. “**Washington County Sheriff Larry Maggi said he's too busy and it's too late to debate congressional opponent Jack Machek before the May 21 primary. "I've offered to debate Larry anytime, anywhere," said Machek of North Huntingdon, Westmoreland County. "He has declined to debate." Maggi, Machek and Bob Domske of West Finley Township are seeking the Democratic nomination for the 18th District congressional seat. Machek did not say whether the offer was extended to Domske, who is running a grass-roots campaign….However, Maggi campaign manager Ben Davis said that Machek did not propose a debate until early this week. "We have a full schedule. We're aggressively pursuing voters in every part of the district," Davis said. "If the offer had been made earlier, we would have accepted." He said that Machek's recent offer of a debate is a campaign ploy because Maggi is the "consensus favorite to win the nomination." (Observer Reporter, 5/10/02)

**Maggi supported legislation limiting the time a citizen could speak before the Commission.** “The Washington County commissioners Thursday approved a new public comment policy that limits the time people can speak at the commissioners' meetings to three minutes. The policy was approved by Commissioners Bracken Burns and Larry Maggi. Commissioner Diana L. Irey voted against the policy because she believed the time limit should be longer. She also felt that it should be up to a group of people to determine their spokesman rather than the board chairman and did not agree that the chairman should decide if a person is out of order. She also felt the pre-meeting registration requirement may dissuade people from speaking, especially if they don't sign in and later decide there is an issue they want to address.” (Observer Reporter, 1/17/04)

**Washington County Negatives: Sheriff & Commissioner**

**Highlights**

* **Maggi served as the prison board chairman while an inmate sued the warden, DA, two corrections officers and the county for being harassed, beaten and denied basic needs.**
* **While Maggi served as the prison board chairman, employees complained of abuses, security concerns and understaffing. Maggi admitted to having a limited knowledge of the situation.**
* **As Sheriff, Maggi had over forty union grievances filed against him.**
* **Maggi investigated, but never charged, a local deadbeat who later stood accused of killing two people.**
* **Maggi knowingly accepted campaign cash from a man later convicted of running an illegal gambling ring. Maggi admitted he knew the man was corrupt, and even joked about the man’s guilt to the press.**
* **Maggi admitted to not closing a murder case. He never arrested a person who hired two men to kill Robert Dickinson in 1985. Maggi stated that a guilty person is “still out there”.**
* **Under Maggi’s tenure as Sheriff, an officer stole money from a citizen during a routine metal detector check.**
* **In 1999, under Maggi’s leadership, taxpayers paid nearly $7,000 for the Sheriff’s department to protect the Ku Klux Klan.**

**Maggi served as the prison board chairman while an inmate sued the warden, DA, two corrections officers and the county for being harassed, beaten and denied basic needs.** “…prison board chairman and county Commissioner Larry Maggi said he knows of many times police were called in by the prison board to investigate criminal allegations involving the jail…..” In October 2006, former county jail inmate Alexander Martos, 40, sued the jail, the county, Warden Joseph Pelzer, former District Attorney John Pettit, and two corrections officers. The suit said he was beaten, harassed and deprived of basic needs when he ended a three-year relationship as a jailhouse informant for Mr. Pettit.”(Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 5/25/08, 7/20/08)

**While Maggi served as the prison board chairman, employees complained of abuses, security concerns and understaffing. “**An anonymous letter alleging overcrowding, understaffing and security issues at the Washington County Prison has caught the attention of county officials and the union representing jail guards.The three-page typewritten letter is being circulated among county employees and officials, and was sent to prison board members, including Warden Joseph Pelzer, the county commissioners, District Attorney Steven Toprani, President Judge Debbie O'Dell Seneca, and other county officials last month.The letter raises concerns over conditions and morale at the jail, both of which are deteriorating, according to the author, who remained anonymous "to avoid undesirable treatment" by jail administration and management. William E. Lickert Jr., secretary and treasurer of Teamsters Local Union 205, which represents jail guards, has asked for a meeting with the prison board to discuss issues raised in the letter, which he believes "outlines the general attitude and the evolving problems at the facility that must be addressed."Among the concerns raised in the letter is persistent overcrowding which "risks the safety and security of the staff members and the inmate population," according to the author.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 2/3/08)

* **Maggi admitted to having a limited knowledge of the situation. “**Mr. Maggi, the county's former sheriff and a retired state police homicide investigator, said a meeting with (Teamsters Local Union William) Lickert is being scheduled. He said he never heard about most of the issues raised until the prison board received a copy of the letter.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 2/3/08)

**As Sheriff, Maggi had over forty union grievances filed against him. “**When Maggi took office, a group of deputies objected to some of the changes he made in the office, prompting a spate of union grievances and division of the office, for a time, into two camps. Romano said he gets along with everyone in the office.”…”As Maggi slashed overtime and made numerous changes in the office, she (Paulette Benard) became one of his most outspoken critics and filed more than 40 grievances in about 15 months.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 11/17/02, 4/17/05)**.**

**Maggi investigated, but never charged, a local deadbeat who later stood accused of killing two people.** “Tossed out of bars, questioned in a decade-old missing person case, repeatedly accused of assaulting, intimidating and threatening to kill people, Gerald A. Gregg appears from interviews and court records to have lived life as a frequent bully before being charged as the triggerman in last month's double homicide at Price's Tavern…."He was a pretty volatile person," said Washington County Sheriff Larry Maggi, who, as a state trooper, questioned Gregg about the 1993 disappearance of South Franklin resident David Hart. Hart worked for Gregg and was the last person to see him alive. State troopers are fiercely protective of their privacy, and Maggi said he was stunned when Gregg twice appeared at his Buffalo home, uninvited, to discuss the Hart case. The case remains open. Gregg appears to have been in a downward spiral in the months before the Nov. 3 shooting of Brilla, 50, and Brahler, 40, at Price's Tavern in North Strabane.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 12/14/03)

**Maggi knowingly accepted campaign cash from a man later convicted of running an illegal gambling ring. Maggi admitted he knew the man was corrupt, and even joked about the man’s guilt to the press. “**Gambling charges against restaurateur don't come as much of a shock. After Mickey Flynn attended the swearing-in ceremony for Washington County's elected officials 3 1/2 years ago, one official jokingly wondered whether the courtroom made Flynn nervous. So long-running and widespread were the bookmaking rumors that when state authorities charged Flynn two weeks ago with running a sports-betting operation from the Union Grill, his restaurant and bar a block from the county courthouse, some were surprised only that the stories had caught up with him. "If I said no, would you believe me?" Sheriff Larry Maggi said, smiling, when asked whether he had heard the rumors.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 8/17/03)

* **Flynn was well connected.** "The whole deal was a set-up [expletive] deal," said Flynn, son of late county Commissioner Michael Flynn, brother of Register of Wills Kathleen Flynn Reda and uncle of state police Cpl. Lou Reda. Flynn referred questions to Pittsburgh lawyer Michael Foglia, who said he could not comment until he had reviewed the case. (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 8/17/03)
* **Flynn was a Maggi campaign contributor.** Flynn, who owns two houses in East Washington and a 55-acre tract in Donegal Township, often criticized police and government. But he made a $200 campaign contribution this year to Commissioner J. Bracken Burns and $100 contributions to Maggi, District Attorney John C. Pettit, Coroner S. Timothy Warco and Treasurer Francis King. Maggi, a retired trooper, recalled that Flynn's name surfaced from time to time in gambling investigations. However, he said troopers never had enough evidence to pursue him. (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 8/17/03)

**Maggi admitted to not closing a murder case. He never arrested a person who hired two men to kill Robert Dickinson in 1985. Maggi stated that a guilty person is “still out there”.** "I truly, truly believe the person who wanted this done is still around and still active." -- Washington County Sheriff Larry Maggi**,** the state trooper who investigated the murder of Robert Dickinson on March 11, 1985. Although John Dino Martin of Weirton, W.Va., and George Ely of Steubenville, Ohio, have both pleaded guilty to the murder, it's unknown who paid them to kill Dickinson. Dec. 16.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 12/30/01)

**Under Maggi’s tenure as Sheriff, an officer stole money from a citizen during a routine metal detector check. “**A Washington County sheriff's deputy is accused of taking $50 from a woman's purse as the woman passed through a security checkpoint, the sheriff said. The alleged incident happened in April, but Paulette Benard, 48, was charged on Wednesday with theft by unlawful taking, criminal attempt at theft, and official oppression, county Sheriff Larry Maggi said. Benard has been suspended without pay since the spring. As a woman handed over her purse to Benard and passed through a security station at the Washington County Courthouse, she allegedly saw Benard take cash out of her bag, Maggi said.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 11/8/02)

**In 1999, under Maggi’s leadership, taxpayers paid nearly $7,000 for the Sheriff’s department to protect the Ku Klux Klan. “**Washington County and the city of Washington will bill the Ku Klux Klan $ 6,269.42 for security at a Klan Rally on June 19. Klan members rallied at the county courthouse. Sheriff Larry Maggi, his chief deputy and captain and 26 deputies put in 174 hours of overtime. Their work included checking garbage cans for weapons and explosives. "We had to make sure it was a safe environment," Maggi said. City Manager Joseph Thomas said Friday that the city paid overtime for its police, as well.” (AP, 7/10/99)

**Personal Ambition / Professional Politician**

**Highlights**

* **Maggi admitted to always having his eye on Congress.**
* **Maggi considered running for Commissioner in 1998.**
* **Maggi passed petitions for State Senator Stout’s seat upon his retirement in 2010.**
* **Maggi ran for Congress in 2002.**

**Maggi admitted to always having his eye on Congress.** “In 1997, Maggi won the county sheriff's position, defeating incumbent Sam Secreet. As sheriff, Maggi has balanced the office budget after years of fiscal disarray. However, he pointed out that he never hid his ambitions to serve the public on a greater level, and said he "always had an eye on a congressional seat." "I want to expand. I want to be a policymaker," Maggi said. "During the time as sheriff, I enjoyed working with and for the people. The next logical step is to serve in Congress." (Observer Reporter, 5/16/02)

**Maggi considered running for Commissioner in 1998. “**Washington County Sheriff Larry Maggi also said he briefly considered the idea, and is not ruling out a future run for commissioner. "Anything is possible in the political world, but not right now," he said. "It's something that everyone thinks about. I also might hit the lottery, but the odds are against it. I've heard the rumors, but I like this job." (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 11/29/98)

**Maggi passed petitions for State Senator Stout’s seat upon his retirement in 2010. “**It's been only two weeks since state Sen. J. Barry Stout, D-Bentleyville, unexpectedly announced he would retire at the end of this year, but already the jockeying among Washington County politicians has begun for his 46th District seat….Democrat Mr. Maggi said he is "thinking very seriously" about running and has also begun circulating petitions.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 2/18/10)

**Maggi ran for Congress in 2002. “**Washington County Sheriff Larry Maggi was defeated by Jack Machek, a financial administrator in the Norwin School District from North Huntingdon, Westmoreland County, in the Democratic race in the 18th District for the U.S. House of Representatives. Machek, with 28,218 votes, moves on to face state Sen. Tim Murphy, R-Upper St. Clair, in November. Murphy was unopposed in the primary. Maggi of Buffalo garnered 18,974 votes, and Bob Domske, a farmer and steel worker from West Finley, had 7,743 votes.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 5/26/02)

**Working Families**

**Highlights**

* **Under Maggi’s leadership, Washington County failed to re-apply for a HUD loan, resulting in dozens of individuals and families being forced from their homes.**

**Under Maggi’s leadership, Washington County failed to re-apply for a HUD loan, resulting in dozens of individuals and families being forced from their homes.** “Homeless once before, about 20 clients, some individuals, some families, are being forced out of federally subsidized apartments and may have to fend for themselves because Washington County's Human Services Department forgot to seek renewal of the grant paying their rent and utilities…. The application for a grant renewal -- the county wanted about $1.6 million for three years -- should have been filed last summer with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The county's coordinator for homeless services was on a medical leave at the time, and "the ball was dropped," Commissioner J. Bracken Burns said.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 2/1/04)

**Safety and Health**

**Highlights**

* **A local Mayor criticized Maggi for not doing enough to curb the drug culture in Washington County.**
* **In 2009, Maggi supported allowing the Retirement Board to invest its pension fund in tobacco stocks.**

**A local Mayor criticized Maggi for not doing enough to curb the drug culture in Washington County. “**Sparks flew Thursday between the Washington County commissioners and Charleroi Mayor Frank Paterra, who again urged them to step up efforts in declaring war on the illegal drug trade…. Paterra then asked Maggi why the commissioners wouldn't convene a meeting to form a plan of attack on the drug problem. "Sir, you make $67,000 a year as a commissioner, and you represent 202,000 people. I make $2,100 and represent 4,800. Drugs are all over our county." Commissioner Diana L. Irey said she has twice met with Paterra in her office to discuss funding to combat drug dealing. "Why can't you make a proclamation to declare war on drugs?" Paterra asked.” (Observer Reporter, 5/2/08)

**In 2009, Maggi supported allowing the Retirement Board to invest its pension fund in tobacco stocks. “**Tobacco might be dangerous to your health, but officials in Washington County have decided their pension fund cannot live without it. The county Retirement Board voted 2-1 to do away with a ban imposed in 1997 that prevented its pension fund from investing in tobacco-related stocks. Commissioner Bracken Burns angrily opposed lifting the ban, reading an eight-minute statement on the health ills of tobacco. But Commissioner Larry Maggi and Controller Michael Namie, the other board members, voted this week to reverse the ban. They say the tobacco ban was largely responsible for the fund underperforming by 30 percent. Taxpayers contributed a record $2.4 million to shore up the fund this year.” (Pittsburgh Post Tribune, 8/22/09)

**Foreign Policy**

**Highlights**

* **While running for Congress in 2002, Maggi supported the War in Iraq.**
* **While campaign for Congress in 2002, Maggi supported waterboarding and other Bush-Cheney ear Homeland Security measures.**

**While running for Congress in 2002, Maggi supported the War in Iraq.** “Question: How would you balance conflicting demands for increased defense spending, lower taxes and a balanced budget?” Maggi: “Balancing these priorities requires a dedicated leader with vision and fortitude. As a law enforcement official and former Marine, I support America's war on terrorism.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 5/14/02)

**While campaign for Congress in 2002, Maggi supported waterboarding and other Bush-Cheney Homeland Security measures. “**The sheriff said he supports President Bush's homeland security efforts.” (Observer Reporter, 5/16/02)

* **President George W. Bush approved waterboarding as an interrogation technique.** “After staying largely mum on the political scene since leaving office almost two years ago, former President George W. Bush will reveal his thoughts on the most historic -- and controversial -- parts of his presidency with the release of his memoir Tuesday. In the 481-page book, Bush shares his thoughts on the 9/11 attacks, Hurricane Katrina and what he calls the "worst moment" of his presidency. The 43rd president also takes responsibility for giving the go-ahead for waterboarding terror suspects, which has touched off a new round of criticism of Bush and calls for his prosecution. He says that he decided not to use two more extreme interrogation methods, but did not disclose what those were.” (CNN, 11/9/10)

**Gaming**

**Highlights**

**Maggi is pro-gaming and favored slots outside of casinos and in bars and restaurants.** “Maggi said he was among those who had hoped the slots bill would reach beyond racetracks, resorts and standalone gaming parlors to permit a certain number of machines at bars, restaurants and clubs.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 9/7/04)

Perceived Strengths and Platform Stances

**Jobs and Economy**

**Highlights**

* **Under Maggi’s leadership, Washington County had the third-highest job growth of any county in the US over the last five years.**
* **Under Maggi’s leadership, residents in Washington County have enjoyed a 9% increase in wages.**

**Under Maggi’s leadership, Washington County had the third-highest job growth of any county in the US over the last five years. “**Described as "unequaled in job growth" in southwestern Pennsylvania and as "the epicenter of this region's growth," Washington County has shrugged off the nation's sluggish economy in recent years, mostly due to the surge of the Marcellus Shale. That was the message county commissioners projected last week at a news conference, where they announced that the county had been named third highest in the nation in job growth and saw investments totaling $279 million in public and private development projects during the past five years. “ (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 3/1/12)

**Under Maggi’s leadership, residents in Washington County have enjoyed a 9% increase in wages. “**The local employment data, provided by the U.S. Department of Labor and Labor Statistics, showed a job growth rate of 4.3 percent, Mr. Maggi said, translating into about 750 new workers in the energy sector and another 900 new jobs in the professional services and business industries. ‘Our residents have seen an increase of 8.8 percent in their average weekly wages as well,’ Mr. Maggi said.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 3/1/12)

**Budget, Taxes and Government Spending**

**Highlights**

* **As Commissioner, Maggi and his colleagues have stayed the course on taxes, only voting to increase the tax rate twice during his tenure.**
* **As Commissioner, Maggi and his colleagues have stayed the course on spending, only voting for double digit spending (as a percent once) and voting to cut spending three times.**
* **As Sheriff, Maggi added new programs to the Department without adding cost to the county budget.**
* **In 2012, Maggi supported a state study creating across-the-board standards for property valuation, as well as a moratorium on court-ordered property reassessments---a move that potentially eases the tax burden on Washington County residents.**
* **In 2004, Maggi began a self-audit of Washington County spending.**
* **In 2008, Maggi supported government consolidation.**
* **Maggi supported using casino revenue for property tax relief.**
* **As Sheriff, Maggi ended the practice of budget overruns, saving the county tens of thousands of dollars a year.**
* **Maggi has increased funding for firefighters, police officers and first responders by 50%, or about $5.5 million.**
* **Maggi has increased conservation and development by nearly 450% or about $1.46 million.**

**As Commissioner, Maggi and his colleagues have stayed the course on taxes, only voting to increase the tax rate twice during his tenure.** (Washington County Records, tax increases in 2004 and 2010).

**As Commissioner, Maggi and his colleagues have stayed the course on spending, only voting for double digit spending increases (as a percent) once and voting to cut total spending three times.** Washington County Spending:

2003 to 2004, a 9.7% increase.

2004 to 2005, a 1% increase.

**2005 to 2006, a 1% decrease.**

**2006 to 2007, a 2% decrease.**

2007 to 2008, a 3% increase.

2008 to 2009, a 5% increase.

2009 to 2010, a 10% increase.

**2010 to 2011, a 1% decrease.**

2011 to 2012, a 3% increase.

* $68,891,871 for 2012 (2012 budget, Observer Reporter, 12/15/11)
* $66.9 million budget for 2011 (2011 budget, Observer Reporter, 12/17/10)
* $67.4 million budget for 2010 (2010 budget, Observer Reporter, 12/18/09)
* $61.2 million general fund spending (2009 budget, Observer Reporter, 12/19/08)
* $58.4 million budget (2008 budget, Observer Reporter, 12/21/07)
* $56.5 million general budget (2007 budget, Observer Reporter, 12/22/06)
* $57.6 million general fund (2006 budget, Observer Reporter, 12/22/05)
* $58.2 million budget (2005 budget, Observer Reporter, 12/17/04)
* $57.7 million spending (2004 budget, Observer Reporter, 1/16/04)
* $52.6 million spending (2003 budget, Clerk Records)

**As Sheriff, Maggi added new programs to the Department without adding cost to the county budget. “**Maggi, who said he developed an interest in politics while visiting the courthouse as a state trooper, is credited with professionalizing the sheriff's office and abolishing deficit spending there. While he implemented a handful of new programs, such as a senior citizens police academy and bicycle patrols at Mingo Creek County Park, he did so without adding county tax dollars to his operating budget.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 1/4/04)

**In 2012, Maggi supported a state study creating across-the-board standards for property valuation, as well as a moratorium on court-ordered property reassessments---a move that potentially eases the tax burden on Washington County residents.** “The task force recommended additional education for assessors, disclosure of each county's system of property valuation and development of statewide criteria and procedures for assessment data collection. The task force also proposed developing what members call a self-evaluation tool that would allow counties to determine when reassessment is warranted. While the report recommends ultimately setting a schedule for how often reassessments should be done, it does not say what the standard should be…. The task force report was released just after the House passed a measure, House Bill 2137, that would place a moratorium on court-ordered reassessments…. Lawrence Maggi, chairman of the Washington County Commissioners, said he hoped the task force report, combined with a moratorium, could spare his county from an experience like that under way in Allegheny County.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 4/14/12)

**In 2004, Maggi began a self-audit of Washington County spending. “**Washington County Commissioner Larry Maggi has formed his own task force to do a "bottom up" review of county operations. "When I was campaigning, I said one of the first things I would do is look at county government," Maggi said Wednesday. The six-member task force, which includes the county's budget and human resources directors, will have at least two months to do the review and report back to Maggi. He said that while he wants the task force to concentrate on cutting waste in the county, he is more interested in receiving a truthful report on the state of the county. "We had to raise taxes this year and I believe the people have a right to know how their money is being spent," Maggi said.” (Observer Reporter, 2/19/04)

**In 2008, Maggi supported government consolidation** "We think consolidation is the thing of the future." -- Washington County Commissioner Larry Maggi, on the Nov. 4 referendum vote that merged Donegal and West Alexander…. Mr. Maggi said he's hoping the arrangement proves to be a good example for other municipalities. "We're hoping other communities look at it," he said. "A lot of people think it's going to be a success." (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 12/28/08, 11/20/08)

**Maggi supported using casino revenue for property tax relief. “**Dozens of local government and representatives of non-profit organizations turned out last week to hear how an estimated $12 to $13 million in slots revenue from The Meadows Racetrack and Casino would be distributed this year…. Commissioner Maggi proposed that instead of the controversial local projects, the revenue could be equally distributed among county residents in the form of county tax relief.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 9/28/08)

**As Sheriff, Maggi ended the practice of budget overruns, saving the county tens of thousands of dollars a year. “**Through the administrations of the last two Washington County sheriffs, we were assured that budget overruns that routinely ran into six figures were unavoidable. The problem, we were told, was built-in overtime for deputies who had to serve court papers or escort prisoners at less than convenient hours. When Larry Maggi took office as sheriff in 1998, the overruns abruptly ended, and this year the office is operating at $24,000 under last year.” (Observer Reporter, 5/6/01)

**Maggi has increased funding for firefighters, police officers and first responders by 50%, or about $5.5 million.** In 2003, Public Safety was allocated in the budget as an expense of $11,219,129. In 2012, the funding increased by 48.9% to $16,706,990. (Washington County Clerk Records)

**Maggi has increased conservation and development by nearly 450% or about $1.46 million.** In 2003, funding in the budget for conservation and development is listed as an expense of $333,038. By 2012, that figure has jumped to $1,794,158. An increase of 438.7% (Washington County Records)

**Changing The Culture Of The Washington County Sheriff’s Office**

**Highlights**

* **As Sheriff, Maggi ended the appointment of Deputies. A practice some called political, and giving someone a “get out of jail free card.”**
* **Maggi’s Sheriff office was under budget every year in office, even though he increased spending for training and bulletproof vests.**

**As Sheriff, Maggi ended the appointment of Deputies. A practice some called political, and giving someone a “get out of jail free card.” “**County sheriffs across the country have the common-law power - posse comitatus, literally "the power of the county" - to issue badges and deputize most anyone to help keep the peace. But while posses have become passe, the practice of appointing what are called "special" deputies lives on in Pennsylvania. Such power has landed sheriffs across the country in hot water when it's abused, often for political purposes. The badges are "like a get-out-of-jail-free card," said Professor Risdon Slate, who chairs Florida Southern College's criminology department. Slate said the badges aren't likely to get someone out of serious trouble - but they could help someone avoid a ticket during a traffic stop…. Lawrence Maggi, now a Washington County commissioner, scrapped a special deputy program when he was the county's sheriff in 1997, calling it a form of political patronage.” (AP, 1/10/05)

**Maggi’s Sheriff Office was under budget every year in office, even though he increased spending for training and bulletproof vests. “**The sheriff's office has been under budget every year since I took office. I have implemented changes: computerized the office, new uniforms, equipment, bulletproof vests and hours of training for the deputies. We instituted a bicycle patrol, involved in numerous community programs from children to senior citizens. We will continue efficient and responsible leadership to stay under budget.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 10/30/01)

**Social Issues**

**Highlights**

* **Maggi is pro life.**
* **Maggi favors 2nd Amendment Rights.**

**Maggi is pro life.** “On major social issues, the candidates agree. Murphy, Feinberg and Larry Maggi, a Democrat running unopposed for his party's nomination, all oppose abortion and want to protect the rights of gun owners. “ (Pittsburgh Tribune Review, 4/9/12)

**Maggi favors 2nd Amendment Rights.** “On major social issues, the candidates agree. Murphy, Feinberg and Larry Maggi, a Democrat running unopposed for his party's nomination, all oppose abortion and want to protect the rights of gun owners. “ (Pittsburgh Tribune Review, 4/9/12)

**Government Bailout**

**Highlights**

* **Maggi opposed a federal loan bailout to 84 Lumber. The loan could have been used to help a subsidiary of 84 Lumber build a casino.**

**Maggi opposed a federal loan bailout to 84 Lumber. “**84 Lumber is pressing Washington County officials to sponsor a $5 million loan from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development to help it restructure an onerous loan with a $55 million balance. With the recession in the home building industry, the company has closed 200 stores and slashed about 6,200 jobs in the last couple years. It employs 3,700, including more than 300 at its headquarters in Eighty Four…..Commissioner Larry Maggi voted against the measure, although it passed 2 to 1. "I just have a philosophical problem with government guaranteeing loans for private industry," Mr. Maggi said. "We get $4.7 million a year from the federal government for our community development block grant for the public interest. We are committing that if 84 Lumber defaults on its loan. "We are literally giving them this $5 million to do whatever they want. We are committing public tax dollars that would go to Washington County if this loan defaults. I think we made a bad decision for the future of the county."(Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 9/17/2010, 10/22/10)

* **The loan could have been used to help a subsidiary of 84 Lumber build a casino.** “The Meadows Racetrack & Casino wants Washington County to deny 84 Lumber Co. a $5 million government loan because it could give its owner an unfair advantage in setting up a competing casino. Sean Sullivan, vice president and general manager of the casino in North Strabane told Washington County commissioners at a hearing Thursday that a subsidy to 84 Lumber, owned by President Maggie Magerko, would mean she could channel more of her money toward Nemacolin Woodlands Resort, which she also owns.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 9/17/10)

**Social Security and Medicare**

**Highlights**

* **While running for Congress in 2002, Maggi proclaimed he’d stay the course on Social Security and Medicare and oppose tax cuts for the rich.**

**While running for Congress in 2002, Maggi proclaimed he’d stay the course on Social Security and Medicare and oppose tax cuts for the rich.** “I will also protect Social Security and Medicare from irresponsible looting to finance wasteful spending and tax cuts for the wealthy.” (Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 5/14/02)

**Environment**

**Highlights**

* **Maggi opposed a controversial power line through southwest PA.**

**Maggi opposed a controversial power line through southwest PA. “**The rolling hills, mature trees and alfalfa fields on Bill Pollock's century-old farm camouflage a growing battle pitting landowners against Allegheny Energy Inc. over a proposed $1.3 billion high-voltage power line that would run through three states… Supporters of the project are Allegheny Energy and PJM Interconnection LLC, the regional transmission organization that coordinates the movement of wholesale electricity in all or parts of 13 states, including Pennsylvania. They say the project is designed to bring stability and solve reliability problems regionally, and to carry badly needed, low-cost power produced regionally to the East Coast…. Washington County Commissioner Diana L. Irey, who said she and fellow commissioners Lawrence O. Maggi and J. Bracken Burns Sr. oppose the project.” (Pittsburgh Tribune, 5/20/07)

Public Records

**Courthouse Records (Pending Right To Know Act public records request)**

According to the DCCC’s preliminary research overview, Maggi is listed as a Debtor / Contributor in at lease six cases. Maggi, during our candidate audit, has no recollection of Catherine Cook (listed as debtor) or having owed money to Citizens Against Tax Incremental Filing or Claysville-Donegal Joint Municipal Authority listed below. (Documents have been requested)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Filing No.** | **Debtor** | **Creditor** | **Amount** |
| 8/16/99 | GD-99-13146 | Catherine Cook | Lawrence Maggi | $259.00 |
| 6/28/99 | 99-2677 | Catherine Cook | Lawrence Maggi | $259.00 |
| 5/14/99 | CV-0000194-99 | Catherine Cook | Lawrence Maggi | $188.00 |
| 9/06/05 | 6320-2005 | Lawrence Maggi | Citizens Against Tax Incremental Filing | Not listed |
| 9/16/96 | Not listed | Lawrence Maggi | Claysville-Donegal Joint Municipal Authority | $706.00 |

Cases: During our candidate audit, Maggi stated he has been sued in his capacity as Commissioner and Sheriff. He claims to have never been convicted of a crime. (Civil and Criminal Records pending Right To Know Act request).

**Property Records** (Pending Right To Know Act request)

**Maggi is the property owner of a home at 269 E. Buffalo Church Road in Washington, PA- The property is valued at $106,171.** The property was last assessed at the following levels:

* Market Land Value: $87,12
* Market Improvement Value: $97,459
* Total Market Value: $106,171 (Washington County Records, 1986-2012)

**Tax Lien**

* **During our candidate audit, Maggi admitted to having a lien placed in his name for property taxes he owed on a property he owned in the 1970s. The lien was the result of documents being misfiled. Mr. Maggi has a letter lifting the lien. (1970s-1980s tax lien data has been requested)**

**Other Properties/Addresses Registered In Maggi’s name for Assessments** (records pending Right To Know Act Request)**:**

PO Box 54

Claysville, PA

Median Home Value: $68,200 (Record year: 2000)

RR 7 Box 130

Washington, PA

Median Home Value: $81,900 (Record Year: 1986-1990)

297 E. Buffalo Church Rd

Washington, PA

Median Home Value: $110,000 (Record Year: 1994-1996)

PO Box 130

Washington, PA

Median Home Value: $81,900 (Record Year: 1984-1992)

224 Main St

#377

Claysville, PA

Median Home Value: $68,200 (Record year: 1986-1991)

PO Box 377

Claysville, PA

Median Home Value: $68,200 (Record Year: 1989-1990)

7 Rd Box

Washington, PA

Median Home Value: $50,200 (Record Year: 1988)

PO Box 376

West Alexandria, PA

Median Home Value: $85,500 (1985-1986)

Methodology

**Some public records were subject to the US Freedom of Information Act as well as Pennsylvania’s Right To Know Act and are still outstanding. We have noted them in our Methodology. We will continue to track down all public records issued through FOIA and Right To Know, and as promised, process those records and update our report.**

The following sources were utilized to conduct our report:

**Candidate Audit**

Conducted an interview with Mr. Maggi to go over his professional and personal career.

**Courthouse Documents** (Documents pending Right To Know Act processing)

* + Reviewed county, state and federal courts for civil and criminal cases involving Maggi and his wife Marry Jeanne. Reviewed U.S. Bankruptcy Court and Tax Court records. Conducted a nationwide electronic court search for possible problems in other jurisdictions.

**News Clip Review**

* Reviewed all news articles pertaining to Maggi. Our news review consisted of all major Pennsylvania newspapers and news agencies, District of Columbia news sources covering the election. Our news review included, but was not limited to, the following sources: The Washington Post, The Washington Times, The Pittsburgh Post Gazette, The Washington County Observer Reporter and CNN.

**Financial Information** (Campaign contributor/expense records, property tax payment history, and lien search pending Right To Know Act Request)

**Washington County Commissioner**

* Reviewed actions on all major pieces of legislation by reviewing meeting minutes.
* Reviewed legislative scorecards.
* Reviewed Twitter, Facebook and candidate website.
* Reviewed all Washington County Budgets during Maggi’s tenure as well as his vote on said budgets.
* Reviewed salary and pension history.

**Washington County (Sheriff Record) and State Police (Investigator Record)** (Formal complaints records pending Right To Know Act processing)

* Reviewed salary and pension data.
* Reviewed travel expenses including taxpayer paid travel.

Backup

Pittsburgh Tribune Review

April 9, 2012 Monday

Primary opponent a first for longtime Rep. Murphy

BYLINE: Jeremy Boren

LENGTH: 764 words

U.S. [Rep. Tim Murphy](http://w3.nexis.com/new/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T14691823454&returnToId=20_T14691823457&csi=279079&A=0.7792901756868882&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23PE000A23A%23&searchTerm=Rep.%20Tim%20Murphy%20&indexType=P) is accustomed to conservative Republicans lobbing long-range attacks that ridicule his voting record during five terms in Congress.

The difference this time is that a hometown Republican who calls himself a "principled conservative" has stepped forward to give Murphy his first primary election challenge since Murphy began representing the 18th District in 2003.

"I think he has uniquely been part of the problem," said Evan Feinberg, 28. "The biggest problem has been bipartisan consensus to spend more money and grow our government."

It's Feinberg's first campaign, but he's not new to politics. The Upper St. Clair resident was an aide to conservative stalwarts U.S. Sens. Rand Paul, R-Ky., and Tom Coburn, R-Okla., and a staffer at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative policy group in Washington, D.C.

Feinberg repeatedly accuses Murphy of catering to labor interests and supporting wasteful government spending. He highlights Murphy's 69 percent report card rating from Club for Growth, a right-wing political group that tracks how often members of Congress vote in line with its ideology.

"The only report card I pay attention to is what my constituents want," Murphy said. "I represent a very diverse district. I don't represent just conservatives. It's the very poor and billionaires and everyone in between. It's people in mansions and people who are homeless."

On major social issues, the candidates agree.

Murphy, Feinberg and Larry Maggi, a Democrat running unopposed for his party's nomination, all oppose abortion and want to protect the rights of gun owners.

Charlie Gerow, a Republican strategist in Harrisburg, said Feinberg's chances of winning the seat are slim. He said some Republicans believe that even if Feinberg defeats Murphy on April 24, he would lose in a general election to Maggi in a district in which 53 percent of registered voters are Democrats, 37 percent Republican and the rest are independent. The district includes parts of Allegheny, Westmoreland, Washington and Greene counties.

Murphy, 59, soundly defeated Democratic opponents by double-digit margins since winning the seat in November 2002.

"One of the problems Evan Feinberg has is not only his lack of life experience, but his lack of experience in the district," Gerow said. "Murphy has attended to his constituency and, by and large, voted the way they wanted him to. Does he have a perfect voting record? No, but very few congressmen do."

Murphy reported raising more than $1 million for his campaign, according to year-end Federal Election Commission records. Records don't indicate Maggi's fundraising total.

Feinberg reported having slightly more than $40,000, but he received help from the Campaign for Primary Accountability, a super PAC that pledged to spend roughly $200,000 on a campaign to "retire" Murphy.

The PAC is running an ad blasting Murphy's votes to increase the nation's debt ceiling and in favor of President Obama's "cash for clunkers" program.

Feinberg believes the 2004 primary race between then-U.S. Rep. Pat Toomey and former Sen. Arlen Specter shows it's possible he could beat Murphy.

Toomey, a staunch conservative, defeated Specter, a moderate Republican, in the 18th District counties of Allegheny, Washington, Westmoreland and Beaver, but Specter squeaked out a victory in the statewide race. Specter became a Democrat in 2009. Toomey won the Senate seat in 2010.

Among his accomplishments, Murphy lists getting federal money to dredge Chartiers Creek to prevent flooding in Heidelberg, Carnegie and Scott; lengthening the runway at Arnold Palmer Regional Airport in Unity Township in Westmoreland County, which attracted commercial flights operated by Spirit Airlines; and volunteering to become a Navy officer and counsel veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Murphy said his experience counts, particularly when dealing with issues such as the proposed closing of the 911th Airlift Wing in Moon. He worked with others to prevent it from closing in 2005.

Maggi, 61, a Washington County commissioner, said the district's large senior citizen population worries about losing Medicare benefits. He said Murphy's vote in favor of the $3.5 trillion budget proposed by Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wis., doesn't align with what seniors want and eventually would cost retirees an average of $6,000 more a year.

Murphy defended his support for Ryan's proposal, saying something must be done to save Medicare.

"Medicare has to have some reform in order for it to go on," Murphy said. "We are within five years of it being broke."

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

April 14, 2012 Saturday

SOONER EDITION

TIMETABLE FOR STATE REASSESSMENT AT ISSUE;

PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND LAWYERS SPLIT OVER RULES FOR PROPERTY VALUATION

BYLINE: Len Barcousky, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

SECTION: STATE; Pg. B-1

LENGTH: 922 words

Having all Pennsylvania counties use the same standards for property assessment would be a good idea, many public officials and lawyers agree.

Where they disagree is on what those standards should be.

They also split over the question of whether all court-ordered reassessments should be shelved until the state Legislature finally adopts new rules for property valuation. That's a move primarily directed at Allegheny and Washington counties.

Local officials were responding to the recommendations in a report issued this week by a state reassessment reform task force. The report is based on a six-month study of the issue that included multiple hearings.

The task force recommended additional education for assessors, disclosure of each county's system of property valuation and development of statewide criteria and procedures for assessment data collection.

The task force also proposed developing what members call a self-evaluation tool that would allow counties to determine when reassessment is warranted. While the report recommends ultimately setting a schedule for how often reassessments should be done, it does not say what the standard should be.

That missing "reassessment trigger" disappointed Pittsburgh lawyer Robert Max Junker, who served on the task force.

Mr. Junker, an attorney with the Law Offices of Ira Weiss, proposed reassessment schedules based on county population. It would have required property revaluation every six to 10 years, unless a county could prove that its assessments remained statistically uniform. His proposal was not warmly received, he said.

"My personal frustration with the task force report is that it just recommends further study," Mr. Junker said. "I wish we had more time to get down to what the [reassessment] trigger would be."

The task force was authorized through legislation written by state Reps. Jesse White, D-Cecil, and Brandon Neuman, D-North Strabane.

Mr. White said task force hearings further convinced him that school districts saw reassessment as a tool to raise more money, despite state anti-windfall regulations. "Why would two Washington County school districts spend $40,000 on legal fees to force reassessment there if it wasn't a way to collect additional revenue?" he asked.

School districts sued Washington County to force reassessment, because the base-year system, which seeks to assess properties based on 1980s market values, made it almost impossible to accurately value newer properties, Mr. Junker said.

Mr. White described data collection for the current assessment system as "garbage in-garbage out." The result has been Allegheny County property owners have filed more than 100,000 formal and informal appeals of their new real estate values released this year and scheduled to be used in determining 2013 taxes.

Legislators across the state have seen the problems that Allegheny County has faced carrying out its reassessment, Mr. White said. That experience should urge them to develop state reassessment standards before their counties are forced into a similar situation, he said.

The task force report was released just after the House passed a measure, House Bill 2137, that would place a moratorium on court-ordered reassessments. That bill, designed to give the state Legislature time to implement recommendations of the task force, is awaiting consideration in the Senate.

Attorney Don Driscoll, who represented some of the clients who sued Allegheny County to force reassessment, said he agreed with those who say reassessment should be governed by state rules.

But he rejected Mr. White's call for a moratorium on reassessment projects until the state acts, characterizing the idea as "a waste of time."

"The Legislature can and should do something about setting assessment standards, but members do not have the authority to stop a process that the [state] Supreme Court has ordered to fulfill a constitutional mandate," Mr. Driscoll said. "They have no legislative authority."

County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, a longtime vocal foe of reassessment, continued to push for a moratorium. "We have to have statewide uniformity," he said. "Otherwise we are going to be pitting one county against another."

Allegheny County's court-ordered reassessment has resulted in thousands of worried people flocking to town hall meetings, Mr. Fitzgerald said. They are seeking information on how to challenge reassessments that have increased by 100 percent or more, he said.

Lawrence Maggi, chairman of the Washington County Commissioners, said he hoped the task force report, combined with a moratorium, could spare his county from an experience like that under way in Allegheny County.

"The Legislature has been talking about this for 40 years, and this report is a small positive step toward action," he said.

Washington County has appealed an order to reassess to Commonwealth Court.

"I agree with Mr. Fitzgerald that what are needed are statewide standards," Mr. Maggi said. "We can't have 67 counties and 67 different ways of doing reassessment."

Mr. White said he and other task force supporters were preparing to introduce a series of bills to standardize and modernize reassessment when the Legislature reconvenes after the April 24 primary.

One proposal would require appraisal companies doing work for counties to reveal how they arrive at property values, he said. "Now they tell us their formulas are proprietary information," he said. "We want everybody to be able to see how they did the valuation.

"The system is screwed up. There is no other way to put it."

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

March 1, 2012 Thursday

SZ EDITION

IN THE WAKE OF THE SHALE RUSH WASHINGTON COUNTY NAMED THIRD HIGHEST IN NATION IN JOB GROWTH

BYLINE: Janice Crompton, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

SECTION: METRO; Pg. S-6

LENGTH: 753 words

Described as "unequaled in job growth" in southwestern Pennsylvania and as "the epicenter of this region's growth," Washington County has shrugged off the nation's sluggish economy in recent years, mostly due to the surge of the Marcellus Shale.

That was the message county commissioners projected last week at a news conference, where they announced that the county had been named third highest in the nation in job growth and saw investments totaling $279 million in public and private development projects during the past five years.

"Washington County's economy continues to expand and outperform the southwestern Pennsylvania region in terms of both economic development projects and job creation," Commissioner Larry Maggi said during the news conference at the new, $30 million Range Resources regional headquarters in Southpointe II in Cecil.

Still, the good news about the local energy sector won't prevent commissioners from supporting a proposed ordinance to establish an impact fee for drilling, each of the three commissioners said.

"We're looking at enacting an ordinance for the impact fee in Washington County," Commissioner Diana Irey Vaughan said. "I feel it's something Washington County needs to do to be responsible."

Mr. Maggi and Commissioner Harlan Shober agreed, saying that although the new law establishing fees and new drilling guidelines may not be ideal, it's all that local counties have to work with.

"This is the hand that's dealt," Mr. Shober said. "We didn't make the law."

The local employment data, provided by the U.S. Department of Labor and Labor Statistics, showed a job growth rate of 4.3 percent, Mr. Maggi said, translating into about 750 new workers in the energy sector and another 900 new jobs in the professional services and business industries.

"Our residents have seen an increase of 8.8 percent in their average weekly wages as well," Mr. Maggi said.

Mr. Maggi credited a stable county tax rate, along with public/private partnerships for investment in infrastructure, business parks and other job creation projects.

Washington County is one of only two local counties to see population growth during the last U.S. Census and home construction and sales also have rallied during the past year, he said.

Mr. Shober said that of the county's 45 economic development projects initiated in the past year, 24 involved energy-related companies, including 21 that "were a direct result of the Marcellus Shale gas play," he said.

"There is no question that the development of the energy industry has become a significant economic generator in our county," Mr. Shober said. "Washington County has emerged as the energy leader in southwestern Pennsylvania."

Statewide, Washington County currently is third behind Bradford and Tioga counties in the total number of producing wells, with 860 wells drilled.

But Washington and Beaver counties soon may lead the state in well production due to the high quantity of "wet gas" in the shale formation here, Matt Pitzarella, Range Resources spokesman, said. Wet gas is rich in secondary fuels, such as butane and propane.

In the eastern half of the state, low natural gas prices have suppressed drilling because of the drier gas there, Mr. Pitzarella said.

"Drilling will decrease statewide, but increase here," Mr. Pitzarella predicted.

Compressed natural gas also can be extracted from the Marcellus here to power vehicles that can use CNG, Mr. Pitzarella said, and the price compared to refined oil is likely to appeal to motorists, especially as gas prices at the pump inched closer to $4 per gallon this week.

"You'd pay $1 per gallon," he said of the CNG fuel. "The issue is just fueling stations."

Mr. Shober said all of the energy activity in recent years has made the region "the energy capital of the East."

The Local Share Account program through the Meadows Racetrack & Casino also has brought new investment to the county, Ms. Irey Vaughan said.

"Since 2007-2008, the LSA has invested over $46.3 million in 158 new economic, community and industrial development projects," she said. "However, more impressive is the leverage that we have been able to realize from these investments. In the past five years, we have been able to match our ... LSA funds with over $233 million in additional federal, state and local monies."

The Local Share Account money, which is generated through slot machine revenue from the casino and funneled to the county, has been used to enhance local business parks, expand the county airport and assist with job training.

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Mr. Shober said that of the county's 45 economic development projects initiated in the past year, 24 involved energy-related companies, including 21 that "were a direct result of the Marcellus Shale gas play," he said.

"There is no question that the development of the energy industry has become a significant economic generator in our county," Mr. Shober said. "Washington County has emerged as the energy leader in southwestern Pennsylvania."

Statewide, Washington County currently is third behind Bradford and Tioga counties in the total number of producing wells, with 860 wells drilled.

But Washington and Beaver counties soon may lead the state in well production due to the high quantity of "wet gas" in the shale formation here, Matt Pitzarella, Range Resources spokesman, said. Wet gas is rich in secondary fuels, such as butane and propane.

In the eastern half of the state, low natural gas prices have suppressed drilling because of the drier gas there, Mr. Pitzarella said.

"Drilling will decrease statewide, but increase here," Mr. Pitzarella predicted.

Compressed natural gas also can be extracted from the Marcellus here to power vehicles that can use CNG, Mr. Pitzarella said, and the price compared to refined oil is likely to appeal to motorists, especially as gas prices at the pump inched closer to $4 per gallon this week.

"You'd pay $1 per gallon," he said of the CNG fuel. "The issue is just fueling stations."

Mr. Shober said all of the energy activity in recent years has made the region "the energy capital of the East."

The Local Share Account program through the Meadows Racetrack & Casino also has brought new investment to the county, Ms. Irey Vaughan said.

"Since 2007-2008, the LSA has invested over $46.3 million in 158 new economic, community and industrial development projects," she said. "However, more impressive is the leverage that we have been able to realize from these investments. In the past five years, we have been able to match our ... LSA funds with over $233 million in additional federal, state and local monies."

The Local Share Account money, which is generated through slot machine revenue from the casino and funneled to the county, has been used to enhance local business parks, expand the county airport and assist with job training.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

November 17, 2011 Thursday

SOONER EDITION

WASHINGTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS PLAN TO APPEAL REASSESSMENT ORDER

BYLINE: Janice Crompton, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

SECTION: LOCAL; Pg. B-3

LENGTH: 256 words

Washington County commissioners on Wednesday said they would appeal a judge's decision to immediately begin a countywide property reassessment.

"We totally disagree with the wording and the order," Commissioner Larry Maggi said of a ruling released Tuesday by Common Pleas Court President Judge Debbie O'Dell Seneca. "We're against the reassessment and we did not agree with what was written."

The issue was prompted by a lawsuit brought three years ago by the McGuffey and Washington school districts. The cash-strapped districts sued to force the county to update the value of properties. The county has not conducted a reassessment since 1981.

To settle the lawsuit, commissioners agreed to a series of legal stipulations and said they would begin the process of a reassessment, expected to cost taxpayers $8 million. Judge O'Dell Seneca ordered the county to hire a reassessment vendor by July 5.

But, earlier this year commissioners asked the judge for a stay, hoping the state Legislature would take action on property tax reform.

Although lawmakers passed a bill this summer that would have given the county a reprieve until November 2012, Gov. Tom Corbett vetoed it within days of its passage.

On Tuesday, the judge said the reassessment must go forward, characterizing the stipulations as a "consent decree" that must be enforced.

But commissioners disagree with her language and plan to appeal the ruling to Commonwealth Court.

"We stipulated to facts," that were not in dispute, Mr. Maggi said. "We never stipulated to a reassessment."

Pittsburgh Tribune Review

September 17, 2010 Friday

Meadows opposes loan to [84 Lumber](http://w3.nexis.com/new/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T14691898288&returnToId=20_T14691898292&csi=279079&A=0.5058281087971597&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23CC0001YKO%23&searchTerm=84%20Lumber&indexType=C)

BYLINE: Thomas Olson

LENGTH: 511 words

The Meadows Racetrack & Casino wants Washington County to deny [84 Lumber Co.](http://w3.nexis.com/new/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T14691898288&returnToId=20_T14691898292&csi=279079&A=0.5058281087971597&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23CC0001YKO%23&searchTerm=84%20Lumber%20Co.%20&indexType=C) a $5 million government loan because it could give its owner an unfair advantage in setting up a competing casino.

Sean Sullivan, vice president and general manager of the casino in North Strabane told Washington County commissioners at a hearing Thursday that a subsidy to [84 Lumber,](http://w3.nexis.com/new/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T14691898288&returnToId=20_T14691898292&csi=279079&A=0.5058281087971597&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23CC0001YKO%23&searchTerm=84%20Lumber,%20&indexType=C) owned by President Maggie Magerko, would mean she could channel more of her money toward Nemacolin Woodlands Resort, which she also owns.

Nemacolin, the resort in Fayette County, is competing for the state's one remaining resort casino license and teamed up with Isle of Capri Casinos to create a proposal to the Gaming Control Board.

Nemocolin would convert The Wildside, a 70,000-square-foot building that houses an arcade and bowling alley, into a casino that visitors staying at the resort could reach by shuttle.

"Another casino in Southwestern Pennsylvania isn't in the best interests of Washington County or, obviously in the best interests of The Meadows," Sullivan said.

The Meadows could lose about $2 million a month, or 10 percent to 15 percent of its monthly revenue, if the Nemacolin plan for "Lady Luck" panned out, said Sullivan. He based the estimate partly on how much business The Meadows lost when The Rivers casino opened in August 2009 on the North Shore.

"By supporting a loan for [84 Lumber,](http://w3.nexis.com/new/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T14691898288&returnToId=20_T14691898292&csi=279079&A=0.5058281087971597&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23CC0001YKO%23&searchTerm=84%20Lumber,%20&indexType=C) it could free up assets of [84 Lumber](http://w3.nexis.com/new/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T14691898288&returnToId=20_T14691898292&csi=279079&A=0.5058281087971597&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23CC0001YKO%23&searchTerm=84%20Lumber%20&indexType=C) or of Maggie's that could be diverted to the Nemacolin project," said Sullivan.

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Washington County commissioners are expected to vote on loan Oct. 7. The move follows Fayette County commissioners' decision to sponsor a similar HUD loan for $15 million Aug. 26.

"They have provided a good tax base for Washington County for many years, and they are in significant difficulty right now," said Commissioner J. Bracken Burns. He is leaning toward voting for the loan backing.

Commissioner Larry Maggi said he would vote against the loan, partly because it creates "a strong possibility we'd be subsidizing a casino in Fayette that would compete against ours in Washington County."

Commissioner Diana Irey said she wants to look at the vote "from every angle," including the status of [84 Lumber's](http://w3.nexis.com/new/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T14691898288&returnToId=20_T14691898292&csi=279079&A=0.5058281087971597&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23CC0001YKO%23&searchTerm=84%20Lumber's%20&indexType=C) 420 or so jobs in Washington County, before deciding.

Competing with Nemacolin for that casino license are Penn Harris Gaming, which wants to build a casino and RV park at a Cumberland County Holiday Inn, and the Bushkill Group Inc., which wants to add a casino to its Monroe County resort.

The gaming commission is not expected to make a selection before January.

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Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

February 18, 2010 Thursday

SOUTH EDITION

POLITICIANS PONDER RUN FOR STOUT'S SEAT

BYLINE: Janice Crompton, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

SECTION: METRO; Pg. S-7

LENGTH: 880 words

It's been only two weeks since state Sen. J. Barry Stout, D-Bentleyville, unexpectedly announced he would retire at the end of this year, but already the jockeying among Washington County politicians has begun for his 46th District seat.

As nominating petitions began circulating Tuesday, a number of potential candidates emerged, including all three county commissioners and local state Rep. Tim Solobay, D-Canonsburg, who said he will likely run for the Senate seat.

That, in turn, has created speculation about the 48th District state House seat, occupied by Mr. Solobay, who is up for re-election this year.

Suddenly, two coveted positions could be wide open, leading one political adviser to predict a "bloody battle" in the May 18 primary elections.

"There are a lot of balls in the air and none of them have landed yet," said Democratic Commissioner J. Bracken Burns, who said he is considering a run for the state Senate or House or possibly even the 12th District Congressional seat formerly held by U.S. Rep. John Murtha, D-Johnstown, who died last week.

After a serious bout with pneumonia in 2004, Mr. Stout, 73, likened local politicians to "circling vultures" waiting for his retirement or death, saying "they'll take this office out of my cold, dead hands."

But he had a change of heart last week, saying that ongoing health issues and the lingering effects from an accident that fractured his pelvis would keep him from seeking another term after nearly 40 years in the state Legislature.

Mr. Stout was one of the most powerful members of the Senate, having served as leader of the Senate Transportation Committee, as Democratic Caucus administrator and as a member of numerous committees, such as those governing policy and appropriations.

How the county will replace the famous "Stout clout" in Harrisburg is an important consideration for strategists, who see Mr. Solobay and county Commissioners Larry Maggi and Diana Irey as the front-runners in the race.

"We can't afford, in Southwestern Pennsylvania, to allow someone to go down there who doesn't even know where the bathrooms are," Mr. Solobay said of Harrisburg. "I think [my experience] weighs heavily on what we can offer."

Mr. Solobay, 53, said he brings 12 years of carefully cultivated relationships and resources to the table, along with what he hopes will be support and endorsements from several important political factions. He is circulating petitions for his House seat and for Mr. Stout's Senate seat, although he said he would not run for both positions.

"We are very actively pursuing it. We have petitions all over the region," he said of the Senate seat.

Ms. Irey, a Republican, said she is "absolutely" considering a run for the Senate seat, while Democrat Mr. Maggi said he is "thinking very seriously" about running and has also begun circulating petitions.

Mr. Maggi, 58, of Buffalo, serves as the chairman of commissioners and remains a respected and popular figure from his days as the county's budget-conscious sheriff and as a homicide investigator for the state police.

He is currently serving his second term as commissioner, having garnered more votes than Mr. Burns or Ms. Irey in the past two elections. He made an ill-fated run for the 18th Congressional District seat held by Tim Murphy, R-Upper St. Clair, in 2002, but couldn't get past the primary.

Ms. Irey, 47, of Nottingham, fared better in her Congressional run against Mr. Murtha in 2006, snatching 42 percent of the vote against the popular incumbent.

In her fourth term as the only female commissioner ever elected, Ms. Irey is known as a fundraising machine, routinely raising double what her opponents have.

That skill would serve her well in a state Senate race, said Dr. Joseph DiSarro, chairman of the political science department at Washington & Jefferson College.

"My gut feeling is that Irey is going to be in," he said. "She is young, that district has changed and this is her last chance."

He believes Ms. Irey would need to raise about $250,000 to defeat a Democratic candidate in the district, where the GOP is outnumbered by a nearly 2 to 1 margin.

Still, voters in the district, which includes most of Washington County, all of Greene County and parts of Beaver and Westmoreland counties, have been swaying more conservative in recent years, Dr. DiSarro said, with the majority voting for Arizona Sen. John McCain in the 2008 presidential election.

Dr. DiSarro said he wouldn't be surprised to see Ms. Irey tap some of her national fundraising sources and possibly even persuade well-known Republican women, like Sarah Palin and Minnesota Rep. Michelle Bachman, to appear on her behalf.

"I think you'll see some significant Republican women come in and help her," he said.

On the Democratic side, Dr. DiSarro predicts a major battle between Mr. Maggi and Mr. Solobay, known as a champion for firefighters, health care and emergency services in the state House.

Mr. Solobay has not faced a serious challenger since his election in 1998. Dr. DiSarro said he thinks Mr. Solobay would have the strategic advantage.

"It will come down to a nuts and bolts campaign between two Democrats who are very similar," Dr. DiSarro said.

Potential candidates have until March 9 to submit nominating petitions to be placed on the primary ballot.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

December 28, 2008 Sunday

WASHINGTON EDITION

The words that defined our year

BYLINE: Linda Wilson Fuoco, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

SECTION: METRO; Pg. W-1

LENGTH: 2522 words

Our Washington pages were graced with noteworthy quotes by public officials, students, parents and taxpayers each Sunday during 2008. Here's a roundup of some of the most memorable comments:

b> January

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"This is like Beverly Hills compared to Camden. I would not go into the city of Camden unarmed." -- Cecil native J. Michael Aaron, 56, an experienced homicide investigator and forensics expert who worked 15 years in Camden County, N.J., and is now chief detective for Washington County District Attorney Steven M. Toprani.

"We didn't do a postmortem, so we don't know for sure. But it appears that the physical abuse they took caused them to perish." -- Glen Needham, Ohio State University associate professor of entomology -- that's bugs -- discussing results of a study indicating that the fleas afflicting cats and dogs are killed by regular running of a vacuum cleaner.

"I've touched the lives of 4,200 students. Will I ever make all those people happy? No. That's the nature of the job. If you're afraid of being disliked, you shouldn't be a high school principal." -- Peters Township High School principal Thomas Hajzus, responding to the lawsuit settlement between himself and the school district that brought him more than $300,000.

b> February

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"We have trouble putting a garbage plant down the road." -- Peters Councilman James Berquist, shooting down a resident's request that elected officials investigate putting a nuclear power plant in the township to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

"We've seen no evidence that mining is the cause of the problem." -- Consol Energy Inc. spokesman Tom Hoffman, after the state sued the operator of one of the country's largest underground coal mines for damaging Ryerson Station State Park in Greene County. The Ryerson Dam failed and Duke Lake was drained.

"If we teach students that it's all right to ride by urban blight on their way home or to school, then they haven't received a Waynesburg education." -- Waynesburg University President Timothy Thyreen, commenting on the university's donation of $71,000 to pay for a planning company to come up with a master design to enhance the look of Waynesburg's historic streets.

b> March

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"The public has a right to know what happened." -- State Auditor General Jack Wagner, taking issue with Peters Township School District's separation agreement with its superintendent.

"When we were kids, we used to sneak down there at midnight and fish for carp. And the Boy Scouts, they went down there for all kinds of things. It was an amazing place." -- Ethan Ward's fond memories of Dutch Fork Lake in Donegal Township, which is now nothing but a muddy hole. After remnants of Hurricane Ivan blew through in 2004, the state Fish and Boat Commission declared the dam "high-hazard" and drained the lake to help prevent further damage to the spillway.

"I kind of felt like Clarence Thomas. It's really an arduous process for someone who doesn't get paid." -- Roxane Palone of Greene County on being elected president of the state Board of Game Commissioners.

b> April

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"We're always trying to get people to come to church, and thought if people stopped here and saw this, they'd like the idea and would feel more free to come to church." -- Judy Chappel of Washington, a congregant at Davidson United Methodist Church in South Strabane. Church members built a tiny 8- by 12-foot chapel on the front lawn of their church, with doors open to all to "Rest with God and Pray" any hour of the day or night.

"I tell them that the eagle is the most intelligent bird because it soars alone, while pigeons are dirty because they're mindlessly together in the poop. They can either rise above it, or be in the poop." -- Dance instructor, tireless volunteer and motivational speaker Joyce Ellis of Washington.

"We have to teach them to set boundaries when they have their clothes on." -- Mary Jo Podgurski, director of The Washington Hospital Teen Outreach, who has presented more than 500 workshops on adolescent sexuality and pregnancy. Since she designed the Postpone, Prevent, Prepare sex education program, the teen pregnancy rate for 15- to 17-year-old Washington County girls dropped from 36 per 1,000 in 1989 to 13 per 1,000 in 2005.

b> May

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"Bradley isn't very vocal and now he talks more. Bradley used to have two or three 'meltdowns' as we call it, every day, and I would be bitten, kicked and pinched. Now he only has one or two meltdowns a week." -- Linda Dallatore of Canton, talking about her 8-year-old son, Bradley, who has autism, and his specially trained service dog, Jiffy, a Labrador retriever mix. Jiffy goes almost everywhere with the boy except to school. Trinity Area School District officials have barred the dog from the school. The Dallatore family is challenging that ruling.

"It's his ability to motivate students to do what they ordinarily wouldn't do that makes him so special. You don't replace a Dr. Dell. It's impossible. You hope you can get someone to follow in his footsteps." -- Peters Township High School principal Dr. Thomas Hajzus, singing the praises of Dr. Robert Dell, who retired as band diretor and music teacher after 28 years.

"Our primary mission of the arboretum is to educate and help the environment. In our new plantings, we're putting an emphasis on trees native to Pennsylvania and would love to bring back disease-resistant species of native chestnut and elm trees. Currently we have a total of 68 native species trees on campus." -- Dr. Robert Whyte, assistant professor of biology and environmental sciences at California University of Pennsylvania.

b> June

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"Oh yes, many people, including me, had reservations about working with rats. ... Drue's animals are very motivating for our clients. We have a boy who was unable to ask questions, and now he asks questions about the rats. We can use the rats to teach concepts." -- Kim Pollock, speech therapist and facilitator for pet-assisted therapy at The Children's Therapy Center of Washington Hospital in Peters. Drue Tepper brings pet rats named Moe and Larry for therapy sessions with children.

"As I was doing CPR, I felt his little hand grab my arm and I thought everything was going to be all right. I kept going." -- Chelsea Dallatore, 16, of Canton, who saved the life of a 5-year-old boy on her second day on the job as a lifeguard at the Washington Park Pool.

"By no means, do I feel that I am above the law in this or any other matter, nor did I ask for or was treated as such. However, as your sheriff, I plan to move forward and continue to lead this county in the most professional manner as I have in the previous 29 months." -- Washington County Sheriff Samuel F. Romano, announcing he had no plans to resign after being arrested and jailed in Parsons, W.Va. on charges of driving under the influence of alcohol.

b> July

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"Denver is busy, expensive, growing and dry. The city, which gets an average of 16 inches of rain each year, is running low on water. By contrast, southwestern Pennsylvania averages about 50 inches of the wet stuff each year. ... Dollar for dollar, Pennsylvania seems the best for what you can get." -- Kathy Robbins, explaining why she and Ken Robbins moved from Colorado to Hopewell, five miles from Washington, Pa., to farm and run a shop called Bounce Back Books.

The mood of Donora residents in late October 1948 "was not exactly panic but there was great concern. Older people were having respiratory problems. Delivery people coming from other towns had respirators on, but we were walking around" attending to business and activities, including a Halloween parade. -- Donora Mayor John "Chummy" Lignelli, recalling the smog that killed 20 people and sickened thousands of others 60 years ago.

"Fifteen years ago, we couldn't sell a single pot of lemon grass. Now, with the growing interest in ethnic foods, we sell close to 500." -- Leigh Shields, who with his wife, Lillian, operates The Shields nursery and winery near Waynesburg, Greene County. The all-organic nursery opened in 1982.

b> August

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"A lady said she had drops of water on her windshield, and several people said they had water on their cars. We checked. One of the cars was covered with dust because it was parked near a construction zone, and there were clean spots amidst the dust. Maybe it did sprinkle, but it wasn't enough. The official word is it did not rain." -- Waynesburg Mayor Blair Zimmerman glumly reporting that rain did not fall on July 29, Rain Day. Precipitation has fallen in the Greene County town on 110 of 134 Rain Days, or 82 percent of the time.

"We had 650 children involved in summer programs, including story times and the summer reading program and a field trip to Phipps Conservatory. Libraries traditionally see an increase in usage when the economy is bad." -- Diane Ambrose, the new director of The Citizens Library in Washington.

"We want essentially the same as everyone else -- to get around. We don't want anything out of the ordinary. We want the same things: that's equal access." -- Andrew Cooper, executive director of Tri-County Patriots for Independent Living, a group that pushes for more access for wheelchairs.

"Washington County is the place to be in southwest Pennsylvania. We are certainly becoming a destination point. We are hoping people who come to the Tanger Outlets will stay for two days and visit other retail shops and tourist attractions." -- Jeff Kotula, president of the Washington County Chamber of Commerce, shortly before the opening of the Tanger Factory Outlet Center in South Strabane.

b> September

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"It was an unbelievable turnout. It was the largest turnout that any of our centers have ever had." -- General Manager Frank Salucci on the grand opening of the Tanger Outlet Center in South Strabane, which attracted more than 100,000 people.

"The harder you sweep, the cleaner the ice [will be], and the farther and straighter the stone will slide. But you can't make the stone move any faster. ... Some think the sport is boring to watch but that's only because they don't understand the rules or the strategy." -- Steve Burchesky of Canonsburg, an avid curling competitor, trying to explain the appeal and allure of the winter sport.

"This year is our best yet, in terms of both area recognition and the number of people shopping here. We have a wide range of great vendors as well as a wonderful array of musicians who volunteer their time to perform each Thursday afternoon." -- Steve Dettinger, market coordinator at the Main Street Farmers' Market in Washington.

"I can't tell you how excited he was about this. He's been practicing reading at home for about two weeks, and he's been practicing on dog books. He tried to read books to our beagle, Caity, but she kept running away." -- Ellen Zissis of Cecil, talking about how excited her son, Tanner Zissis, 6, is about a program where children learn by reading books to dogs that visit the Cecil Resource Center in the Greater Canonsburg Public Library.

b> October

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"They are beautiful, they are full, and we have a waiting list." -- William McGowan, executive director of the Redevelopment Authority of the County of Washington, about 24 apartments built for seniors in the tiny borough of Claysville.

"In 1989 we thought we could do it all in three or four years. Now we think we'll finish up in three to four years." -- Stan Sattinger of Bethel Park, one of the co-founders of Friends of the Montour Trail, and one of many volunteers who worked to finish a 1.75-mile section in West Peters, linking the Arrowhead Trail in Peters with the next portion of the trail in Cecil.

"It was crazy. I didn't want to score 71 points, but we gave up 38. I looked at my watch at one point and I'm thinking, 'Man, this is really a long game.'" -- Fort Cherry Coach Tim Garry, commenting that he hopes to never be involved in a football game like the one in which his team beat Frazier 71-38.

"I wanted to do something to build team unity. I also wanted to show the kids how important it is to be a good citizen. ... I heard about an elderly disabled lady who needed the outside of her house painted. I thought this was the perfect way to show the kids how important it is to give back to the community." -- Ron Headlee, at the start of his first season as Waynesburg Univeristy wrestling coach. Twenty-five team members worked three days to scrape and paint the house of Rose Swaniger in Pitt Gas, Greene County.

b> November

/b>

"The entire Pittsburgh area is so very much haunted. To me the most haunted place in Pennsylvania besides Gettysburg is the Mon Valley -- Bunola, Elizabeth Borough, Monongahela and other [Mon River] towns." -- Shawn Kelly, founder of Pittsburgh Paranormal Society in Dormont. That's one of four local groups that investigates reports of hauntings and things that go bump in the night.

"There's a wealth of talent here at the Center -- storytellers, art and singing instructors, even baby rockers. Just having the children enter a room with the seniors changes their body language and raises their spirits." -- Cherie Sears, president of the Village, which offers day care and preschool for children and daytime activities for seniors at the Center in the Woods near California.

"We think consolidation is the thing of the future." -- Washington County Commissioner Larry Maggi, on the Nov. 4 referendum vote that merged Donegal and West Alexander.

"My family has all left the valley, so you have solved my entire Christmas list. My family members are jealous that I am still in the valley." -- Ken Kulak, architect and chairman of the Monongahela Planning Commission, after watching a screening of "One Extraordinary Street", a documentary by Monongahela native Laura Magone, about famous and successful people who grew up on Park Avenue. Mr. Kulak said he was buying DVDs as gifts.

"You never get over seeing a child receive something for the first time. The room just fills with joy. Some kids are quiet and some run around as they try to make sense out of the toys and candy they've never seen before. It's just amazing." -- Leigh Fisher, a regional director for Operation Christmas Child, which collects gift-filled shoe boxes from groups and churches for distribution to poor children around the world.

b> December

/b>

"It's horrible. It's the worst possible timing." -- Washington County Board of Commissioners chairman Larry Maggi, responding to the possibility that Washington County residents may face property reassessments for the first time in nearly 30 years.

"Both of my dogs are from shelters. Maui was 5 months old when she was taken to a shelter. Her owners said she was untrainable and out of control. Now she's a therapy dog." -- Marsha Robbins, humane educator at the Western Pennsylvania Humane Society in Pittsburgh, extolling the virtues of dogs adopted from shelters. Some of them are certified therapy dogs that visit students in the Cathedral of Learning at the University of Pittsburgh.

"The big thing now is the dispute over the lien property." -- Robert B. Stein, court-appointed attorney for the sheriff's sale of The Foundry shopping center, which has been beset by subsidence in South Strabane.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

September 28, 2008 Sunday

WASHINGTON EDITION

MANY SEEKING CASINO REVENUES;

GOVERNMENT GROUPS, NON-PROFITS APPLY

BYLINE: Janice Crompton, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

SECTION: METRO; Pg. W-1

LENGTH: 978 words

Dozens of local government and representatives of non-profit organizations turned out last week to hear how an estimated $12 to $13 million in slots revenue from The Meadows Racetrack and Casino would be distributed this year.

Applicants have until Nov. 14 to submit requests to receive a portion of the local share revenue, two-thirds of which will be used for economic development projects, including water and sewage improvements.

The remaining one-third of the funds are set aside for municipal or community projects.

The local share represents a percentage of gross revenue at The Meadows. The state Race Horse Development and Gaming Act provides for casino host municipalities and counties by setting aside a small percentage of casino revenue to be used for local projects.

The Washington County Redevelopment Authority sponsored three public meetings last week with the state Department of Community and Economic Development, to field questions and explain changes for this year.

Especially important to municipalities was the distribution of sewage and water grants.

After conducting several public hearings earlier this year, the local state legislative delegation had proposed setting aside one-third of the local share to fund only water and sewage projects because of concerns expressed last year when municipalities complained that such projects had been overlooked for larger economic development ventures.

The process by which projects were selected drew harsh criticism last year because more than $80 million worth of local projects were left on the cutting room floor, while four county business parks stood to gain the lion's share of revenue, with nearly $4 million in improvements.

Local government representatives complained that the nine-member committee charged with making decisions about the funding was populated largely with county economic development executives, and some municipalities challenged their decision in court.

The litigation has since been dropped, said William McGowen, executive director of the Redevelopment Authority.

One of the legislators, state Rep. Jesse White, D-Cecil, who also serves on the local share committee, said he was disappointed that county commissioners vetoed several key recommendations from the legislative delegation, including the one-third sewage and water provision.

"I am not happy at all about the way this went on," he said of the changes, most of which don't reflect recommendations from the legislators.

He said commissioners also rejected a recommendation from the group that called for another third of the revenue to be distributed among municipalities.

Half of that money would have been distributed evenly among each municipality, with the exception of North Strabane, for a total of about $30,000 per municipality. The other half would be distributed on a per-capita basis, totaling about $10.28 per person.

The money could have been used for any qualifying capital project, and would have answered charges that the process unfairly served larger municipalities with more resources.

"It was universally applauded as the one thing everyone could agree on," Mr. White said.

North Strabane, the host municipality for The Meadows, receives its own revenue share.

There was about $8 million in local share revenue available last year after The Meadows opened in June 2007.

Of the 85 projects worth $88 million that were proposed last year, 26 were selected to receive funding. Some of the legislators' recommendations that were adopted by commissioners included adding one representative from a township and one from a borough to the local share committee and removing the county Redevelopment Authority, which administers the funding, from the local share selection process.

Commissioner Maggi proposed that instead of the controversial local projects, the revenue could be equally distributed among county residents in the form of county tax relief.

However, DCED and county representatives said last week that 35 percent of gross revenue already is earmarked for tax relief.

"Remember, this is not tax revenue," said Mr. McGowan.

Instead of each municipality receiving a share of the fund, they will submit competing projects.

Mr. White said that unfairly pits municipalities against one another and doesn't foster cooperation, one of the stated goals of the local share program.

Mr. McGowan and other officials told applicants to try to submit projects that would benefit as many citizens as possible, and to avoid projects that normally would be locally funded, like sidewalk or road improvements.

That irritated Ellsworth councilman Mark Segedi, who said it's difficult for smaller municipalities to compete with their larger and richer counterparts.

"We're being left out of this because we don't have projects that are big enough," he said.

Also this year, municipalities are being asked to prioritize projects, which worried some local non-profit agencies, who expressed concern that their projects sometimes have problems getting support from local government.

All projects must be sponsored by a municipality, and non-profit representatives said their projects were being orphaned because municipalities were afraid to jeopardize their own proposals by applying for too many projects.

Mr. McGowan said the committee would look favorably on projects that combined resources between municipalities, along with those that were environmentally friendly.

Steve Wiencek, assistant executive director of the Redevelopment Authority, said he expected the second year of revenue distribution to go smoother than the first.

Applications have been streamlined and simplified, and local government representatives have a better idea about what kinds of projects to submit, he said.

Representatives can get information and apply online this year, he said, at [www.racw.net](http://www.racw.net/).

"People understand it better as it evolves," he said.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

May 25, 2008 Sunday

WASHINGTON EDITION

INDEPENDENT JAIL REVIEW POLICY OPPOSED

BYLINE: Janice Crompton, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

SECTION: METRO; Pg. W-1

LENGTH: 1445 words

A recent call for an independent review of policies and procedures at the Washington County Correctional Facility has been met with resistance from county officials -- a reaction neighboring counties find unusual.

County Commissioner and prison board member Diana Irey said hundreds of the approximately 600 complaints she has received about the jail over the past 12 years, including accusations of sexual misconduct, were investigated internally and all were found to be without merit.

While most neighboring counties have policies that turn over claims of abuse or inmate mistreatment against jail staff to an outside agency or other county department to investigate, Mrs. Irey said Washington jail administrators often self-investigates complaints and allegations -- none of which has ever led to charges.

"It's amazing to me that there's never an employee found to be at fault with these investigations," Mrs. Irey said.

But, prison board chairman and county Commissioner Larry Maggi said he knows of many times police were called in by the prison board to investigate criminal allegations involving the jail.

"It's our policy that if there's a crime, we call the police," he said.

Mr. Maggi said it's a difficult balance to weigh the rights of inmates against those of guards, who often have to put up with frivolous allegations.

At the same time, though, investigations that consistently find the facility faultless should raise a red flag, say other jailers.

"Not all inmates lie all the time," said Greene County Prison Warden Harry Gillespie, who has also worked at a now-closed state prison in West Virginia.

"You need to look at that."

Mrs. Irey recently asked the prison board to explore how an outside investigation could be conducted because of ongoing complaints and because the jail has been mentioned as part of a federal grand jury investigation of former county District Attorney John C. Pettit.

Jail employees have testified before the grand jury, which has been hearing the case since January, and inmate communication and transportation records were seized late last year by the FBI.

Federal agents have approached a number of county employees, including assistant district attorneys, the jail warden and a probation officer, at their homes to question them about whether Mr. Pettit offered preferential treatment to friends and political supporters.

As district attorney for 24 years, Mr. Pettit had been criticized for his frequent use of jailhouse informants in murder trials. The county has faced more than one lawsuit over allegations that he interfered with the treatment of inmates.

In response to complaints about Mr. Pettit, county President Judge Debbie O'Dell Seneca last year issued a mandate requiring a court order before an inmate could be removed from the jail.

Mr. Pettit lost a bid for a seventh term in office last year to political newcomer Steven Toprani.

In 2006, former inmate and convicted murderer Alexander Martos sued the county, the jail, Warden Joseph Pelzer, the district attorney's office, Mr. Pettit and two corrections officers, claiming that when he severed his relationship as a jailhouse informant for Mr. Pettit, he was beaten, harassed and deprived of basic needs.

Another inmate in 2005 testified that Mr. Pettit threatened to break his fingers if he did not cooperate as a jailhouse informant in a murder trial.

Other inmates have made similar claims, and in February, an anonymous letter from a jail employee citing overcrowding, understaffing and security issues was sent to prison board members.

Mr. Pelzer did not return phone calls for this story, but Deputy Warden Brian Hammett said in a previous interview that the jail was a "flagship operation," which had received perfect inspection reports from the state Department of Corrections since 2002.

Mrs. Irey's request, made during an April 16 prison board meeting, is being looked into but was not supported by other prison board members -- fellow county commissioners J. Bracken Burns and Mr. Maggi, along with Judge O'Dell Seneca, Controller Mike Namie and Sheriff Sam Romano.

Only Mr. Toprani so far has expressed support for the idea, saying the nature and frequency of complaints merit a closer look.

"I think there should be a review," he said. "There's obviously issues that should be addressed."

Other members have asked to delay an investigation until the federal inquiry of Mr. Pettit is completed.

"We want to wait until the federal government is done," said Mr. Maggi. "When this is all done, we're going to look into it."

Defense attorneys and county officials say it's not unusual for inmates to request longer state prison sentences to avoid being housed in the county jail.

"I think that the public trust of the way things are handled at the jail is questionable," said Mrs. Irey, who said she receives more complaints about the jail than any other county department.

"It's important that the public is confident."

Mrs. Irey said she's been approached by jail employees on many occasions about how inmates are treated, some with specific allegations of abuse.

"The problem has been that employees have been too scared to come out and put their names to these allegations," she said.

County Assistant Public Defender Charles Carpinelli said his office also hears complaints from inmates who say they are not being given certain prescription drugs, especially those for mental disorders, which makes it more difficult to represent defendants.

"We can't really counsel them effectively," when they aren't given prescribed medicines, he said.

Mr. Carpinelli also said he believes a member of the public defender's office should have a seat on the prison board.

"We're the ones who have all the contact with the inmates and their families," he said.

Mrs. Irey said that many of the abuse complaints center on the same two or three jail employees, and she confronted them about 10 years ago. Two of them still work at the facility, said Mrs. Irey, who declined to name the employees.

"I let them know that I didn't believe that all of these complaints were unwarranted," she said.

Although the meeting resulted in fewer complaints temporarily, the allegations continued, including one that she found particularly disturbing, Mrs. Irey said.

She received a letter from an inmate who claimed guards spat in his food, threw cold water on him, sprayed him with pepper spray and sexually assaulted him to the point that he was taken from the jail to the hospital to have an item extracted from his body.

"That's the one that troubled me the most," she said of the allegation, which was investigated by jail staff and found to have been a "self-inflicted injury," Mrs Irey said.

She said there was a discussion among prison board members about asking an outside agency to investigate the claim, but no action was taken.

The jail also was involved in an investigation of a high-ranking employee who was accused of having sexual relations with an inmate. No action was taken in that case.

Accusations of sexual misconduct against another employee several years ago were found to be false after video footage cleared the employee of wrongdoing, Mr. Maggi said. That investigation, he said, was handled by the city of Washington police department at the request of the prison board.

According to wardens, in other counties, accusations of such magnitude would always be referred to outside agencies.

"I would intentionally not investigate myself," said Butler County Prison Warden Richard Gigliotti, who said outside investigations can be the most effective way to restore confidence and combat the appearance of impropriety. "I would request an outside person."

Initial investigations are often handled at the county level in Greene and Fayette counties, but more serious allegations of abuse are turned over to the state police.

Dealing with allegations and investigations in an above-board manner helps to weed out bad employees and curtail litigation, said Mr. Gillespie, of Greene County.

"We all make mistakes," he said. "I don't cover them up and I don't hide them from the press."

In Westmoreland County, a jail guard was fired when it was discovered that he had a sexual relationship with a former inmate, said Westmoreland County Prison Deputy of Security Steve Cmar, who also conducts internal affairs investigations for the Westmoreland facility.

Mr. Cmar said he has found other allegations of abuse against jail employees, who were fired. Their cases are turned over to the county district attorney.

Mr. Cmar said the hardest part about investigating fellow employees is having the patience and persistence to get to the truth and wanting to find it.

"You have to want to do it," he said.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

February 3, 2008 Sunday

WASHINGTON EDITION

ANONYMOUS LETTER LISTS 'PROBLEMS' WITHIN JAIL

BYLINE: Janice Crompton, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

SECTION: METRO; Pg. W-1

LENGTH: 1008 words

An anonymous letter alleging overcrowding, understaffing and security issues at the Washington County Prison has caught the attention of county officials and the union representing jail guards.

The three-page typewritten letter is being circulated among county employees and officials, and was sent to prison board members, including Warden Joseph Pelzer, the county commissioners, District Attorney Steven Toprani, President Judge Debbie O'Dell Seneca, and other county officials last month.

The letter raises concerns over conditions and morale at the jail, both of which are deteriorating, according to the author, who remained anonymous "to avoid undesirable treatment" by jail administration and management.

William E. Lickert Jr., secretary and treasurer of Teamsters Local Union 205, which represents jail guards, has asked for a meeting with the prison board to discuss issues raised in the letter, which he believes "outlines the general attitude and the evolving problems at the facility that must be addressed."

Among the concerns raised in the letter is persistent overcrowding which "risks the safety and security of the staff members and the inmate population," according to the author.

The letter claims jail capacity, which is about 300 inmates, has been overtaxed in recent years, with some cells housing three inmates and other inmates sleeping on mattresses in the jail clinic.

The mattresses, said the author, "are hidden every time the facility is due for an inspection."

Deputy Warden Brian Hammett said the inmate population is always in flux because the facility holds everyone who needs to be confined countywide, whether it's for parking tickets or a homicide.

Mr. Hammett said the jail is always seeking ways to shift prisoners and make space.

"It's a constant process," he said. "It never ends."

Mr. Hammett characterized the jail as "a flagship operation" which has received perfect inspection reports from the state Department of Corrections since 2002.

Another issue the letter claims is chronic understaffing and mandated overtime which has resulted in at least one resignation. In an emergency, as few as two officers could be responding in a housing unit with 68 inmates.

The jail has about 58 security officers with an average daily population of 308 inmates, according to the Department of Corrections.

Officers are sometimes mandated to work up to eight extra hours per day to cover for staffing shortages, said the letter writer, and the deficiency is interfering with safety initiatives, such as CPR training for guards.

Mr. Hammett said there are legitimate concerns over staffing, but disputes the claim that it is jeopardizing security. He said it doesn't matter if two or 10 guards respond to a riot or fight involving 60 inmates, they could still be overpowered.

"It makes no difference," he said.

Staffing problems are rooted in the competition between the county and the state for jail staff, Mr. Hammett said.

The county usually comes out on the losing end, training jail guards who end up working at state correctional institutions in Greene and Fayette counties which offer better benefits and full-time jobs. Officers in the county lockup start out as part-time employees.

"As we train officers, we've rapidly been losing them at the new state facility," Mr. Hammett said of SCI Fayette, which opened in 2003.

Last week, the jail graduated nine new officers from its training program, Mr. Hammett said. In past years, the jail has sponsored one training program per year, but as they lose guards, training has been upped to four programs a year.

Also brought up in the letter was concern over the health of officers, who will begin contributing to their health care benefits as a result of an arbitration decision in December.

The author writes that guards "have sub-standard health care," with high deductibles and no dental or vision benefits.

County commissioner and prison board member Larry Maggi and Mr. Hammett said they believed the letter may have been spawned by the arbitration decision.

"I believe that the officers feel that they had an unfair arbitration decision," said Mr. Hammett.

"That is absolutely not true," Mr. Lickert said. While guards were not happy about the decision, he said, there were bigger issues at stake.

Mr. Lickert, who also received the anonymous letter, said he believes the concerns were raised largely due to an agreement between the county and the guards over mandated overtime.

In July, Mr. Lickert said, the jail was so understaffed that the county sought a temporary contract provision that required mandated overtime for jail guards.

The union agreed to the request as long as the issue was addressed by Dec. 31. But, Mr. Lickert said, the mandated overtime has continued this year with no real staffing progress. He said the county "bargained in bad faith."

"They had five months to correct the staffing problems," Mr. Lickert said. "When you have people working 16 hours a day, five days a week, that's a real problem."

Mr. Lickert backs up claims in the letter that some senior-level employees have resigned because of staffing problems.

"They're losing staff because of the way the staff is treated," he said.

The union has filed a grievance with the county and an unfair labor practice complaint with the state Labor Relations Board to resolve the issue.

In a Jan. 16 letter to the county, Mr. Lickert requested a meeting with the prison board to discuss issues raised in the anonymous letter.

Mr. Maggi, the county's former sheriff and a retired state police homicide investigator, said a meeting with Mr. Lickert is being scheduled. He said he never heard about most of the issues raised until the prison board received a copy of the letter.

He said the board immediately asked for an explanation from Mr. Pelzer, who told them the jail was running smoothly with no security breaches.

"He assured us there is no danger," Mr. Maggi said.

The person who wrote the letter, however, expressed concern that there could be injuries and said the mood among the staff has never been worse.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

February 3, 2008 Sunday

WASHINGTON EDITION

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Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

October 21, 2007 Sunday

WASHINGTON EDITION

Challenger meeting united front of incumbents

BYLINE: Janice Crompton, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

SECTION: METRO; Pg. W-1

LENGTH: 1103 words

In an election expected to draw few voters to the polls, the race for Washington County commissioner hinges on voter satisfaction and whether calls for change will be heard.

Incumbent Commissioners J. Bracken Burns, Larry Maggi and Diana Irey say the county is doing better than ever, with the second highest rate of job creation in southwestern Pennsylvania, the second lowest tax rate, and as one of only two local counties to experience population growth in the last census.

Pitted against what one political adviser calls a "formidable bipartisan troika," Republican challenger Mike Neville is calling for change, saying the county can do better with no tax increases, more open and publicly accessible government, and term limits for commissioners.

He and Mrs. Irey will appear on the GOP ticket in the Nov. 6 general election. Mr. Burns and Mr. Maggi are Democrats. The top three vote getters win. Mr. Burns, 62, of South Strabane, and Mrs. Irey, 45, of Carroll, will be seeking their fourth term in office, while Mr. Maggi, 56, of Buffalo, is running for his second term.

In a debate last week and throughout most of the campaign season, the incumbents have stuck together on issues, displaying a bipartisan spirit that had been lacking in previous years, when Mrs. Irey and Mr. Burns clashed bitterly over many issues.

Department heads, who in past years might have been dismissed because they were appointed by an opposing commissioner, now sport campaign buttons for all three incumbent candidates.

The commissioners have been finding ways to get along during the past couple of years because, they say, it's necessary to build a successful county.

And, they say they've done that, making Washington County the "crown jewel of southwestern Pennsylvania," according to Mr. Maggi.

"Everyone wants to come here," he said, highlighting the county's country charm and low tax rates, which have been drawing in new residential and commercial development over the past several years.

But Mr. Neville, 47, a former two-term Peters councilman, takes issue with the commissioners for a 22 percent county property tax increase in 2004 and for voting county employees, including themselves, an annual 3 percent pay raise. If elected, he would support neither, Mr. Neville said.

The chairman of commissioners -- this year Mr. Burns -- earns $66,890 annually, while the other two earn $65,890 a year.

The commissioners couch the increase not as a raise, but a cost-of-living adjustment that is given to all county employees. Mrs. Irey voted against the wage adjustment, and against the tax increase.

The commissioners went 12 years with no salary hike until the increase three years ago, and Mr. Burns said it's "primitive" to think that elected officials should not be compensated or that salaries shouldn't be adjusted when the cost of everything goes up by about 3 percent every year.

For the same reason, he said, it's naive to believe that taxes would never need to be increased when the cost of salaries, health benefits and other costs soar higher each year.

"It just doesn't happen in the real world," he said.

Even with the increase, the county retains the second lowest tax rate in southwestern Pennsylvania, he said, and the county has improved in other ways.

According to the state Department of Labor and Industry Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, about 7,000 new jobs have been created in Washington County from 1996 to 2006. During that time, unemployment rates went down from 5.6 percent to 5 percent.

Though the county has consistently been slightly behind the state and national unemployment averages, by July of this year -- the latest data available -- the county's unemployment rate was 4.4 percent, compared to the state average at 4.5 percent, and the national average of 4.9 percent.

The average weekly wage for county residents still lags behind the state at $642 per week, compared to $716 statewide.

The commissioners also have touted their work in economic development, including several new industrial and mixed-use business parks, such as Starpointe in Hanover, Alta Vista near Bentleyville and Southpointe II in Cecil.

Mr. Neville said he does not favor building new business parks while others remain vacant, but commissioners said the parks have only temporary vacancies, and more business parks are needed for long-range planning.

"I think that's wrong," Mr. Neville said. "I don't think that's good planning."

"We're growing in job creation, and we have a lot to offer," said Mrs. Irey, adding that businesses often have different needs and circumstances when relocating.

If elected, Mr. Neville said he would stay in office for a maximum of two terms, and propose additional commissioner's meetings, including televised meetings at little or no taxpayer cost, and evening meetings at least once a month, each held in a different municipality.

Mr. Neville said residents have told him they cannot attend the afternoon commissioner's meetings, held twice a month.

"I hear that everywhere I go," he said.

He also questioned Mr. Burns and Mr. Maggi for accepting a campaign donation earlier this year from the Dominion Political Action Committee.

The county, along with thousands of residents, have been opposing a plan by Allegheny Power to construct a 37-mile, 500-kilovolt electric transmission line through Washington and Greene counties. Another proposed line from Greene County would stretch through West Virginia, into Maryland, ending in Virginia, where Dominion Power will build the last leg of the project.

Dominion Power is an electric utility company in Virginia and North Carolina, but Mr. Burns said the campaign donation, $500 for a golf outing for he and Mr. Maggi, was donated by a longtime friend who works at Dominion Peoples, a Pennsylvania gas distribution company.

The Dominion PAC includes all Dominion companies, but Mr. Burns pointed out that he and Mr. Maggi have been outspoken in their protest to the power line, including their testimony arguing against it at a recent state Public Utility Commission hearing.

Three candidates who have formed a successful alliance will be a tough battle for Mr. Neville, according to Joseph DiSarro, professor and chairman of the Department of Political Science at Washington and Jefferson College.

"It seems they have decided to maintain power and they don't want a newcomer in the picture," he said.

Mr. Neville said he believes the current board of commissioners see their jobs as lifetime entitlements that they don't want to be threatened.

"I'm not running against anybody or any team," he said. "I'm running for the people of Washington County."

Pittsburgh Tribune Review

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[Allegheny Energy,](http://w3.nexis.com/new/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T14691947571&returnToId=20_T14691947574&csi=279079&A=0.7469296424877331&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23CC0002AOI%23&searchTerm=Allegheny%20Energy,%20&indexType=C) landowners in power play over transmission line

BYLINE: Rick Stouffer

LENGTH: 1057 words

The rolling hills, mature trees and alfalfa fields on Bill Pollock's century-old farm camouflage a growing battle pitting landowners against [Allegheny Energy Inc.](http://w3.nexis.com/new/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T14691947571&returnToId=20_T14691947574&csi=279079&A=0.7469296424877331&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23CC0002AOI%23&searchTerm=Allegheny%20Energy%20Inc.%20&indexType=C) over a proposed $1.3 billion high-voltage power line that would run through three states.

Pollock's farm in Somerset, Washington County, lies at the nexus of existing 138,000-volt and smaller transmission lines, and by 2011 could have the proposed 500,000-volt line consuming about 18 acres of the property.

It may become the focus of a test of new federal authority to site power lines granted by Congress in 2005. Opponents say [Allegheny Energy's](http://w3.nexis.com/new/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T14691947571&returnToId=20_T14691947574&csi=279079&A=0.7469296424877331&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23CC0002AOI%23&searchTerm=Allegheny%20Energy's&indexType=C) plan will bring higher electricity rates -- eliminating one of the region's attractions for business.

"If I thought this project was needed -- I wouldn't like it cutting across my property -- but I wouldn't fight it," Pollock said. "But when you look at the details, that's when I decided to really get involved."

Supporters of the project are [Allegheny Energy](http://w3.nexis.com/new/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T14691947571&returnToId=20_T14691947574&csi=279079&A=0.7469296424877331&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23CC0002AOI%23&searchTerm=Allegheny%20Energy%20&indexType=C) and PJM Interconnection LLC, the regional transmission organization that coordinates the movement of wholesale electricity in all or parts of 13 states, including Pennsylvania.

They say the project is designed to bring stability and solve reliability problems regionally, and to carry badly needed, low-cost power produced regionally to the East Coast.

"Real reliability problems were coming," said David E. Flitman, president of [Allegheny Energy's](http://w3.nexis.com/new/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T14691947571&returnToId=20_T14691947574&csi=279079&A=0.7469296424877331&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23CC0002AOI%23&searchTerm=Allegheny%20Energy's&indexType=C) Allegheny Power utility. "There is real potential for brownouts and blackouts within PJM, and they could happen in 2009, 2010."

The project -- formally the Tran-Allegheny Interstate Line -- would stretch 240 miles from Southwestern Pennsylvania, through West Virginia before ending in Loudoun County, Va., near Washington, and link with Dominion Virginia Power.

Three smaller 138,000-volt lines totalled 15 miles in length will be constructed -- two running east and west from a substation in North Strabane to connect with existing lines, and a third paralleling the larger line and running south.

[Allegheny Energy's](http://w3.nexis.com/new/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T14691947571&returnToId=20_T14691947574&csi=279079&A=0.7469296424877331&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23CC0002AOI%23&searchTerm=Allegheny%20Energy's&indexType=C) portion of the total cost is about $850 million, with the project slated for completion by 2011.

Public opposition to the Pennsylvania portion of Trans-Allegheny is growing and with it, political resistance.

"I've been in this office now for about 12 years, and I've never seen such an outcry by residents," said Washington County Commissioner Diana L. Irey, who said she and fellow commissioners Lawrence O. Maggi and J. Bracken Burns Sr. oppose the project. All are preparing testimony for upcoming state Public Utility Commission hearings. Dates and locations have not been announced.

The PUC must approve the project for it to move forward.

In Western Pennsylvania, Flitman said PJM and [Allegheny Energy](http://w3.nexis.com/new/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T14691947571&returnToId=20_T14691947574&csi=279079&A=0.7469296424877331&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23CC0002AOI%23&searchTerm=Allegheny%20Energy%20&indexType=C) have identified electricity reliability problems in Washington and Greene counties if the 500,000-volt line isn't constructed.

"A blackout here is a possibility," Flitman said. "The upgrading of the 138 kilovolt (one kilovolt equals 1,000 volts) lines -- we need them today."

Pollock and a growing group of opponents, known as "Stop the Towers," or the Energy Conservation Council of Pennsylvania, oppose the project on aesthetic grounds, over privacy rights and possible health issues. Some studies suggest electromagnetic waves from power lines can cause cancer.

They point to security concerns -- vandalism or even terrorist actions -- at the 190 power line towers, up to 175 feet tall, that the 500,000-volt line will require in Pennsylvania alone.

More than 4,000 people have signed a Stop the Towers petition, said Willard R. Burns, a leader of the non-profit group and an attorney in the Pittsburgh office of Pepper Hamilton LLP.

Pollock has worked in the power industry since the 1970s, including the last 12 years as head of his own energy-environmental consulting firm. He's worked on power generation and transmission projects, he said.

"There currently are more than enough transmission lines in place to handle power needs in Washington and Greene counties," he said. "There is a need for upgrades to some facilities, but there is no need to bring ... the new 500,000 volt line into Washington County."

He pointed to [Allegheny Energy's](http://w3.nexis.com/new/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T14691947571&returnToId=20_T14691947574&csi=279079&A=0.7469296424877331&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23CC0002AOI%23&searchTerm=Allegheny%20Energy's&indexType=C) 1,710-megawatt Hatfield's Ferry power plant in Cumberland, Greene County, as having more than enough generating capacity to handle all of Washington and Greene counties' needs, which he estimated are growing at 3 percent a year.

Flitman said customer power needs in Washington County alone over the last six to eight years have been growing at about 4 percent annually. And with new commercial development around the Meadows race track, and other projects -- such as the $404 million Victory Centre, including a Bass Pro Shop and Tanger Outlets, planned or under way along Interstates 70 and 79 and Route 19 -- "the current system wasn't built to handle the growth."

There's the question of who pays for the power line project, Pollock says. Transmission of power is a state-regulated business, so all work performed within Pennsylvania would be paid for by [Allegheny Energy](http://w3.nexis.com/new/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T14691947571&returnToId=20_T14691947574&csi=279079&A=0.7469296424877331&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23CC0002AOI%23&searchTerm=Allegheny%20Energy%20&indexType=C) customers, Flitman said.

Transmission costs comprise about 5 percent of an average customer's bill. That would increase. And [Allegheny Energy](http://w3.nexis.com/new/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T14691947571&returnToId=20_T14691947574&csi=279079&A=0.7469296424877331&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23CC0002AOI%23&searchTerm=Allegheny%20Energy%20&indexType=C) would benefit by selling its low-cost power into high-cost areas to the east, said Richard Tabors, vice president with consulting firm CRA International, Boston.

And there is the question of who will have the final say on the project -- state or federal regulators.

Many opponents fear [Allegheny Energy](http://w3.nexis.com/new/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T14691947571&returnToId=20_T14691947574&csi=279079&A=0.7469296424877331&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23CC0002AOI%23&searchTerm=Allegheny%20Energy%20&indexType=C) will appeal a PUC ruling against the project to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 gave FERC what's referred to as "backstop" authority to overrule a state if national power grid security and reliability are in jeopardy.

"This was a bipartisan agreement to give the federal government some additional power in these situations," said Elliot Roseman, a transmission expert and vice president with ICF Consulting Group, Fairfax, Va. "The power was given as a catalyst, not a big stick to hit states over the head. FERC becomes the arbiter of last resort."

[Allegheny Energy's](http://w3.nexis.com/new/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T14691947571&returnToId=20_T14691947574&csi=279079&A=0.7469296424877331&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23CC0002AOI%23&searchTerm=Allegheny%20Energy's&indexType=C) Flitman said his company doesn't want the federal government involved. "We intend to work closely with the PUC," he said.

"We think when the PUC gets the details of the project, they will say 'no'," Pollock said.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

April 17, 2005 Sunday WASHINGTON EDITION

CAMPAIGN 2005;

3 DEMOCRATS,;

ONE REPUBLICAN;

SEEK SHERIFF'S JOB PRIMARY PITS WELL-KNOWN LAWMEN

BYLINE: Joe Smydo Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

SECTION: LOCAL, Pg.W-5

LENGTH: 682 words

The Democratic race for Washington County sheriff features three well-known lawmen who say they can add to the office's growing reputation for efficiency and professionalism.

Canonsburg police Superintendent R.T. Bell said he was prepared to give up a 37-year career with that department to run the sheriff's office. Chief Deputy Bill Bryker said he had played an integral role in upgrading the sheriff's office the past eight years and would build on that record. Sam Romano, a sheriff's deputy for 15 years, said he would give the office a greater role in the war on drugs and juvenile crime.

The primary is May 17. Cpl. Ralph McCullough, of the Carroll Township Police Department, is unopposed for the Republican nomination.

Bell, 60, son of former Canonsburg Mayor Lou Bell, said he was a team player who had worked well with various mayors and councils. He's so popular that the council voted to jump-start his candidacy.

Civil service rules prevented Bell, police chief for 27 years, from holding that position and running for office at the same time. Council created the superintendent's position to remove the legal impediment.

Bell said he was a competent administrator who had never been over budget, instituted a crime-watch program and was the first in the world to try the Watchful Shepherd program, arming abused women and children with transmitters allowing them to call for help.

Bell is popular among his peers, too. He was president of the Western Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police and vice president of Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 22.

As sheriff, Bell said, he would be a partner to police departments, judges and the district attorney's office. Bell is a member of the district attorney's drug task force and served on the Washington-Greene Drug and Alcohol Planning Commission.

Bryker has been as much a fixture in Washington as Bell has been in Canonsburg. He's been in law enforcement for 30 years, most of them as a patrolman, detective, patrol sergeant and shift commander with the Washington Police Department.

He retired from that department in 1997 and joined the sheriff's office the next year, as then-Sheriff Larry Maggi began repairing the image of an office previous officeholders had tarnished with budget overruns and a job-selling scandal. Maggi, now a county commissioner, has called Bryker one of a select group of veteran officers he brought to the sheriff's office for their administrative abilities and to act as role models for young deputies.

As part of the management team, Bryker said, he's written policies, obtained grants and created a bicycle patrol unit for the county parks. Training has been a special priority, especially for a courthouse tactical unit.

When Maggi was elected commissioner, John Rheel moved from chief deputy to sheriff and named Bryker chief deputy. Rheel, another of the veteran outsiders Maggi brought to the office, isn't running for a full term.

Bryker said he was running for office to cement the work of Maggi and Rheel and build on their legacy.

Romano, 40, a member of the sheriff's warrant squad, goes places and sees things most people don't. He said his work collaring fugitives took him to gritty neighborhoods where he's received a close-up look at how drugs destroy families and lead to other kinds of crime.

Romano said he would expand the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program in schools and take steps to combat juvenile delinquency. The sheriff traditionally hasn't played a role in prevention of youth crime, but Romano said he saw the office as a forum for promoting character and life skills.

While he praised Maggi and other sheriffs, Romano said he wouldn't use the sheriff's position as a springboard to higher office. A "full-time, long-term commitment" is a main theme of his campaign.

When Maggi took office, a group of deputies objected to some of the changes he made in the office, prompting a spate of union grievances and division of the office, for a time, into two camps. Romano said he gets along with everyone in the office.

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

January 20, 2005, Thursday, BC cycle

Common law deputy power still used in Pennsylvania

BYLINE: By JOE MANDAK, Associated Press Writer

SECTION: State and Regional

LENGTH: 870 words

DATELINE: PITTSBURGH

County sheriffs across the country have the common-law power - posse comitatus, literally "the power of the county" - to issue badges and deputize most anyone to help keep the peace.

But while posses have become passe, the practice of appointing what are called "special" deputies lives on in Pennsylvania. Such power has landed sheriffs across the country in hot water when it's abused, often for political purposes.

The badges are "like a get-out-of-jail-free card," said Professor Risdon Slate, who chairs Florida Southern College's criminology department. Slate said the badges aren't likely to get someone out of serious trouble - but they could help someone avoid a ticket during a traffic stop.

"I think anytime you throw politics into the mix, you create an atmosphere where that sort of thing might happen," said Slate, who noted that issuing badges for political gain is as old as the office of sheriff itself.

Earlier this month, federal authorities served subpoenas on Allegheny County Sheriff Pete DeFazio's office seeking his campaign finance records and a list of 294 "special" deputies ranging from Pittsburgh mayoral candidate and county prothonotary Michael Lamb to Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger, said Michael Mullen Jr., DeFazio's executive assistant and campaign treasurer.

Federal authorities aren't commenting on the probe, but Mullen said he believes that the special deputies list is at the center of the investigation. Only 12 percent of those given the "special" badges have contributed to DeFazio's campaigns, Mullen said.

DeFazio's attorney, Anthony Mariani, said he was told by federal investigators that DeFazio isn't being targeted by the feds. DeFazio was elected in 1997 and is running for a third four-year term this year.

"Remember that sheriffs are political jobs," said Professor James M. Denham, also of Florida Southern College, who wrote a history of sheriffs in that state. Handing out badges "is a great way to create and sustain a political faction and political support."

"Now, these things are not necessarily sinister or corrupt. They can be, of course, but they're really a way of creating a power base," Denham said.

In 2000, the Connecticut legislature created the position of state marshal and abolished that state's 334-year-old county sheriff system following a state attorney general's report that suggested that some sheriffs were selling the badges. The following year, Suffolk County (N.Y.) Sheriff Patrick Mahoney pleaded guilty to using county employees to raise campaign funds in a scandal that included claims that private contributors had gotten badges. In 2003, Bergen (N.J.) County Sheriff Joel Trella issued new badges to his deputies after a predecessor admitted selling "honorary special deputy" badges to finance his campaign.

In Pennsylvania, Mercer County Sheriff William Romine hasn't used special deputies since taking office in 1988, in part, because of past abuses. Romine, who is also president of the Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association, wouldn't detail his concerns.

"Over the years there had been some comments about problems with people having them, people having badges and not being actual law enforcement," Romine said.

Lawrence Maggi, now a Washington County commissioner, scrapped a special deputy program when he was the county's sheriff in 1997, calling it a form of political patronage.

Others are careful to distinguish between different types of special deputies.

DeFazio, and Sheriff Christopher Scherer in neighboring Westmoreland County, both use nonprofit deputy reserve organizations to outfit a roster of special volunteer deputies who are used for traffic control and security details. The Westmoreland County deputies also run a charity fund-raising picnic and perform public service, such as collecting used cell phones for senior citizens. But Scherer doesn't issue special badges for purely honorary purposes.

Butler attorney Thomas King III, solicitor for the Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association, said such volunteer reserve deputies are the same, legally, as the "special" deputies appointed by DeFazio and others. Since 1955, Pennsylvania's county code has noted sheriffs' broad discretion to appoint deputies, essentially codifying their centuries-old common-law powers, King said.

Mullen said special deputies like Roethlisberger can be useful for making anti-drug speeches at schools or other community outreach projects. Special deputies don't receive the municipal police training that paid deputies do, they don't carry weapons - though reservists do - and have power only when they're called to duty for a specific purpose.

King defended the special badges, which in Allegheny County look just like a paid deputy's badge except that they're silver- rather than gold-colored and have the word "special" engraved across the top.

"They may be people who are respected in the community, they may be people that Pete respects - and they may just be a good guy that Pete would feel comfortable honoring," King said. "It certainly doesn't hurt the image of the sheriff's department that Ben Roethlisberger is a deputy - especially as (the Steelers) keep on winning."

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

November 7, 2004 Sunday WASHINGTON EDITION

LOCAL BUSINESSES FEAR THEIR GAMING ODDS POLICE AMBIVALENCE TOWARD ILLEGAL GAMBLING EXPECTED TO CHANGE

BYLINE: Joe Smydo Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

SECTION: LOCAL, Pg.W-1

LENGTH: 1598 words

Bars, restaurants and fraternal groups fear the opening of slot-machine venues in Pennsylvania will bring a crackdown on illegal gambling machines at their establishments, depriving them of tax-free income that's keeping some of them afloat.

Police said they had no plan for an assault on illegal machines, a mainstay of southwestern Pennsylvania culture.

However, in what establishments view as an ominous sign, the gaming bill Gov. Ed Rendell signed in July gives $5 million a year to local police departments "to enforce and prevent the unlawful operation of slot machines in this commonwealth." Some officials and hospitality industry leaders said they doubted gaming interests and the state, two of the parties poised to benefit from up to 61,000 slot machines at racetracks and other venues, will tolerate competition from the corner bar.

Bars and restaurants also expect to lose food and alcohol sales to glitzy eateries at slot-machine venues, said Amy Christie, executive director of Pennsylvania Tavern Association, and Joe Pintola, president of Washington-Greene-Fayette Licensed Beverage Association.

Christie estimated as many as half of the independently owned establishments in some counties will go out of business because of the gaming bill, which supporters have hailed as an economic stimulus likely to generate $3 billion a year. Pintola portrayed gaming venues as the Wal-Marts of the hospitality industry, likely to take business not only from bars and restaurants but also from newsstands, bookshops and hotels.

A crackdown on illegal gambling portends a sweeping change of the cultural landscape. Beyond bars and restaurants, it would affect the veterans groups, ethnic clubs, civic groups and fraternal lodges that subsidize operations with tax-free gambling proceeds, Washington County Commissioner Larry Maggi said.

"I've had people tell me if it weren't for the machines, they wouldn't be able to survive." Maggi, a former county sheriff and state trooper, said law-enforcement colleagues have told him a crackdown on illegal gambling likely will follow the introduction of slot machines.

Maggi said he was among those who had hoped the slots bill would reach beyond racetracks, resorts and standalone gaming parlors to permit a certain number of machines at bars, restaurants and clubs.

Supporters said legalizing the machines and taxing the proceeds would help small businesses compete with slot-machine venues and funnel additional revenue to the state. The proposal enjoys some support among lawmakers and businesses and hospitality trade groups, but it's been blocked by those fearing too dramatic an expansion of legalized gambling.

Establishment owners and trade groups said they believe Pennsylvania will follow New Jersey, which has zero tolerance for illegal gambling.

New Jersey's hard line predates the Atlantic City casinos, said Lewis Rothbart, manager of that state's Licensed Beverage Association. But he said the casinos for years have fought the association's efforts to legalize gambling machines in bars.

Huge profits

Business owners, managers and others said an illegal gambling machine has the potential to generate hundreds of dollars a week, maybe more, depending on the establishment's location. The money is divided between the establishment owner and the vendor supplying the machine, with a percentage set aside for payouts.

An official at one club said the machines pay out at least 70 percent of what they take in. He estimated the weekly proceeds on an average machine, after payouts and the vendor's cut, is $200 for the establishment.

A federal case this year involving a private men's club in Easton, Northampton County, showed more clearly how lucrative illegal gambling can be.

The U.S. attorney's office for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania alleged the club, called the Order of Fleas, grossed nearly $9 million over 10 years and used the money to pay vendors and employees. During that period, officials said, club members and guests fed about $100 million into 15 video-poker machines.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert Goldman, who handled the case, said he considered the club's profits astonishing but not necessarily unique. He said he understands why a statewide assault on illegal gambling would stir worry.

"A lot of these clubs really subsidize their existence and their cheap food and liquor through the gambling machines," Goldman said.

Without gambling machines, he said, the Fleas club has "barely a pulse."

Even without a crackdown, people familiar with video poker said, bars and other establishments will lose gambling proceeds to slot-machine venues with a greater variety of games. They said lost revenue may force establishments to reduce hours, lay off staff, decrease charitable work or close.

Police, government officials and others offered little sympathy for businesses using illegal machines, and some laughed at the prospect of business owners ruing the loss of underground income.

Yet the machines have a long history in Washington County and other parts of the state, their presence is well known, and some businesses have operated them with the consent of those empowered to halt illegal gambling.

In 1995, Erie Preate Jr. resigned as state attorney general and pleaded guilty to mail fraud, admitting he concealed campaign contributions from video-poker operators.

Five years later, the former Carroll police chief, Howard Springer, pleaded guilty to charges stemming from his use of video poker machines at a township deli. Springer received $7,500 in payouts from August 1996 to December 1997, court records alleged.

In 2001, a federal jury convicted former District Justice Ronald Amati of running a video-poker operation out of a Finleyville coffee shop. Assistant U.S. Attorney James Wilson, who handled the case, later called video poker the most lucrative illegal enterprise in Western Pennsylvania.

Tradition of ambivalence

In Pennsylvania, it's illegal to make a payout or to possess a machine rigged for gambling. Such machines have "knockoff switches" to clear a winner's credits and internal mechanisms for tracking bets and winnings.

Sometimes, the machines are played in the open; other times, they're played in back rooms or behind curtains. If the owner or bartender knows a winning player, money quietly changes hands; if the parties don't know each other, the winner may get nothing.

Those caught running illegal gambling concerns often say authorities should devote their time to more serious crimes. But authorities note the links among illegal gambling, tax evasion and organized crime.

Government has taken what some called a hypocritical approach to illegal gambling. Some municipalities license amusement devices -- charging more for slot machines than video games, pinball machines and jukeboxes -- but don't check to see whether the slot machines are rigged for gambling.

Canonsburg this year licensed 85 slot machines in 20 establishments. Washington has as many as 81 in 26 businesses and Monongahela licensed 47 in 11 establishments. A handful of business owners and managers contacted for this story declined to comment about their machines.

The state police Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement cited three Washington County establishments for gambling machines in the past 12 months. Statewide last year, LCE issued 299 gambling citations, made 77 arrests, seized 515 machines and confiscated about $106,000.

Establishment owners and police said enforcement could be tougher. Local police, for example, rarely get involved in gambling cases.

Canonsburg police Chief R.T. Bell said his department will respond to complaints about gambling machines but doesn't have the time, manpower or expertise to check whether machines are rigged for gambling or to make gambling investigations a priority. Maggi said the public's ambivalence about illegal gambling also restrains local police.

"You're not going to look hard at that," Maggi said.

John Milliron, counsel for Pennsylvania Amusement and Music Machine Association, a vendors group, said he's sensed a general indifference to illegal gambling over the years.

Until now, he said, "nobody cared."

"Cleanup" predicted

Establishment owners, trade groups and government officials predicted law-enforcement's stand soon will harden for two reasons: the state's financial interest in slot machines and pressure from racetracks and other gaming interests that will pay as much as $50 million each for slot-machine licenses.

They said neither party will want competition from illegal gambling concerns that do not meet rigorous operating standards set out in the state gaming law or pay a whoping 52 percent tax on their profits.

A crackdown "would certainly be helpful" to gaming interests and the state, said Tom Acevedo, chief of staff for the Mohegan Tribe, which operates a casino in Connecticut and last month announced the $280 million purchase of Pocono Downs racetrack near Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County.

Fran Cleaver, a lawyer for state Sen. Robert M. Tomlinson, R-Bucks County, one of the leading proponents of the gaming bill, said she sees a crackdown on illegal gambling as a necessary corollary to legalized gaming. She said the $5 million police appropriation in the gaming bill is for "cleanup" efforts, saying illegal machines can't be allowed to operate blocks away from a legal venue.

"I think the answer to your question is, yes, there will be a crackdown," she said.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

April 11, 2004 Sunday REGION EDITION

IREY GETS A TASTE;

OF BEING THE MINORITY AFTER UPSET GAVE HER LEADING ROLE, SHE'S NOW 3RD AMONG 3

BYLINE: JOE SMYDO PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

SECTION: LOCAL, Pg.W-1

LENGTH: 1472 words

Washington County Commissioner Diana L. Irey has made it her business the past eight-plus years to meet with county employees who had questions, comments and concerns about the government.

Now, Republican Irey says, a "grapevine" of workers and political observers is helping to keep her informed as she ekes out a role as minority commissioner in the administration of Democrats J. Bracken Burns and Larry Maggi.

In what she termed a payback for making Burns odd man out last term, and what others would call politics as usual, Irey said Burns and Maggi had cut her out of the government. She said they'd excluded her from meetings, canceled meetings without informing her, failed to inform her of initiatives and slowed to a trickle the paperwork reaching her office.

"I believe, in Bracken's eyes, this is his revenge toward me," she said.

Last term, Irey formed an alliance with Burns' running mate, John Bevec. Burns made many of the complaints Irey makes now.

But Burns and Maggi denied they mistreated Irey.

"We're all three elected, and we all three should have a say. We all three should be here and participate in it," Maggi said.

Maggi said Irey would be better informed if she spent more time in the office. Is he calling Irey a truant?

"I don't even want to go there because she's an elected official. What she determines is enough time in the office is up to her. I'm here every day. Bracken's here every day," Maggi said.

Burns, describing himself as the "rented mule" of the past administration, said he has made a point of treating Irey better than she treated him.

"I didn't have to try very hard to do that," he said.

Since January, Irey has disagreed with the Democrats about their budget, insurance for retirees and compensation for members of the tax appeals board.

But her complaints barely have registered in the public arena. She hasn't unleashed any broadsides.

Those who have followed Irey might say she isn't out of ammunition, just reloading.

Irey is a GOP favorite who rubs elbows with the Santorums and Specters of her party but said the demands of motherhood had kept her from seeking higher office.

She landed in office in January 1996 like a political bombshell. With no previous political experience, she did the unthinkable: gave the heavily Democratic county a second Republican commissioner for the first time in recent memory.

She didn't stop making waves, either, forming an alliance with Burns at the expense of senior Republican Joseph A. Ford. Then-Gov. Tom Ridge took the unusual step of attending the freshman commissioner's fund-raiser, and Irey's stock soared as she wove herself into the party fabric, happily chairing the county campaigns of congressional and statewide office-seekers.

Meanwhile, Irey kept her name in the headlines by questioning operations at Children and Youth Services and the county health center and by calling for a county "inspector general" to investigate complaints of mismanagement. She kept department heads busy responding to complaints and problems employees brought to her door.

Her detractors accused her of back-stabbing and grandstanding. Admirers called her a skillful politician.

Told Irey was accusing him of mistreating her, Maggi said the remarks made him angry. Many who have worked with her know the feeling.

The charming Irey, some would say beguiling, proved adept at raising money. People wondered, would she run for Legislature, lieutenant governor, auditor general, Congress?

Irey stayed put.

She had a taste of the minority commissioner's job in 1998, when Ford resigned and was replaced by Republican Scott Fergus. Burns and Fergus formed a partnership, leading Irey at the time to describe herself as the third wheel.

But four years ago, at the start of her second term, she teamed with Bevec at Burns' expense and wielded influence a minority commissioner generally doesn't have. Burns lamented the minority commissioner's role.

When Burns and Maggi ousted Bevec last year, the petite Irey said she was consigned a like-sized role in the government.

"I wasn't surprised," she said.

But how much can a person take?

Irey said the Democrats' choice for county director of administration, former state Rep. Leo J. Trich Jr., tried to tell her how to handle the media. Irey, a media darling from the get-go, said she told Trich she didn't need advice.

Bevec and Irey complained that Burns gave them the cold shoulder.

But Irey said she hadn't reacted the same way. If pouring a cup of coffee for herself, she said, she'll pour for the other two.

Like Irey is doing now, Burns had accused Bevec and Irey of disregarding his ideas and excluding him from meetings. He complained that his colleagues gave him no opportunity to make appointments to county-related boards.

In what they cast as an example of bipartisanship, Burns and Maggi allowed Irey to make an appointment to the tax-appeals board. But Irey said she'd like more involvement than that, claiming Burns might not have liked the decisions made last term, but at least was better informed than she has been.

Like a mother watching over mischievous sons, Irey said she would try to monitor Burns and Maggi and admonish them when necessary. She said one taxpayer described her role as the "county's conscience."

When Irey and Bevec took the chairmanship from Burns and fired his favorite department heads, Burns accused the pair of "gutter government" and a "coup d'etat."

Irey uses an equally pejorative term for the Burns-Maggi administration -- secret government. She said Burns, Maggi and Trich conferred behind closed doors, keeping her and the public out of the loop.

Last year, Irey and Bevec shelved a proposal to have the Washington County Authority float a $5.5 million bond issue for Ballpark Scholarships Inc., the nonprofit group that owns Falconi Field in North Franklin.

Irey said she learned from a member of authority that Burns and Maggi resurrected the idea this year. She said the pair should have informed her and discussed the matter publicly.

She said she learned from an employee about a plan to restructure the county revenue department, possibly dividing operations among other offices.

While he and Maggi may have discussed the bond issue, Burns said, it wasn't formally revisited. Burns and Maggi said Irey would be better informed if she were in the office when matters came before the commissioners on a daily basis.

"That's bogus," Irey said, claiming Burns and Maggi met with authority members about the proposed bond issue while she was sitting in her office.

Maggi said possible changes in the revenue department were discussed at a meeting of a financial task force he convened. Irey has been invited to the meetings, he said, but attended one.

Asked whether department heads had been asked to keep memos from Irey, Maggi said, "Absolutely not." Burns agreed.

Because she's been relegated to the passenger seat, Irey said, she spends more time than before at speaking engagements and at meetings of county-related agencies.

Also, she said, employees with complaints now want to meet with her out of the office. Maggi, a former state trooper and county sheriff, said he knew information from unofficial channels isn't always accurate and can lead to misunderstandings.

Irey said she was also working on an economic development venture that could bring more than $450 million in international investment to the county.

She declined to provide details but said she'd told her colleagues about the opportunity, for which she has made one overseas trip and will make another this week. She said she wasn't billing the county for the travel costs.

She said she learned of the opportunity through her husband, Bob, executive at a Southpointe firm, CLI Corp., that provides consulting, management and other services in the coal and mineral industries. She said CLI Corp. wouldn't be the primary beneficiary of the venture here.

Irey said she didn't know whether she's lost her political momentum of two terms ago, but that some of the state's biggest Republicans still call her for support.

She doesn't rule out running for higher office someday, but said she couldn't consider the possibility now because her husband travels for work and her children, 14, 13, and 10, require much of her time.

Besides, she said, she believes the county still needs her.

Late last year, Irey said she considered the Burns-Maggi alliance a fragile partnership and expected her influence to grow as differences between the two developed. But last week, she said she was just trying to make the best of her current situation.

"You have to know what's in your control and what's out of your control, and you have to be able to accept that," she said.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

February 1, 2004 Sunday REGION EDITION

WITHOUT GRANT, PEOPLE BEING FORCED FROM HOMES HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT FORGETS TO RENEW APPLICATION FOR THOSE IN FEDERALLY SUBSIDIZED HOUSING

SECTION: LOCAL, Pg.W-1

LENGTH: 1443 words

By Joe Smydo

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Homeless once before, about 20 clients, some individuals, some families, are being forced out of federally subsidized apartments and may have to fend for themselves because Washington County's Human Services Department forgot to seek renewal of the grant paying their rent and utilities.

The oversight also may force seven young adults to leave a Washington house and strike out on their own before they're ready to do so. The 18- to 22-year-olds, who have mental health and substance abuse problems, pay reduced rent while learning how to make it on their own.

The programs have waiting lists, meaning the loss of funding affects not only today's clients. Because they help the disadvantaged make a transition to self-sufficiency over a period of years, if necessary, the programs are considered a step above shelters, which provide the homeless with short-term stays and services.

"It's a significant loss, and we prided ourselves in Washington County on being able to have a good continuum of care for the homeless," said Ame Linn, supervisor with Connect Inc.

An affiliate of Southwestern Pennsylvania Human Services, of Monessen, Connect Inc. is scrambling to find homes for the 20 clients displaced from the agency's apartments in Washington and Donora. But Luther Sheets, chief development officer for the parent agency, said most were unlikely to land in a Connect-style program.

"For this particular population," he said, "the options are pretty bleak."

The application for a grant renewal -- the county wanted about $1.6 million for three years -- should have been filed last summer with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The county's coordinator for homeless services was on a medical leave at the time, and "the ball was dropped," Commissioner J. Bracken Burns said.

George Krcelich, who headed the county's human services department at the time, said the deadline was missed even though he reminded a staff member about it before going on vacation. Because of the mistake, he suspended one employee for a week and another for three days.

Burns said he hoped to explain the error to HUD and ask the agency to provide money to keep the programs operating. The homeless, he said, should not be penalized for the county's shortcoming.

"We will be pursuing it to see if there's any way to recover the lost time and the lost revenue," Burns said.

The county must try to right the ship without a human services director. Krcelich resigned in December, fearing Burns and new Commissioner Larry Maggi would fire him during the shake-up that often accompanies a change in administrations.

Krcelich, who, during four years as director, often was at odds with Burns, took a pay cut and moved into a lower-level position in the Human Services Department. Burns and Maggi fired him anyway, and the commissioners have yet to hire a human services director.

Spokesmen for U.S. Rep. Tim Murphy, R-Upper St. Clair, Allegheny County, and John Murtha, D-Johnstown, Cambria County, said the county had not asked the congressmen to intervene with HUD. The spokesmen said Murphy and Murtha would be happy to do so.

But Richard Nemoytin, director of HUD's Pittsburgh office, had this to say about the possibility of stopgap funding:

"There isn't any that I'm aware of."

When the county didn't apply, he said, the money was distributed to other programs. He said Washington County may apply again this year.

Because the grant process is competitive, the county wasn't guaranteed a renewal last year. But Nemoytin said county officials had a very good chance of getting the money because their application was a hit three years ago.

"Someone at that point in time thought they had a good program and funded it to the tune of $1 million," he said.

The loss of funding means people who have been homeless, or at risk of being homeless, will be forced from the nest before they're ready to fly. Some may revert to living situations as bad as, or worse than, those they experienced before entering the housing programs.

"There is that potential," said Scott Hilliard, executive director of Try Again Homes of Washington. Hilliard's agency operates the program for young adults, called Can Do.

The missed deadline also means the county, which raised taxes by 3.9 mills last month to close a $4 million deficit, will lose money that could have been used to subsidize operation of the Human Services Department.

While the county has operated the housing programs through contracts with Connect and Try Again Homes, it took a slice of the grant for oversight and administrative expenses.

The county took $37,800 of the initial three-year, $1.6 million grant, awarded in 2001. The money helped to pay salaries of employees in the Human Services Department, including the salaries of those blamed for missing the application deadline.

Records in the county controller's office show the commissioners allocated most of the grant, more than $1 million, to two related programs operated by Connect.

While Connect has held the apartment leases and used grant money to pay rent and utilities, Sheet said, the agency asked clients to contribute 30 percent of their income toward housing expenses.

Connect has provided case management services to help clients work on the problems that led to their homelessness, and its life skills program has taught clients how to budget money and be good tenants.

Substance abuse, mental illness or other disabilities sometimes are causes of homelessness. Domestic problems also drive men and women from their homes, though they have no other place to go.

Clients remain in Connect apartments for varying periods, depending on each's need. As many as 50 individuals and families may be served in a year, but Linn said some had been in Connect's programs for longer than two years.

With the grant money poised to run out April 30, Connect has stopped accepting clients from Washington County and begun the process of relocating 20 clients in the programs Oct. 1.

Linn said she had helped find homes for four individuals and families, and was working with four other clients now. Of those eight clients, two will stay in transitional housing programs, including one who has been assigned a Connect apartment in Westmoreland County.

With recent criminal cases and credit problems, many Connect clients aren't eligible for reduced-rent apartments operated by the county Housing Authority. Ordinarily, Linn said, Connect's programs give clients time to repair credit and reputations so they one day will be eligible for Housing Authority programs.

Linn said many Connect clients would have to pay their own way in private housing, live with family members or go to shelters. She said shelters, a step down in the continuum of care, may limit a person's stay to 30 or 60 days.

During the past two years, the county has provided Try Again Homes with more than $300,000 for the Can Do program.

Hilliard said young adults were referred to the program from other social-service agencies, such as substance abuse and mental health treatment organizations.

He said clients may live in the house as long as two years while they work and receive informal instruction in independent living. Like Connect, Try Again Homes requires clients to contribute 30 percent of their income to housing expenses.

The program got high marks from Jeff Felton, county director of Children and Youth Services. Felton said he knew children in the CYS system weren't necessarily ready for independence when they become adults at 18.

Krcelich said he suggested using the Human Service Development Fund, discretionary money from the state, to keep the Can Do program operating when the federal grant money runs out July 31.

But other county programs already tap the development fund. The commissioners and their new human services director will have to decide whether to allocate some of those funds to Can Do.

If no money becomes available, Hilliard said, his agency will try to find alternative housing for clients. Ordinarily, he said, Connect's programs would be an excellent substitute.

For Linn, each client's relocation presents a different set of challenges.

One client's mental illness prevents her from working. She owes $1,200 in back rent and doesn't qualify for a Housing Authority apartment. If the client returns to her dysfunctional family, she may resume her drug use.

"What," Linn said, "are we going to do?"

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

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GUESS TODAY, LEARN TOMORROW WILL BURNS AND MAGGI BE PARTNERS OR ANTAGONISTS AT THE COURTHOUSE?

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LENGTH: 1420 words

By Joe Smydo

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Washington County Commissioner J. Bracken Burns might be tempted this weekend to hide his running mate from Commissioner Diana L. Irey, who has a reputation for shattering political alliances.

But Democrat Burns said he wouldn't stash Commissioner-elect Larry Maggi in a secure and undisclosed location, a la Dick Cheney, or take other measures to keep Republican Irey at arm's length on the eve of the board's reorganization meeting.

"I'm sure she's already made her overtures," Burns said, confident Maggi won't disappoint him the way John Bevec did in January 2000.

Then, in what Burns termed a coup d'etat, Bevec abandoned his running mate and teamed with Irey. The two stripped Burns of the chairmanship, fired his favorite department heads and gave him a back-seat role in a government that Burns said has idled for four lonely years.

A new term begins tomorrow, with the reorganization meeting set for 2 p.m. With Bevec voted out of office and Irey theoretically returned to the role of minority commissioner, Burns hopes he and Maggi will embark as partners on such initiatives as halting the migration of the county's young people and laying a technology infrastructure that will draw businesses and residents.

But the political monolith of a previous era, with Democratic commissioners moving in lockstep and a powerful chairman setting the agenda, isn't likely to return.

Burns and Maggi respect each other and share a love of the county.

But Maggi, the budget-conscious county sheriff for six years and a retired state trooper, is more conservative than Burns and may balk at proposals to increase spending or the size of government. Burns, who in previous terms advocated neighborhood beautification programs and community wellness programs, sees innovation as part of his job description.

"I mean, I'm not here as a caretaker," Burns said.

The public will get an early look at how Maggi juggles his values, loyalty to Burns and duty to the taxpayers. With Bevec, Burns and Irey unable to agree on a 2004 budget before the end of their term, one of Maggi's initial duties will be to cast the deciding vote.

Will he side with Burns, who sees a 3.9-mill tax increase as necessary, or embrace some of the cost-cutting ideas proposed by Irey? Burns has left his running mate little wiggle room by saying Irey's ideas, such as freezing spending at last year's levels, are unrealistic.

Fiscal policy won't be the only strain on the Democrats' alliance.

Maggi unsuccessfully ran for Congress in 2002 and still may harbor high political aspirations. If so, he will want to establish a high profile even as Burns attempts to regain the control and limelight he lost to Bevec.

Already, Burns and Maggi have wrangled over the chairmanship. Burns said he believed the role should go to him because he's the senior Democrat and "wasn't enthusiastic" when Maggi suggested taking the position as top vote-getter in the Nov. 4 election.

The two wouldn't detail the compromise they reached about a month ago, though Burns noted the County Code doesn't require a chairman and hinted at a kind of power-sharing arrangement that would have been a laughable concept during the Frank Mascara era a decade ago.

Irey said she hasn't been let in on the secret.

"I don't know what to expect at the reorganization meeting," she said. "My first two have shown me they're always full of surprises."

Four years ago, Irey made the motion that gave Bevec the chairmanship and made her, de facto, the second majority commissioner. In 1996, she abandoned Republican running mate Joseph A. Ford and made an alliance with Burns that gave each commissioner the chairmanship for 16 months.

But as Irey tells it, her reputation as a divide-and-conquer specialist is misplaced. She said she merely agreed in 2000 to a partnership proposed by Bevec and in 1996 to one proposed by Burns.

She said no one's courted her vote for chairman this time, and she has no plans to nominate anybody for the position at the reorganization meeting.

Irey said she expects her role "to start out in one direction and then change," meaning her influence may grow as Maggi gets a feel for the job.

"I believe Commissioner-elect Maggi is going to think for himself," she said. "I don't think he's going to be a yes man. I think he's going to do what he thinks is right."

Bevec said he teamed with Irey because Burns wanted to run the show, in the manner Mascara did as commissioners chairman from 1980 through 1994 before moving on to Congress. In those days, no one doubted who set the agenda, and county government had a stability, a predictability, some considered healthy and others did not.

Burns insists he isn't looking for a silent partner, just a person who reads from the same playbook and won't make him haggle for votes like he's "in the market in Venice or something." Moving the county forward, he said, would be much easier if the commissioners shared a vision.

Maggi, who said he developed an interest in politics while visiting the courthouse as a state trooper, is credited with professionalizing the sheriff's office and abolishing deficit spending there. While he implemented a handful of new programs, such as a senior citizens police academy and bicycle patrols at Mingo Creek County Park, he did so without adding county tax dollars to his operating budget.

He said he decided to run for commissioner to see what impact he could have at a higher level of government and brings to the job a policeman's knack for reading people and situations. He boasts an independence that comes from his state police pension, saying, "I don't have to sell my soul to keep my job."

Maggi offered a modest opinion of himself--"I don't have all the answers"--and said he hopes to be a moderating influence on the board.

"It will be hard at times," Maggi said. "I know that. But families sometimes have a tough time, too, working through their problems."

While he and Burns have excluded Irey from discussions about department head appointments typically made at the reorganization meeting, Maggi said he intends to respect her voice on most issues.

"We're a three-headed government," he said.

The Democrats' choice for director of administration hints at the delicate balance of power between them.

While the county's top management job could have gone to a person close to Burns or to Maggi, it instead went to a person close to both of them, former state Rep. Leo J. Trich Jr.

Trich said he met with the pair shortly after the Nov. 4 election and helped them reach a consensus on certain issues, a role he will continue to play when the new term begins tomorrow.

Irey said the courthouse rumor mill has the Democrats disagreeing on a variety of issues. But Trich said the two agree on most items now.

During this last term, the administrator's position was combined with that of chief clerk. Burns said the positions likely will be severed again.

Two weeks ago, Cathi Kresh resigned as director of administration and chief clerk to head the county's domestic relations office, a court-related office from which the commissioners cannot fire her. The move came with a pay cut of about $10,700.

The Democrats also will have the opportunity to appoint a human services director, following the resignation of George Krcelich. He took a $13,600 pay cut to accept a protected civil-service position in the department he had run since 1996.

The resignations spared Burns and Maggi a decision about whether to fire the top department heads Bevec and Irey installed after the "coup." Burns, who repeatedly criticized Bevec and Irey for the dismissals, would have exposed himself to allegations of hypocrisy if he took the same tack.

Burns said he plans to continue a partnership that has Washington County Chamber of Commerce providing the county's economic development services. He also wants to retain tax-revenue director Ken Barna, whose involvement in a land acquisition and construction business in the mid 1980s to mid 1990s raised ethical questions last year.

While Maggi said there won't be a repeat of the 1996 "bloodbath," he said some additional personnel changes may occur down the road. He said change will be measured and humane, if painful at times.

"When you make changes, you make enemies," he said, "but we will be making some changes."

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

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FEAR CASTS A LONG SHADOW;

MAN ACCUSED OF 2 KILLINGS HAS A RECORD OF FRIGHTENING THOSE AROUND HIM

SECTION: W, Pg.W1

LENGTH: 1832 words

By Joe Smydo

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Tossed out of bars, questioned in a decade-old missing person case, repeatedly accused of assaulting, intimidating and threatening to kill people, Gerald A. Gregg appears from interviews and court records to have lived life as a frequent bully before being charged as the triggerman in last month's double homicide at Price's Tavern.

He also may have envisioned a grandiose role for himself in the local crime scene. "I'm going to be the next godfather of Washington," he reportedly said 24 hours before the killings of Frederick Brilla and Martin Brahler.

Gregg, 39, a South Franklin masonry contractor, inspired fear in those who loved him and some who barely knew him. He allegedly told his ex-wife two years ago, "Dig your hole a little deeper so I can push you in and concrete over you."

In April 2000, Gregg was charged with stuffing his girlfriend into the trunk of a car police said was owned by an acquaintance, South Strabane security company executive Michael D. Tarbuck. The woman allegedly was driven from Interstate 79 in South Strabane to Tarbuck's neighborhood, where police found her, bruised and bloody, on a sidewalk.

Gregg "will kill me. You don't know him," a police report quoted the woman as saying. Charges of kidnapping and assault were dropped when a state trooper failed to attend Gregg's preliminary hearing.

A year later, District Justice Jay Weller, of North Strabane, tossed Gregg out of his courtroom during a preliminary hearing for Tarbuck, who had been charged with assaulting and threatening his wife, Mary Lynn Tarbuck, and with threatening a police officer. On the witness stand, South Strabane police Sgt. Larry Garner halted his testimony to say Gregg was trying to intimidate him from the audience.

Tarbuck is an acquaintance of District Attorney John C. Pettit, whose office is prosecuting Gregg and alleged accomplice Dirk Barfield, 40, of Washington. Tarbuck declined to discuss Gregg. Pettit, facing calls he remove himself from the case because he had a protracted civil dispute with Brilla, said he never met Gregg through Tarbuck or anyone else.

Plenty of law enforcement officers in the county had met Gregg.

"He was a pretty volatile person," said Washington County Sheriff Larry Maggi, who, as a state trooper, questioned Gregg about the 1993 disappearance of South Franklin resident David Hart. Hart worked for Gregg and was the last person to see him alive .

State troopers are fiercely protective of their privacy, and Maggi said he was stunned when Gregg twice appeared at his Buffalo home, uninvited, to discuss the Hart case. The case remains open.

Gregg appears to have been in a downward spiral in the months before the Nov. 3 shooting of Brilla, 50, and Brahler, 40, at Price's Tavern in North Strabane.

Ralph Moore, owner of Old Trails Cafe in South Strabane, said he barred Gregg from the establishment after Gregg flashed a gun, frightened a barmaid, tried to pick fights with patrons and rambled about the Hart case.

Gregg also was kicked out of Noochie's Grill in Canonsburg for belligerent behavior, said Jim Gregorakis, father of the establishment's owner, Jim "Noochie" Gregorakis.

Around Nov. 4, Election Day, Gregg stopped at the sheriff's office seeking a permit to carry a concealed weapon. "Out!" an incredulous Maggi told Gregg, refusing to let him complete an application.

Thomas Moore, brother of Ralph Moore, said Gregg launched into a diatribe after approaching him at Gabby Inn in North Franklin the night before Brilla and Brahler were killed.

He said Gregg proclaimed himself Washington's godfather and had this to say about Brilla: "He's going to play the game my way or he's not going to be in the game."

Thomas Moore said Gregg also told him Ralph Moore and Washington restaurant owner Mickey Flynn were "going down." Thomas Moore said Gregg made the following remark about the district attorney:

"John Pettit is going to commit suicide. It's going to look like suicide."

Thomas Moore said Gregg wrongly believed Ralph Moore had accused Gregg of dealing drugs. Ralph Moore said Gregg might have mentioned Flynn, owner of the Union Grill and the alleged leader of a Washington gambling ring, because Moore and Flynn are friends. Flynn said he had no idea why Gregg would have mentioned his name.

The elder Gregorakis said he had heard authorities found among Gregg's possessions a note bearing his son's name and Flynn's name. He said he didn't know what significance, if any, the note might have had. Flynn said he knew nothing about a note.

Pettit said Gregg might have planned to harm other people, but he wouldn't elaborate. State police Lt. Rick Sethman denied police had found a "hit list" or had warned people that Gregg was targeting them.

As for Gregg's animosity toward him, Pettit said Gregg didn't like being questioned about Hart's disappearance and might have been angry with him in the mistaken belief he was directing that investigation.

At a preliminary hearing Dec. 3, Gregg and Barfield were ordered held for court. When Gregg's alleged remark about Pettit and suicide came up during Trooper James McElhaney's testimony, Gregg smiled at the prosecutor.

"I just gave him a cold, hard stare, and I think he got the message I didn't think it was very amusing," Pettit said.

Gregg has accused Pettit of railroading him on the murder charges, an accusation the prosecutor has denied.

At the preliminary hearing, Mary Mahoney, of Washington, testified that she drove Barfield to Price's Tavern the night of the killings so he could pick up a package and "rip off" Brilla. She said Barfield told her Gregg would be there.

Upon entering the bar, she said, she saw Gregg yelling at a person on a bar stool. She said she saw Gregg shoot bartender Brahler, then Brilla, the man on the stool.

The victims were convicted drug dealers, and shortly after the killings, police said a drug connection, not robbery, appeared to be the motive. But after Mahoney's testimony about the plan to rob Brilla, Sethman said investigators were studying a variety of motives.

Sethman said he didn't know the contents of the package Barfield reportedly was going to collect that night. Another mystery is the person Barfield allegedly spoke with before he and Mahoney entered the bar.

Mahoney testified that she and Barfield, while walking toward the door of the bar, stopped in the parking lot beside a pickup truck. She said a person in the truck she could not identify told Barfield the slayings would be blamed on Pettit, who had been locked in a protracted civil dispute with Brilla concerning possessions not returned to him after 1989 police raids. At the time of his death, Brilla was awaiting a court-ordered payment of $65,000 from Pettit.

Pettit said he offered state police an account of his whereabouts Nov. 3 so he could be ruled out as a suspect.

Police said Brilla and Brahler were involved in the drug trade, but that it was unclear what "game" Gregg had in mind during the encounter Thomas Moore reported having with him Nov. 2.

While Gregg was rumored to be involved with drugs, he has no record for possessing or dealing them. Court records paint a portrait of him as an audacious bully, if not a ticking time bomb.

The bodies of Brilla and Brahler were discovered about 11:30 a.m. Nov. 4 by a would-be patron. Later that day, Michael Passalacqua, the owner of Angelo's in Washington, ordered Gregg out of his bar, calling him a disruptive influence.

Passalacqua said a waiter had stopped coming to work because he owed Gregg money. Worse, he said, some of his regular customers began staying away because they didn't feel comfortable around Gregg.

Passalacqua said North Franklin police called him Nov. 5 with a warning to be on guard.

He said he was told Gregg had ranted about him that day while being removed from another bar, Garfield's at Washington Crown Center. North Franklin police Chief Mark Kavakich refused to discuss that incident.

Gregg and Barfield were arrested Nov. 21. The day before, Gregg had a hearing before District Justice Jay Dutton, of Buffalo, and was found guilty of harassing an East Washington man he had been following.

At times, alcohol reportedly fueled Gregg's rage.

In 1998, Katrina Lee, Gregg's wife at the time, said he arrived home one evening drunk, grabbed a shotgun and threatened to kill the family's horses. She said Gregg tripped or fell, giving their son and daughter an opportunity to spirit away the gun.

Lee said Gregg re-entered the house, grabbed her by the hair, shoved her into a piece of furniture and said, "I'll kill you." She said he later menaced her with part of a pool cue he had shattered against a wall.

In a petition for a protection-from-abuse order, she said that wasn't the first time Gregg had threatened to kill her. On three occasions, she said, he had threatened her at gunpoint.

In a petition for another PFA order in 2001, Lee said the threats continued after they divorced. For example, she said he made the remark about concreting over her and left such messages as "I'll bury you" and "Your life will end" on her answering machine.

At other times, Gregg was charged with threatening his brother-in-law, with threatening two people at a Buffalo service station and with assaulting a motorist after an accident. A police report said Gregg caused the accident.

The case involving the brother-in-law was dropped by the district attorney's office for reasons that weren't clear in court records. Gregg was found guilty in the gas station incident and pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct in his altercation with the motorist.

In the past six years, South Strabane police have handled several dozen calls involving the Tarbucks, many described as domestic disputes involving alcohol. According to police reports, Gregg was present or his name surfaced on a handful of the calls.

In April 2001, a neighbor reported a disturbance outside the Tarbuck house, and a police investigation determined Gregg, his son, girlfriend and another man were involved in a fight.

"He had blood on his face and hands and had blood and dirt on his clothing," Officer Michael Manfredi reported about Gregg. "I asked him if he was drunk, and he said, 'What do you think?' "

In July 2001, after a report of a domestic disturbance at the Tarbuck home, Garner charged Michael Tarbuck with assaulting and threatening Mary Lynn Tarbuck. Garner added the charge that Michael Tarbuck threatened him by saying he would send Gregg to the officer's home to "take care" of him.

During the preliminary hearing, Weller ordered Gregg from the courtroom after Garner complained about intimidation. The case remains unresolved; Mary Lynn Tarbuck initially testified she was assaulted but since has stated her husband kicked her by accident.

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ALL BETS ARE OFF

BYLINE: JOE SMYDO, POST-GAZETTE STAFF WRITER

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Gambling charges against restaurateur don't come as much of a shock

After Mickey Flynn attended the swearing-in ceremony for Washington County's elected officials 3 1/2 years ago, one official jokingly wondered whether the courtroom made Flynn nervous.

So long-running and widespread were the bookmaking rumors that when state authorities charged Flynn two weeks ago with running a sports-betting operation from the Union Grill, his restaurant and bar a block from the county courthouse, some were surprised only that the stories had caught up with him.

"If I said no, would you believe me?" Sheriff Larry Maggi said, smiling, when asked whether he had heard the rumors.

Announcement of the charges Aug. 7 trumped the story of Gov. Ed Rendell's visit to Washington that day and left residents pondering two questions: What prompted state police and the attorney general's office to go after Flynn and, if the charges are true, how did he operate -- rumors notwithstanding -- under the noses of local law enforcement?

The attorney general's office said Flynn, 62, of East Washington, and a partner, Charles Martin, 50, of South Strabane, worked with eight bookies, identified as Daniel Piccolo, 75, and Charles Skorvan, 58, both of Monongahela; William McGonigle, 69, of Peters; John Pankas, 68, of Canonsburg; William Antonio, 58, of Beallsville; Edmund Cononge, 43, of Canton; James Celedonia, 50, of Upper St. Clair, Allegheny County; and Anthony Cihal, 76, of Pittsburgh.

All are free pending their arraignments, scheduled for 4 p.m. tomorrow before District Justice Jay Weller of North Strabane.

"The whole deal was a set-up [expletive] deal," said Flynn, son of late county Commissioner Michael Flynn, brother of Register of Wills Kathleen Flynn Reda and uncle of state police Cpl. Lou Reda. Flynn referred questions to Pittsburgh lawyer Michael Foglia, who said he could not comment until he had reviewed the case.

Flynn, known for his Christmas and St. Patrick's Day parties, his generosity to employees and his profanity, runs one of the city's landmark establishments.

Because the Union Grill is below street level, Washington and Jefferson College students call it the D&U -- Down and Under. But the restaurant, its walls decked with prints by local artists, is a hangout more for politicians and county workers than for the college crowd.

After extensive remodeling in the mid 1990s, Flynn hung a framed print of a rooster on the wall in the bar -- a metaphor, some thought, for the proud, confident owner.

The county prothonotary's office has more than a dozen records of liens the state and federal governments imposed on Flynn or the Union Grill because of tardy payment of various taxes. All appear to have been satisfied.

Flynn, who owns two houses in East Washington and a 55-acre tract in Donegal Township, often criticized police and government. But he made a $200 campaign contribution this year to Commissioner J. Bracken Burns and $100 contributions to Maggi, District Attorney John C. Pettit, Coroner S. Timothy Warco and Treasurer Francis King.

Maggi, a retired trooper, recalled that Flynn's name surfaced from time to time in gambling investigations. However, he said troopers never had enough evidence to pursue him.

Authorities did strike at Flynn once before.

In June 1995, officers removed two video poker machines from the Union Grill and cited Flynn for allowing gambling on the premises, said Sgt. Zigmund Jendrzejewski, district commander of the state police Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement.

The case was handled as a violation of the state Liquor Code; Flynn waived the case and paid a $500 fine imposed by an administrative law judge working for the Liquor Control Board.

No criminal charges were filed.

The Liquor Control Board wasn't immediately able to say whether the charges filed two weeks ago would affect the Union Grill's liquor license.

Flynn and Martin face a variety of charges, including participating in a corrupt organization, a felony punishable by 20 years in prison. Those identified as bookies face misdemeanor counts of bookmaking, and Cononge also faces felony drug charges because authorities said they found marijuana and steroids in his home.

The attorney general's office wouldn't say what led investigators to Flynn, who allegedly charged a 10 percent commission, called "juice," on the bets he took.

However, the investigation began in April 2001, a month after Flynn reported an ambush, assault and robbery to East Washington police. Flynn told police he and a friend arrived at Flynn's home early March 4, 2001, and were forced into the house and tied up by two black men who stole a large amount of money.

Borough police Chief Larry Prevuznik said his department then received anonymous calls alleging gambling at the Union Grill. He said his officers also developed information indicating that a possible suspect in the assault and robbery was a person with a gambling connection to Flynn.

Prevuznik, saying he didn't have the resources to conduct a gambling investigation, turned the case over to state police. The robbery remains unsolved.

Another Flynn investigation began after suspended District Justice Ronald Amati was convicted of running an illegal video poker operation and tipping friends to police raids.

Kevin Harley, spokesman for the attorney general's office, declined to say whether the investigations were linked but said such cases often overlap.

Piccolo, one of those identified as Flynn's bookies, was a witness in the Amati trial. Trooper Anthony J. Cornetta, who orchestrated the sting that nabbed Amati, was one of two investigators who presented evidence against Flynn and the other nine to the statewide investigating grand jury.

The attorney general's office said Flynn at one point arranged for bettors to leave their wagers on voice mail, while Martin told customers to call Flynn with bets while the former vacationed in Las Vegas. The attorney general said its confidential informant went to the Union Grill to "settle up" many wagers.

The case sheds an uncomfortable light on one of Western Pennsylvania's worst-kept secrets. Next to the region's love of sports is the love of betting on them.

"Sports gambling is a fact of life. Don't you know?" Washington police Chief John Haddad said when asked how pervasive the practice is in the city. Haddad, who declined to discuss Flynn, said he believes betting is one factor driving the popularity of professional football.

Maggi said gambling is a low priority with many police departments because residents, ambivalent about such activity, prefer to have investigators focus on violent crime.

Also, he and Harley described gambling investigations as complex, time-consuming endeavors best handled by the state. Harley said most of the investigations are handled by a special state police unit, the organized crime division, and often are run through investigating grand juries empowered to compel testimony and grant immunity.

The attorney general's office said investigators monitored tens of thousands of phone calls among Flynn and the others, logging volume and duration of calls and sometimes listening to conversations. Investigators said they caught bookies transferring bets from one to another for financial reasons and heard Flynn and Piccolo discussing a "Vegas night" involving blackjack and craps.

The attorney general said search warrants served at the Union Grill and the defendants' homes yielded bookmaking paraphernalia and more than $200,000 cash -- $12,800 from Celedonia's home, $131,000 from Cononge's home, $33,000 from Pankas' home, $3,600 from Cihal's home and $38,000 from Martin's home.

Later, officials said, they listened as Flynn and Martin discussed moving their business to an offshore betting house. Authorities said the pair discussed doing so through Flynn's son, Michael, who works for an offshore betting business in Costa Rica.

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Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

November 17, 2002 Sunday ONE STAR EDITION

SHOWDOWN IN THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE

BYLINE: JOE SMYDO, POST-GAZETTE STAFF WRITER

SECTION: METRO, Pg.W-1

LENGTH: 1443 words

Deputy, former union leader has clashed with bosses for over a decade

Paulette Benard, the sheriff's deputy charged with stealing $50 from a woman's purse at Washington County Courthouse, is a veteran of rough-and-tumble political battles who grew so controversial three years ago that her colleagues ousted her from the union leadership.

In an 11-year on-again, off-again career as a deputy, she has locked horns with two sheriffs and prevailed over one. It remains to be seen whether Benard, 48, suspended without pay since April, will bounce back again.

Laid off or fired by late Sheriff James "Fuzzy" Fazzoni in 1993 -- the parties disagreed on the chain of events -- the Amwell resident filed a lawsuit claiming Fazzoni sexually harassed her. Two years later, the county commissioners agreed to reinstate Benard and pay her $65,000 to settle the case.

One of two female deputies, she rose among the rank-and-file to become union president in September 1998, nine months after current Sheriff Larry Maggi took office. As Maggi slashed overtime and made numerous changes in the office, she became one of his most outspoken critics and filed more than 40 grievances in about 15 months.

"She filed a grievance on ice cream," Maggi said last week, recalling the time chief deputy John Rheel refused to pay for snacks Benard and other deputies purchased after a training seminar.

Benard also took the bold step of supporting Robert Kmett, Maggi's Democratic opponent in the May 2001 primary.

"I think we definitely need a change. ... As far as the sheriff bringing any good to the office, I think he brought more animosity to the office than there's ever been," Benard said at the time.

In the battle of former state troopers, Maggi handily defeated Kmett and sailed to a second term without Republican opposition in the general election. Maggi is one of the county's most popular politicians, and his public image is starkly at odds with the portrait of the petty, vindictive boss Benard has painted in grievances and interviews.

But then, Maggi and Rheel's account of an out-of-control union leader differs from the story Benard's supporters tell of the principled dissenter, henpecked for defending herself and others.

"She always struck me as a very generous person. She cared about the workers down there. She always did the right thing," said Marianne Oliver, the Pittsburgh lawyer who represented Deputy Sheriffs Association of Washington County during Benard's days as union leader.

Often, Benard groused about Maggi and Rheel while operating the courthouse metal detectors, where the theft allegedly occurred.

It's not an assignment that advances a deputy's career, but Maggi and Rheel said Benard had metal-detector duty permanently because she had asked for steady daylight hours so she could care for a sick friend in the evenings. Oliver said Benard had opened her home to a friend dying of cancer.

"I would find it very hard to believe she took a lousy $50 out of somebody's purse," Oliver said. "She's not that kind of person."

Benard agreed to an interview for this story but later canceled the appointment. Sgt. Stephen Svitek, who succeeded Benard as union president, said she has denied stealing the money. Deputy Jacquelynn Salyer said Benard, thanks to the settlement in her sexual-harassment suit and wise investing, did not need the $50. "I'm behind her 100 percent," Salyer said.

Maggi said the case, investigated by Washington city detectives at his request, is legitimate and not motivated by politics.

"We're not going to tolerate criminal wrongdoing here," Maggi said. "It's cut-and-dried."

Denise Straffon of Smith said she entered the courthouse's front door April 16, put her purse on the table where Benard was stationed and walked through the metal detector. She gave this account of what happened next:

Benard rummaged through the purse for an "awful long time" and withdrew a closed fist. Straffon looked inside her purse, found her money "disheveled and mixed up" and demanded Benard open her hand.

Straffon then asked for a sheriff's department supervisor, but none arrived. As a small crowd gathered, Benard denied taking Straffon's money but offered her $50 to appease her.

"She said I was crazy," Straffon said.

Maggi and Rheel said Benard never alerted them to the disturbance, but they learned of it later that day from Straffon.

"The victim came forward," Maggi said. "She was adamant about making a complaint."

Straffon said police waited until two weeks ago to file the charge because they "just wanted to make absolutely sure ... and I understand that."

She said she was questioned by city police and the sheriff's department and passed a lie-detector test. Because her allegation involved a law-enforcement officer, Maggi said, "she was put through the wringer for being a victim."

It isn't the kind of attention Maggi likes for the office he's tried to turn around, but it's the kind of publicity that has dogged the sheriff's department through the years.

During his 1997 campaign, Maggi pledged to bring rules, regulation and discipline to a department tainted by budget overruns and Fazzoni's job-selling scandal.

He demoted three lieutenants and hired a trio of retired police officers as a chief deputy and two captains. He slashed overtime and cut spending on related items, such as hotel stays and other costs deputies incur while transporting prisoners long distances. He has been under budget every year.

Some veteran deputies resented the changes -- loss of overtime, in particular -- and the new union leader began to put her foot down.

When Maggi took office, deputies had to travel 225 miles in a day -- only four hours of driving, Rheel said -- to qualify for an overnight stay. "This has to end. This isn't right," Rheel recalled telling Maggi.

When the sheriff's department required deputies to travel greater distances for overnight stays, Benard filed a grievance but lost in arbitration. When Maggi refused to give a promotion to Salyer, Benard filed a grievance but lost in arbitration. When Maggi tried to enforce a policy on deputies' hair length and other grooming matters, Benard filed a grievance but lost in arbitration, Maggi and Rheel said.

Benard and Maggi's managers battled over a pair of handcuffs, which she claimed she owned and they claimed the county had purchased. They battled over the work summer interns could do and over what Rheel described as Benard's refusal to note a restroom break in her daily report. After a training seminar, Benard and other deputies stopped for ice cream and tried to bill the county.

Rheel denied the request, saying the county bought the deputies lunch during the seminar and wouldn't spring for afternoon snacks. Rheel said Benard told him she got "bad chicken" with her lunch and was still hungry.

"I can't help that, " Rheel recalled telling her.

Maggi and Rheel said they won the most important cases and compromised on others for the sake of office harmony. Oliver said the union prevailed over department officials in some cases, "and I'm sure they didn't like it."

Tension mounted in the 1,800-square-foot sheriff's office, where 40 people work in a space so cramped they can't pass each other in the hall.

"It was terrible working conditions for us," said Maggi, whose Benard file grew so thick he had to move it to a roomier file cabinet.

The union's legal bills mounted, too. During an 11-month period in 1999, Benard spent $12,000 on arbitration, labor negotiations and court cases, a deputy said at the time. One deputy posted a sign in the office ridiculing the spending, and in December 1999, some of Benard's colleagues called a special union meeting to remove her as president.

"I don't know why they won't work with me instead of against me," she said at the time.

Benard fought her removal in Common Pleas Court but lost. Some saw Maggi's hand in the deputies' uprising; Oliver said Benard was "rubbed out by some of his cronies."

"It was a small group, and it was very political down there," Oliver said. "I think she kind of got railroaded."

Now, in fighting her suspension, Benard must rely on the union that some of her supporters regard as a puppet of management. Svitek said the organization operates independently of Maggi and has filed at least two grievances challenging Benard's removal from duty.

Svitek said he has seen no proof of Straffon's allegations. "Anybody," he said, "can say that about anybody at any time."

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The Associated Press State & Local Wire

November 8, 2002, Friday, BC cycle

News in brief from western Pennsylvania

SECTION: State and Regional

LENGTH: 615 words

DATELINE: WASHINGTON, Pa.

A Washington County sheriff's deputy is accused of taking $50 from a woman's purse as the woman passed through a security checkpoint, the sheriff said.

The alleged incident happened in April, but Paulette Benard, 48, was charged on Wednesday with theft by unlawful taking, criminal attempt at theft, and official oppression, county Sheriff Larry Maggi said. Benard has been suspended without pay since the spring.

As a woman handed over her purse to Benard and passed through a security station at the Washington County Courthouse, she allegedly saw Benard take cash out of her bag, Maggi said.

The woman was rebuffed when she asked to talk to Benard's supervisor, Maggi said, so she went to police.

Washington city police handled the case and needed time to interview Benard, the woman and witnesses, Maggi said.

Benard does not have a telephone number listed in her name and it could not immediately be determined if she has an attorney.

WHITE OAK, Pa. (AP) - An elderly couple whose bodies were exhumed after they died a week apart died from carbon monoxide poisoning, officials said.

Frederick Gessner, 77, died Sept. 29, and his wife, Vivian, 76, died a week later, both in the couple's bedroom in White Oak, a suburb just south of Pittsburgh.

The deaths were not originally reported to the Allegheny County Coroner because doctors believed the couple died of natural causes, but authorities became suspicious when a housekeeper collapsed in the couple's bedroom just days after Vivian Gessner died.

County police then found a faulty vent on the couple's furnace and hot water heater, and Coroner Cyril Wecht had the bodies exhumed late last month.

The investigation was performed with the family's blessing, and no criminal charges are being considered, although investigators did speak to a repairman who worked at the house.

Wecht said he hopes to develop a system in which county health officials report seemingly natural deaths to his office if unusual circumstances exist - such as two family deaths in a short time.

PITTSBURGH (AP) - A federal court jury awarded $215,592 to a white Pittsburgh Public Schools police officer who accused school officials of demoting him for supporting racial discrimination charges made by black school officers.

The jury ruled Thursday that Ron Mancini was wrongly demoted from commander to patrol officer by school district Safety Chief Robert Fadzen, the district's director of human resources, and the school board.

Fadzen and the school officials had claimed Mancini's whistleblower suit was filed to obscure what they said was the real reason he was demoted: for allegedly grabbing a female officer's breast.

But the jury sided with Mancini, who said he was punished because he defended black officers and spoke out against racist comments allegedly made by Fadzen.

Fadzen's lawyer, Robert McTiernan, declined comment. A school district attorney said only that she was disappointed.

It was not immediately clear whether school officials would appeal.

GREENSBURG, Pa. (AP) - Westmoreland County will spend $12.46 million for a new emergency radio system for the entire county.

Motorola Inc. will supply the new 800-megahertz system in the 1,025-square-mile county in southwestern Pennsylvania.

Emergency crews have grappled for years with dead spots and other areas where radio transmission is poor, a situation complicated by the fact that the county's municipalities use a hodgepodge of frequencies and three different wavelength bands.

Commissioner Tom Balya said the county will float bonds to pay for the system, which officials hope to have running by June 2004.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

May 26, 2002 Sunday WASHINGTON EDITION

MASCARA VOWS TO STAY INVOLVED IN LOCAL POLITICS

BYLINE: JANICE CROMPTON, POST-GAZETTE STAFF WRITER

SECTION: METRO, Pg.W-6

LENGTH: 464 words

U.S. Rep. Frank R. Mascara may be down, but he's not out.

The four-term congressman from Charleroi and longtime Washington County commissioner lost Tuesday in his bid for the Democratic nomination in the newly created 12th Congressional District to U.S. Rep. John P. Murtha. The 72-year-old Mascara said he will evaluate his future and will spend more time with his family.

"I'll always be somehow involved in local politics," Mascara said.

Election results showing Murtha with 60,421 votes and Mascara with 33,480 stunned the Mascara camp, which expected a very close race in the district that was redrawn by a Republican-authored plan after the state lost two congressional seats.

Still, it's the people of the Mon Valley who will suffer in the long run, he said.

"Pennsylvania stands to lose billions in transportation money," Mascara told supporters Tuesday night, alluding to his position on the powerful Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, which he has served on for seven years. He also was a member of the Financial Services Committee.

Plans for a Southpointe-like business park in Rostraver are all but finished with his defeat, as is funding for other projects, like the Fayette Business Park, he said. Mascara said his loss also will mean delays for completion of the Mon-Fayette Expressway and for the maglev project, a high-speed transit system Mascara hoped would be operated at California University of Pennsylvania.

"It was a loss for working men and women and it was a victory for corporate America," said Mascara, who criticized Murtha, 69, of Cambria County, for voting against campaign finance reform.

State Representative H. William DeWeese cruised to an easy victory over two challengers in the 50th District, all but guaranteeing himself a 14th term in the district that encompasses Greene County, and parts of Washington and Fayette counties.

DeWeese, D-Waynesburg, with 5,696 votes, defeated the Rev. Robert Spence Jr. of Luzerne, Fayette County, with 1,277 votes, and Lonnie L. Miller of Cumberland, Greene County, who got 1,611 votes.

DeWeese said he will use his position as House minority leader to continue efforts for prescription drug relief for seniors and increased funding for school districts.

Washington County Sheriff Larry Maggi was defeated by Jack Machek, a financial administrator in the Norwin School District from North Huntingdon, Westmoreland County, in the Democratic race in the 18th District for the U.S. House of Representatives.

Machek, with 28,218 votes, moves on to face state Sen. Tim Murphy, R-Upper St. Clair, in November. Murphy was unopposed in the primary.

Maggi of Buffalo garnered 18,974 votes, and Bob Domske, a farmer and steel worker from West Finley, had 7,743 votes.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

May 14, 2002 Tuesday SOONER EDITION

CANDIDATES FOR THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SECTION: TABS, Pg.C-2

LENGTH: 2211 words

U.S. House

of Representatives

(Vote for one in your district)

Term: 2 years

Salary: $150,000

Duties: The Congress is the legislative branch of the federal government. It is composed of two houses, the Senate and the House of Representatives. A majority vote by both houses is necessary to pass a law. Every law concerned with taxation must originate in the House of Representatives.

Question: How would you balance conflicting demands for increased defense spending, lower taxes and a balanced budget?

3rd District

Republican:

Phil English, 45, Erie

Education: B.A., University of Pennsylvania, 1978.

Occupation: U.S. representative; member, Committee on Ways and Means and Joint Economic Committee; chairman, Steel and Real Estate Caucus.

Qualifications: 1995-present, U.S. representative; minority executive director, state Senate Finance Committee; 1986, Erie city controller: the taxpayer's independent fiscal watchdog.

Answer: With the nation at war, ensuring our troops have all the tools they need is obviously our first priority. Taxes need to be lowered, and just as importantly reformed, because the current tax code remains a dead drag on the economy's ability to grow and create jobs. Aside from eliminating wasteful programs -- and there are many -- we need to promote pro-growth policies which allow the economy to expand and thereby draw revenue into the treasury.

Democrat:

No Candidate Filed

4th District

Republican:

Melissa Hart, 40, Bradford Woods

Education: B.A., Washington and Jefferson College, double major, business & German; J.D., University of Pittsburgh School of Law.

Occupation: U.S. representative.

Qualifications: Currently serving in this office, January 2001-present; Pennsylvania state senator, January 1991-January 2001.

Answer: Our federal government is charged with defending our nation. Because we are in a war situation, I believe we are responsible for properly and adequately funding defense and homeland security first. We should be attentive to funding projects and programs which will be the most effective. Certainly lower taxes are desirable and they shall once again be a priority when we win the war. During the war, we will do our best to spend appropriately and not excessively. This care will help us keep or soon return to a balanced budget.

Democrat:

Mark A. Purcell, 55, Ross

Education: High school graduate; Art Institute of Pittsburgh graduate.

Occupation: Self-employed. Owner Golden Triangle Jewelry Co.

Qualifications: Self-employed, self-motivated businessman. Served five terms as Ross commissioner. Vast experience in all matters with respect to public issues.

Answer: Defense spending has to be a top priority. I believe this can be accomplished by spreading the tax burden fairly over all, meaning business and individuals.

Stevan Drobac, Jr., 50, Center

Education: Community College of Beaver County, 1976, associate's degree, applied science.

Occupation: Retired police officer; former instructor at Community College of Beaver County, continuing education-computer classes, Word & Excel; presently on a voluntary leave of absence from US Airways as a flight attendant.

Qualifications: Presently serving my sixth year on the Center Township Water Authority board, three years as chairman and the past two years vice chairman.

Answer: Our country's defense is extremely important for the welfare and safety of every American citizen to enjoy the freedom and prosperity of life with their family, children and neighbors. Every American citizen must have an equal opportunity for employment with good wages, national health insurance and drug prescription programs implemented. The trillions of dollars we spend on foreign countries should be used to protect our homeland security and the American people first, what is left over give to foreign countries.

9th District

Republican:

David E. Bahr, 63, Chambersburg

Education: B.A. in economics, Northern Michigan University; M.B.A., Syracuse University and equivalent master's from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.

Occupation: President, Bahr Consulting.

Qualifications: Over 33 years in federal service including four years' military service. Ten years' experience in Washington, D.C., working with the Congress on the federal budget and policy issues.

Answer: History shows that reductions in marginal tax rates, both personal and corporate, significantly increase tax revenue by stimulating economic activity. National defense is the primary function of a central government. Economies can be realized not only within the non-defense appropriations, but also from within the Defense Department itself. It is a matter of priorities, similar to the way families live within a budget.

Bill Shuster, 41, Hollidaysburg

Education: Everett High School, Everett, Pa.; Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pa., B.A., political science and history; master's in business administration from American University, Washington, D.C.

Occupation: Small businessman (owner, Shuster Chrysler); U.S. House of Representatives, 107th Congress.

Qualifications: It's been an honor to represent the 9th District and I hope to build on the progress we've made so far. I want to use my experience in Congress and as a small businessman to ensure our district is ready to meet the demands of a changing economy while maintaining our values and small-town nature.

Answer: The simple answer is that in reality there does not have to be a conflict. Legislators in Washington have to act fiscally responsible. There is much pork in Washington that could be cut from the budget so that we can fully fund our military, balance our budget and lower the tax burden on Americans. It is exactly in times of economic uncertainty that we must exhibit leadership in Washington and control spending.

David S. Keller, 32, Chambersburg

Education: Chambersburg Area Senior High School, 1987; Franklin and Marshall College, B.A. in government, 1991.

Occupation: Computer network consultant for digitalSunrise, the corporate sales and service division of Sunrise Computers, Chambersburg, Pa.

Qualifications: My approach to this office is "people first." And I have learned from the people that the issues of health care and jobs are directly related. Fixing America's health care problems will create economic growth and jobs.

Answer: In times of war, we are all called upon to make sacrifices. And Congress should be no different. I'm sure there are a number of pet pork projects that could be deemed less important than our nation's defense, and which should at least be postponed, if not delayed indefinitely. In light of the sacrifices being made by our troops and their loved ones, I don't think most Americans would object to this.

Democrat:

John R. Henry, No reply

12th District

Republican:

Bill Choby, 51, Johnstown

Education: Bishop McCort High School; B.S., D.M.D., University of Pittsburgh; M.P.A. Virginia Tech.

Occupation: Dentist; executive director, Cornerstone Leadership Foundation, a faith-based public charity.

Qualifications: Experience in both public and private sectors, especially with voluntary nonprofit organizations.

Answer: History has proven that lower taxes actually increase government revenues. Recent examples of this phenomenon are the robust economic growth of the Kennedy era in the 1960s and the Reagan years during the late 1980s. President Reagan's defense spending defeated the former Soviet Union while lowering taxes. The budget can be balanced by reducing spending on unconstitutional items, wasteful pork, fraud and abuse. You see, freedom is still the world's best economic stimulation.

Democrat:

Frank Mascara, 72, Charleroi

Education: B.S. education, summa cum laude, California University of Pennsylvania.

Occupation: U.S. congressman.

Qualifications: Seven years in current office; small businessman; public accountant; former chairman, Washington County commissioners.

Answer: Demands for increases in national security spending brought on by the terrible events of Sept. 11, recently enacted tax cuts and the economic downturn have made a balanced federal budget very difficult to achieve. I believe, to balance conflicting demands for increased defense spending, lower taxes and a balanced budget, Congress must insist that any increase in federal spending be accompanied by a proposal for decreasing spending from another area of federal government.

John P. Murtha, 69, Johnstown

Education: Bachelor's in economics, University of Pittsburgh; graduate work, Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Occupation: Former small business owner/operator; member of Congress.

Qualifications: Served in the Pennsylvania General Assembly and U.S. House of Representatives; small business background; raised family in Western Pennsylvania.

Answer: I believe we'll see changes in the Bush administration budget. Serving on the Defense Appropriations subcommittee, I believe we'll see a final budget number close to what the president recommended. I believe we'll see shifts in other parts of the budget to meet Medicare, health care and education needs. I believe it's very important for jobs and the economy that we have a balanced budget and if there is deficit spending this year, we need a plan to return to a balance quickly. I believe any further tax cuts will need to wait until we're back in a balanced budget.

14th District

Republican:

No Candidate Filed

Democrat:

Mike Doyle, 48, Swissvale

Education: Penn State University, B.S., 1975; graduate, Leadership Pittsburgh.

Occupation: U.S. congressman representing Pennsylvania's 18th District.

Qualifications: Lifelong Pittsburgh resident; completing fourth term as congressman; appointed to powerful House Energy and Commerce Committee at beginning of 107th Congress; co-owner of small insurance agency; married more than 25 years, four children.

Answer: As always, achieving a balanced budget is a priority and requires a strong focus on fiscal responsibility while meeting our nation's demands such as increased defense and homeland security spending; prescription drug benefits for senior citizens; and quality education. While I support lowering taxes responsibly for those who really need help, I don't support tax cuts that are too large, economically irresponsible, and run the risk of raiding the Social Security and Medicare trust funds.

18th District

Republican

Tim Murphy, No reply

Democratic

Bob Domske, 46, West Alexander

Education: California University of Pennsylvania, economics/history/business.

Occupation: Steel worker at Allegheny Ludlum, Washington Flat Roll Plant, Washington, Pa., member of Steelworkers Local 7139.

Qualifications: I live the issues important to the voters of Pennsylvania every day. I am one of them and will go to D.C. to fight for their interests, not special interests.

Answer: Sometimes the most complex questions have the simplest answer. Cut out the pork spending. Stop the financial aid to foreign countries that would do us harm. And increase tariffs on goods brought in by companies who have taken American jobs overseas.

Jack Machek, 34, North Huntingdon

Education: U.S. Military Academy, West Point; University of Pittsburgh, M.A., public administration.

Occupation: Administrator, Norwin School District.

Qualifications: U.S. Army veteran, Clairton city manager, Private Industry Council federal grant and program coordinator, aide to Pennsylvania Sen. Edward Zemprelli, past president, Democratic Club, congressional candidate in 2000.

Answer: My priorities are to maintain a balanced federal budget that avoids deficit spending while maintaining the world's strongest military by increasing defense spending. I support lower taxes but only if we still maintain a balanced budget and protect Social Security. Middle- and working-class families are better off financially with a balanced budget because it promotes economic growth, investment performance and lower interest rates. Our families benefit by paying less for mortgages, insurance premiums, and student loans.

Larry Maggi, 51, Buffalo Township

Education: Graduate of McGuffey High School and California University of Pennsylvania; served in the U.S. Marine Corps.

Occupation: Served 24 years as a Pennsylvania state policeman and currently serving as the Washington County sheriff.

Qualifications: Born, educated and work in Washington County; active in community and veterans' activities. A Sunday School teacher and active in church.

Answer: Balancing these priorities requires a dedicated leader with vision and fortitude. As a law enforcement official and former Marine, I support America's war on terrorism. But ensuring our nation's security will have its costs. As your congressman, I will fight to bolster economic growth and fiscal discipline by limiting spending and promoting innovative economic development initiatives to empower small businesses and working families. I will also protect Social Security and Medicare from irresponsible looting to finance wasteful spending and tax cuts for the rich.

PERSON:  MELISSA HART (50%);

ORGANIZATION:  US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  (91%); US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES (91%); UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA  (57%); UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA (57%);

COUNTRY:  UNITED STATES (93%);

STATE:  PENNSYLVANIA, USA (92%);

CITY:  PITTSBURGH, PA, USA (92%); ERIE, PA, USA (90%);

COMPANY:  HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES INC (91%);   US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  (91%); US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES (91%); UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA  (57%); UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA (57%);

SUBJECT: ELECTION ELECTION ENDORSEMENT  LEGISLATIVE BODIES (93%); US HOUSE ELECTIONS (90%); US REPUBLICAN PARTY (90%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (90%); TAXES & TAXATION (90%); SELF EMPLOYMENT (89%); DEFENSE SPENDING (89%); US STATE GOVERNMENT (89%); COMMUNITY COLLEGES (89%); US DEMOCRATIC PARTY (89%); GOVERNMENT BUDGETS (89%); BUDGETS (89%); NATIONAL SECURITY (89%); REAL ESTATE (78%); LEGISLATION (78%); WAGES & SALARIES (78%); CAUCUSES (78%); TAX LAW (78%); POLITICS (78%); GOVERNMENT CONTROLLERS & AUDITORS (77%); LAW SCHOOLS (76%); GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS (75%); COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (75%); HIGH SCHOOLS (75%); JOB CREATION (74%); ECONOMIC GROWTH (70%); EMPLOYMENT GROWTH (70%); EXECUTIVES (68%); CITY GOVERNMENT (68%); SECONDARY SCHOOLS (63%);

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Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

May 14, 2002 Tuesday SOONER EDITION

CANDIDATES FOR THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SECTION: TABS, Pg.C-2

LENGTH: 2211 words

U.S. House

of Representatives

(Vote for one in your district)

Term: 2 years

Salary: $150,000

Duties: The Congress is the legislative branch of the federal government. It is composed of two houses, the Senate and the House of Representatives. A majority vote by both houses is necessary to pass a law. Every law concerned with taxation must originate in the House of Representatives.

Question: How would you balance conflicting demands for increased defense spending, lower taxes and a balanced budget?

3rd District

Republican:

Phil English, 45, Erie

Education: B.A., University of Pennsylvania, 1978.

Occupation: U.S. representative; member, Committee on Ways and Means and Joint Economic Committee; chairman, Steel and Real Estate Caucus.

Qualifications: 1995-present, U.S. representative; minority executive director, state Senate Finance Committee; 1986, Erie city controller: the taxpayer's independent fiscal watchdog.

Answer: With the nation at war, ensuring our troops have all the tools they need is obviously our first priority. Taxes need to be lowered, and just as importantly reformed, because the current tax code remains a dead drag on the economy's ability to grow and create jobs. Aside from eliminating wasteful programs -- and there are many -- we need to promote pro-growth policies which allow the economy to expand and thereby draw revenue into the treasury.

Democrat:

No Candidate Filed

4th District

Republican:

Melissa Hart, 40, Bradford Woods

Education: B.A., Washington and Jefferson College, double major, business & German; J.D., University of Pittsburgh School of Law.

Occupation: U.S. representative.

Qualifications: Currently serving in this office, January 2001-present; Pennsylvania state senator, January 1991-January 2001.

Answer: Our federal government is charged with defending our nation. Because we are in a war situation, I believe we are responsible for properly and adequately funding defense and homeland security first. We should be attentive to funding projects and programs which will be the most effective. Certainly lower taxes are desirable and they shall once again be a priority when we win the war. During the war, we will do our best to spend appropriately and not excessively. This care will help us keep or soon return to a balanced budget.

Democrat:

Mark A. Purcell, 55, Ross

Education: High school graduate; Art Institute of Pittsburgh graduate.

Occupation: Self-employed. Owner Golden Triangle Jewelry Co.

Qualifications: Self-employed, self-motivated businessman. Served five terms as Ross commissioner. Vast experience in all matters with respect to public issues.

Answer: Defense spending has to be a top priority. I believe this can be accomplished by spreading the tax burden fairly over all, meaning business and individuals.

Stevan Drobac, Jr., 50, Center

Education: Community College of Beaver County, 1976, associate's degree, applied science.

Occupation: Retired police officer; former instructor at Community College of Beaver County, continuing education-computer classes, Word & Excel; presently on a voluntary leave of absence from US Airways as a flight attendant.

Qualifications: Presently serving my sixth year on the Center Township Water Authority board, three years as chairman and the past two years vice chairman.

Answer: Our country's defense is extremely important for the welfare and safety of every American citizen to enjoy the freedom and prosperity of life with their family, children and neighbors. Every American citizen must have an equal opportunity for employment with good wages, national health insurance and drug prescription programs implemented. The trillions of dollars we spend on foreign countries should be used to protect our homeland security and the American people first, what is left over give to foreign countries.

9th District

Republican:

David E. Bahr, 63, Chambersburg

Education: B.A. in economics, Northern Michigan University; M.B.A., Syracuse University and equivalent master's from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.

Occupation: President, Bahr Consulting.

Qualifications: Over 33 years in federal service including four years' military service. Ten years' experience in Washington, D.C., working with the Congress on the federal budget and policy issues.

Answer: History shows that reductions in marginal tax rates, both personal and corporate, significantly increase tax revenue by stimulating economic activity. National defense is the primary function of a central government. Economies can be realized not only within the non-defense appropriations, but also from within the Defense Department itself. It is a matter of priorities, similar to the way families live within a budget.

Bill Shuster, 41, Hollidaysburg

Education: Everett High School, Everett, Pa.; Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pa., B.A., political science and history; master's in business administration from American University, Washington, D.C.

Occupation: Small businessman (owner, Shuster Chrysler); U.S. House of Representatives, 107th Congress.

Qualifications: It's been an honor to represent the 9th District and I hope to build on the progress we've made so far. I want to use my experience in Congress and as a small businessman to ensure our district is ready to meet the demands of a changing economy while maintaining our values and small-town nature.

Answer: The simple answer is that in reality there does not have to be a conflict. Legislators in Washington have to act fiscally responsible. There is much pork in Washington that could be cut from the budget so that we can fully fund our military, balance our budget and lower the tax burden on Americans. It is exactly in times of economic uncertainty that we must exhibit leadership in Washington and control spending.

David S. Keller, 32, Chambersburg

Education: Chambersburg Area Senior High School, 1987; Franklin and Marshall College, B.A. in government, 1991.

Occupation: Computer network consultant for digitalSunrise, the corporate sales and service division of Sunrise Computers, Chambersburg, Pa.

Qualifications: My approach to this office is "people first." And I have learned from the people that the issues of health care and jobs are directly related. Fixing America's health care problems will create economic growth and jobs.

Answer: In times of war, we are all called upon to make sacrifices. And Congress should be no different. I'm sure there are a number of pet pork projects that could be deemed less important than our nation's defense, and which should at least be postponed, if not delayed indefinitely. In light of the sacrifices being made by our troops and their loved ones, I don't think most Americans would object to this.

Democrat:

John R. Henry, No reply

12th District

Republican:

Bill Choby, 51, Johnstown

Education: Bishop McCort High School; B.S., D.M.D., University of Pittsburgh; M.P.A. Virginia Tech.

Occupation: Dentist; executive director, Cornerstone Leadership Foundation, a faith-based public charity.

Qualifications: Experience in both public and private sectors, especially with voluntary nonprofit organizations.

Answer: History has proven that lower taxes actually increase government revenues. Recent examples of this phenomenon are the robust economic growth of the Kennedy era in the 1960s and the Reagan years during the late 1980s. President Reagan's defense spending defeated the former Soviet Union while lowering taxes. The budget can be balanced by reducing spending on unconstitutional items, wasteful pork, fraud and abuse. You see, freedom is still the world's best economic stimulation.

Democrat:

Frank Mascara, 72, Charleroi

Education: B.S. education, summa cum laude, California University of Pennsylvania.

Occupation: U.S. congressman.

Qualifications: Seven years in current office; small businessman; public accountant; former chairman, Washington County commissioners.

Answer: Demands for increases in national security spending brought on by the terrible events of Sept. 11, recently enacted tax cuts and the economic downturn have made a balanced federal budget very difficult to achieve. I believe, to balance conflicting demands for increased defense spending, lower taxes and a balanced budget, Congress must insist that any increase in federal spending be accompanied by a proposal for decreasing spending from another area of federal government.

John P. Murtha, 69, Johnstown

Education: Bachelor's in economics, University of Pittsburgh; graduate work, Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Occupation: Former small business owner/operator; member of Congress.

Qualifications: Served in the Pennsylvania General Assembly and U.S. House of Representatives; small business background; raised family in Western Pennsylvania.

Answer: I believe we'll see changes in the Bush administration budget. Serving on the Defense Appropriations subcommittee, I believe we'll see a final budget number close to what the president recommended. I believe we'll see shifts in other parts of the budget to meet Medicare, health care and education needs. I believe it's very important for jobs and the economy that we have a balanced budget and if there is deficit spending this year, we need a plan to return to a balance quickly. I believe any further tax cuts will need to wait until we're back in a balanced budget.

14th District

Republican:

No Candidate Filed

Democrat:

Mike Doyle, 48, Swissvale

Education: Penn State University, B.S., 1975; graduate, Leadership Pittsburgh.

Occupation: U.S. congressman representing Pennsylvania's 18th District.

Qualifications: Lifelong Pittsburgh resident; completing fourth term as congressman; appointed to powerful House Energy and Commerce Committee at beginning of 107th Congress; co-owner of small insurance agency; married more than 25 years, four children.

Answer: As always, achieving a balanced budget is a priority and requires a strong focus on fiscal responsibility while meeting our nation's demands such as increased defense and homeland security spending; prescription drug benefits for senior citizens; and quality education. While I support lowering taxes responsibly for those who really need help, I don't support tax cuts that are too large, economically irresponsible, and run the risk of raiding the Social Security and Medicare trust funds.

18th District

Republican

Tim Murphy, No reply

Democratic

Bob Domske, 46, West Alexander

Education: California University of Pennsylvania, economics/history/business.

Occupation: Steel worker at Allegheny Ludlum, Washington Flat Roll Plant, Washington, Pa., member of Steelworkers Local 7139.

Qualifications: I live the issues important to the voters of Pennsylvania every day. I am one of them and will go to D.C. to fight for their interests, not special interests.

Answer: Sometimes the most complex questions have the simplest answer. Cut out the pork spending. Stop the financial aid to foreign countries that would do us harm. And increase tariffs on goods brought in by companies who have taken American jobs overseas.

Jack Machek, 34, North Huntingdon

Education: U.S. Military Academy, West Point; University of Pittsburgh, M.A., public administration.

Occupation: Administrator, Norwin School District.

Qualifications: U.S. Army veteran, Clairton city manager, Private Industry Council federal grant and program coordinator, aide to Pennsylvania Sen. Edward Zemprelli, past president, Democratic Club, congressional candidate in 2000.

Answer: My priorities are to maintain a balanced federal budget that avoids deficit spending while maintaining the world's strongest military by increasing defense spending. I support lower taxes but only if we still maintain a balanced budget and protect Social Security. Middle- and working-class families are better off financially with a balanced budget because it promotes economic growth, investment performance and lower interest rates. Our families benefit by paying less for mortgages, insurance premiums, and student loans.

Larry Maggi, 51, Buffalo Township

Education: Graduate of McGuffey High School and California University of Pennsylvania; served in the U.S. Marine Corps.

Occupation: Served 24 years as a Pennsylvania state policeman and currently serving as the Washington County sheriff.

Qualifications: Born, educated and work in Washington County; active in community and veterans' activities. A Sunday School teacher and active in church.

Answer: Balancing these priorities requires a dedicated leader with vision and fortitude. As a law enforcement official and former Marine, I support America's war on terrorism. But ensuring our nation's security will have its costs. As your congressman, I will fight to bolster economic growth and fiscal discipline by limiting spending and promoting innovative economic development initiatives to empower small businesses and working families. I will also protect Social Security and Medicare from irresponsible looting to finance wasteful spending and tax cuts for the rich.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

December 16, 2001 Sunday WASHINGTON EDITION

MURDER OF BUSINESS OWNER STILL UNSOLVED AFTER 16 YEARS

BYLINE: JANICE CROMPTON, POST-GAZETTE STAFF WRITER

SECTION: METRO, Pg.W-1

LENGTH: 1300 words

Robert Dickinson probably never knew what hit him as he opened his truck door when he was leaving the Somerset Inn the night of March 11, 1985.

It was a bullet from a .30-caliber rifle equipped with a night scope, police believe. The bullet shattered his skull, killing him instantly.

For 16 years, authorities have struggled to bring Dickinson's killers to justice. And last month, it looked as though one of his accused murderers finally would be tried for the crime.

Instead, John Dino Martin struck a deal with prosecutors Nov. 6 to cooperate with the ongoing investigation into Dickinson's death.

Martin, from Weirton, W.Va., and George F. Ely of Steubenville, Ohio, admit involvement in the crime. Ely four years ago pleaded guilty and thereby dodged a possible death sentence by confessing he drove Martin to the Somerset Township bar to kill the 46-year-old meat-packing business owner from Chartiers. Ely has said he doesn't know who ordered the killing.

Martin and Ely were longtime criminals linked to the organized crime empire led by Paul "No Legs" Hankish of Wheeling, W.Va. Early on, authorities believed the duo acted at someone else's behest. Ely admitted collecting $1,000 for his role as chauffeur.

Local investigators have been somewhat stifled in their inquiries because Martin has been in federal protective custody since 1986, when he began cooperating with the investigation into Hankish's criminal activity. In 1990, Hankish stood trial for racketeering crimes dating to the 1950s. He died in prison in 1998.

"We wanted to guarantee [Martin's] safety," said Dick Furda, former senior resident agent for the FBI in Wheeling.

As part of Martin's deal, the federal government agreed not to ask him about any murders -- except one -- that he may have committed. This involvement in the federal program had been delaying local investigators and his trial in the Dickinson death.

The murder Martin was questioned on was the September 1985 shooting death of Betty Pearson of Hancock County, W.Va. Pearson was killed and her husband was injured in a gun battle in her home during a botched burglary by Martin and Ely. Before she died of bullet wounds, Pearson shot Ely and Martin. Martin pleaded guilty in the Pearson death and is serving time in an undisclosed federal penitentiary for that crime and for violations of the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations act.

By the mid 1990s, the Dickinson case had stalled. But retired state police homicide investigator Larry Maggi reopened the file and was able to gather more information. He made enough progress to get Martin and Ely arrested for the murder. Maggi, now Washington County sheriff, said although he never was able to say conclusively who ordered the killing, he had his theories and he hopes police will continue to pursue the investigation.

"I truly, truly believe the person who wanted this done is still around and still active," Maggi said.

Martin says he was not the triggerman in the Dickinson death. In exchange for his cooperation and a conspiracy to commit murder plea, authorities have agreed to delay sentencing for nine months.

How Dickinson, a small-town business owner who didn't gamble heavily or otherwise draw obvious attention, incurred the wrath of such characters is baffling.

Martin and Ely were not the sort of hired hands who could be found on a street corner or local watering hole. They were professionals who for months would plan meticulously the most routine robberies.

And, they were expensive -- whoever hired them would have paid at least $10,000.

Martin and Ely once turned down $5,000 to commit a murder, saying it wasn't worth their time. Like legitimate contract work, murder had a going rate.

But Martin's bread and butter was burglary. Ely had a job at a water treatment plant in Steubenville and was a part-time member of Martin's crew.

In law enforcement corners, Martin is considered to be exceptionally intelligent.

"It's too bad he didn't put it to good use," Furda said. "He was brilliant -- he had a good memory."

According to documents from the Hankish trial, Joseph Truglio, a Hankish associate, solicited Martin in 1983 to rob and kill a drug dealer at Hankish's request.

Through the 1970s and 1980s, prosecutors said Martin was involved in many burglaries in which the stolen goods were fenced to Truglio and Hankish.

In 1982, Hankish was a partner in a sports gambling operation conducted by Truglio and Martin.

Police were led to Martin and Ely by Arthur Ray Smith of Grove City, Ohio. Smith, who dated Ely's sister, said that around February 1985 he was in a car with Martin and Ely outside of a "bar/bookie joint," in the Steubenville area when Martin went in to pay a basketball bet. When he emerged about 20 minutes later, Martin asked Ely if he would like to earn $1,000 for driving him to Washington, according to Smith.

It's unclear if the shooting was ordered or sanctioned by the Hankish group, or if it was an independent assignment.

Mob hierarchy probably would not have turned a friendly eye on such autonomy, so the savvy Martin may have sought the go-ahead from someone in Hankish's circle.

"I think they did it independently," said Dick Volgamor, investigator for the Brooke County prosecutor's office in West Virginia.

Martin has told Washington County authorities he was solicited for the Dickinson murder. However, he was being pressured at the time to complete construction of a bomb to blow up a union hall in Wheeling -- a crime he carried out shortly after Dickinson's death. Martin said he persuaded Ely to do the job alone.

Ely, 56, is serving a life sentence in the Washington County Jail. He did not respond to a request for comment on the allegations.

Washington County District Attorney John C. Pettit said the investigation is ongoing and that he hopes to wrap it up within nine months.

Dickinson's widow, Sandy Dickinson, said she is disappointed that it still is not known why her husband was killed. Rumors over the years that Robert Dickinson was not the real target of the shooting are false, Martin said.

Some in law enforcement believe one of Robert Dickinson's several extramarital affairs during 13 years of marriage may have landed him in hot water with the wrong person.

"He very rarely ever came straight home from work," Sandy Dickinson said. "He sometimes would completely disappear."

She said it's possible her husband had an inkling of what was coming. A few weeks before the shooting, on Valentine's Day, Robert Dickinson told his wife it would be the last time he sent her roses, although he had a standing order with a local florist. In the days before his death, he also began to reconcile with his wife.

On the day he died, Robert Dickinson stayed at the meat packing plant, working by himself. He didn't attend that day's weekly livestock auction in Somerset Township, an event she never can remember him missing.

On the night he was killed, the couple planned to attend their 12-year-old daughter's basketball game.

Robert Dickinson promised his daughter Robin he would be there. Instead, he wound up at the Somerset Inn, along Route 136.

The family continues to operate the meat-packing business in Somerset Township, which had been called Kolb and Dickinson Meat Packing.

Dickinson and Jon Kolb, former lineman and assistant coach for the Steelers, were partners in the business until the early 1980s. It has been renamed 84 Packing.

Sandy Dickinson said her husband didn't deserve to be killed. She and their two children continue to hope for an answer, although she said it's frustrating after more than 16 years.

"It's become an everyday passion to be sure we know who did it," she said.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

May 8, 2001 Tuesday SOONER EDITION

OTHER COUNTIES

SECTION: TABS, Pg.D-9

LENGTH: 8006 words

ARMSTRONG

COUNTY

Coroner

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $26,225

DUTIES: The coroner investigates deaths of suspicious or violent nature. When necessary, he orders autopsies and subpoenas witnesses for inquests. The coroner is required to issue a certificate if death occurs without medical attendance.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Republican

ROBERT T. BOWER

Age: 52; West Kittanning

EDUCATION: No response.

OCCUPATION: Armstrong County coroner.

QUALIFICATIONS: 16 years coroner, seven years chief deputy, 24 years assistant to the hospital pathologist doing necropsy studies (autopsies); past president of the Pennsylvania State Coroners Association; presently regional vice president of the PSCA.

ANSWER: The coroner's office is an investigatory office with the purpose to determine whether or not there is sufficient reason that the death may have resulted from a criminal act or criminal neglect. The office by statute works closely with the district attorney.

Democratic

TERRY A. KNEPSHIELD

No reply.

District attorney

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $58,033

DUTIES: Prosecutes all criminal cases in Court of Common Pleas. Prepares criminal information, requests and conducts investigative grand juries, prepares cases for court.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Democratic

SCOTT J. ANDREASSI

No reply.

Jury commissioner

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $6,658

DUTIES: The jury commissioners (two to be elected, one from each party) annually prepare lists of qualified voters from which are drawn names of persons for jury duty for the ensuing year.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Republican

CINDY SMITH

No reply.

KAREN J. SCHRECKENGOST

Age: 40; Manor

EDUCATION: Graduated from Freeport High School; studied business courses in high school.

OCCUPATION: Assistant manager at Video Update, Kittanning; secretary for husband's plastering company, Schreckengost Plastering.

QUALIFICATIONS: Born and raised in Armstrong County. Resides in Manor with her husband of 20 years, Jeffrey. Endorsed by the current Republican jury commissioner, Goldie Schreckengost.

ANSWER: The position of jury commissioner is a vital link in our criminal and civil systems. A jury commissioner must be committed to making the systems work effectively and efficiently. I believe my work experience will enable me to do both.

Democratic

PATRICIA G. FIORINA

No reply.

Sheriff

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $37,731

DUTIES: The sheriff, as an officer of the court, serves writs, warrants, summonses and other judicial documents, impanels jurors, executes sheriff's sales and carries out orders of the county court.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Democratic

LARRY R. CRAWFORD

No reply.

BEAVER COUNTY

Common Pleas judge

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $116,065

DUTIES: The Court of Common Pleas is primarily a trial court. Judge candidates can run on both the Republican and Democratic tickets.

QUESTION ASKED: Do you have any specific suggestions for improving the administration of justice?

Republican-Democratic

J. PHILIP COLAVINCENZO

Age: 53; Beaver

EDUCATION: B.S. Georgetown University, 1970; J.D. Catholic University School of Law, 1973.

OCCUPATION: Attorney, admitted to bar Oct. 1, 1973.

QUALIFICATIONS: Master, juvenile court, 1985-present; past president, Beaver County Bar Association; solicitor, Beaver County Adult and Juvenile Probation offices, Beaver Falls Municipal Authority, Chippewa Township Zoning, Corporation for Owner-Operator Projects, Housing Opportunities of Beaver County, Dawes Manor; civil and criminal trial experience; all aspects of family law.

ANSWER: As master in juvenile court, I conduct hearings and adjudications in the same way as a judge of the Court of Common Pleas. As judge, I would strive, in collaboration with the five other members of Beaver County's distinguished bench, to improve communications from the bench to all citizens of Beaver County participating in the court system whether as a party, juror or witness. I would seek to improve the conciliation process of all claims.

HARRY E. KNAFELC

Age: 53; Ambridge

EDUCATION: 1965 graduate, Ambridge Area High School; 1969 A.B., political science, Villanova University; 1972, 1992 J.D. Villanova University School of Law.

OCCUPATION: District justice, attorney.

QUALIFICATIONS: Seven years as a district justice judging thousands of civil and criminal cases; 16 years solicitor for the Ambridge Area School District; 28 years as a practicing attorney representing ordinary people in various legal matters.

ANSWER: Today, divorce, custody and support cases are parceled out to different judges of the court. To resolve family law disputes in a just, efficient and prompt way, we must consolidate family law functions of the court into a single Family Law Division under one judge. When one judge oversees every aspect of a family law dispute, that judge can act more decisively and swiftly to help resolve those disputes. I hope to be that judge.

C. GUS KWIDIS

Age: 56; Rochester Township

EDUCATION: Ambridge High School, 1962; West Virginia University, College of Commerce, 1966; University of Toledo, J.D., 1969.

OCCUPATION: Attorney at law.

QUALIFICATIONS: Law clerk; public defender; assistant district attorney; 31 years of general practice with emphasis on trial practice and litigation.

ANSWER: I intend to conduct evidentiary and pretrial conferences in all cases prior to trial or hearing to eliminate and expedite the litigation and to explore all possible avenues of amicable settlement. I also intend to establish and maintain a timetable for all pretrial discovery and depositions in all cases to be conducted and completed prior to the pretrial conference.

Jury commissioner

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $10,844

DUTIES: The jury commissioners (two to be elected, one from each party) annually prepare lists of qualified voters from which are drawn names of persons for jury duty for the ensuing year.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Republican

NANCY J. LOXLEY

Age: 65; Beaver

EDUCATION: Registered nurse; graduate, Beaver High School; Beaver Valley General Hospital School of Nursing (affiliated with Geneva College).

OCCUPATION: Jury commissioner.

QUALIFICATIONS: I have served Beaver County as jury commissioner for 16 years and as commissioner for four years.

ANSWER: The jury commissioners office cooperates very efficiently with the court administration office, clerk of courts, prothonotary and sheriff's office. I have been able to make the office more efficient and more cost-effective by introducing Judicial Systems - Jury 2000 and saving time and money through efficient jury management.

Democratic

DOMENIC LEONE

Age: 44; Hopewell

EDUCATION: Graduated from Center High School, 1975; attended Robert Morris College; attended Connelley vocational school; certified in graphic arts.

OCCUPATION: Owner, Henderson Printing Service, Rochester, Pa.

QUALIFICATIONS: As a business owner, I feel I can use my business management and computer skills to maintain the professional office run by Betty DiCiccio and Nancy Loxley. I will keep the office efficient and if I see any area for change I will make necessary adjustments.

ANSWER: No reply.

KIMBERLY J. TODD

No reply.

MARK R. GALZERANO

Age: 40; Aliquippa

EDUCATION: USC Law School, J.D., 1985; University of Pittsburgh, B.A. Speech Pathology, 1982; Hopewell High School, 1978.

OCCUPATION: Attorney; legal adviser for students at University of Pittsburgh.

QUALIFICATIONS: Attorney, 15 years, private law practice; Hopewell Area school board, 1995-99; Democratic committeeman, precinct 9, Hopewell; Hopewell Alumni Foundation board of directors; former instructor, Community College of Beaver County.

ANSWER: No opinion.

DOROTHY A. COLELLA

Age: 68; White Township

EDUCATION: Community College of Beaver County; 1968 licensed practical nurse; 1978 associate's degree liberal arts.

OCCUPATION: Retired 1994 from Penn State University as a nutrition education adviser.

QUALIFICATIONS: Dependable, reliable. I am township supervisor, chairperson, vice president of Upper Beaver Valley. I do grant writing, supervise the office, check roster of township residents.

ANSWER: I will do my best to work closely with the county officials to keep costs at a minimum without neglect to the public and jurors. I am hoping to have a favorable relationship with my co-workers and to have a smooth-running operation. My door will be open for complaints, advice and ideas for any improvement.

BUTLER COUNTY

Common Pleas judge

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $116,065

DUTIES: The Court of Common Pleas is primarily a trial court. Judge candidates can run on both the Republican and Democratic tickets.

QUESTION ASKED: Do you have any specific suggestions for improving the administration of justice?

Republican-Democratic

S. MICHAEL YEAGER

Age: 47; Butler Township

EDUCATION: University of Pittsburgh, bachelor of science, 1975; St. Francis College of Loretto, Pa., master of arts, 1976; Ohio Northern University, juris doctor, 1979.

OCCUPATION: Self-employed attorney.

QUALIFICATIONS: I have been engaged in the private practice of law for 21 years during which time I have acquired an extensive and varied legal background.

ANSWER: I do have a specific course of conduct outlined for myself relative to the sentencing of criminal defendants and for the expeditious handling of civil matters; however, I feel constrained by the explicit language contained in Judicial Canon 7 of the Code of Judicial Conduct wherein it is stated that a candidate "for a judicial office should not make pledges or promises of conduct in office other than the faithful and impartial performance of the duties of the office."

ALEXANDER H. LINDSAY JR.

Age: 54; Buffalo Township

EDUCATION: B.A. Washington and Jefferson College; law degree, University of Pittsburgh School of Law.

OCCUPATION: Lawyer.

QUALIFICATIONS: Thirty years as a practicing attorney; eight years as a full-time prosecutor; three years as a state prosecutor; five years as a federal prosecutor; 20 years as a trial lawyer. Butler County solicitor.

ANSWER: All persons who appear before a judge need to be treated with respect. Judges must be concerned with maintaining the dignity of all people. All parties that appear in a courtroom will take their lead when it comes to being civil to other parties from how the judge in the courtroom treats people, especially the lawyers. Finally, judges need to make decisions quickly. Justice delayed is justice denied.

Clerk of courts

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $49,753

DUTIES: Keeps all the criminal records of Common Pleas Court. Duties include docketing and recording cases, filing court decisions, issuing criminal bonds, taking bail, collecting court costs and paying witness fees.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Republican

LISA WEILAND LOTZ

Age: 38; Prospect

EDUCATION: B.S. public administration.

OCCUPATION: Butler County clerk of courts.

QUALIFICATIONS: Butler County clerk of courts, eighth year; deputy clerk of courts, six years; executive secretary, district attorney's office, 5 1/2 years.

ANSWER: Over the course of the last eight years, constant transformation has occurred with many new, efficient computer programs and expansions, approved by the county commissioners, being utilized by valued court employees. Information is shared with other court offices and the public. While our county is experiencing rapid growth, ongoing computerization has allowed countless dollars in labor costs to be saved in the clerk of courts office while trickling through the entire court system.

Democratic

ROBERT NOLAND

Age: 29; Butler Township

EDUCATION: Graduate, Butler High School; B.A. history, University of Pittsburgh.

OCCUPATION: Sales consultant at Kelly Chevrolet.

QUALIFICATIONS: Member, Red Cross; volunteer escort, Butler VA; member Eighth U.S. Air Force Historical Society; six years' sales experience; former private tutor in conversational English in Turkey; organized clothing drive for the 1999 earthquake in Turkey; frequent world traveler; former member, Habitat for Humanity, Butler Historical Society, RCIA, assistant catechist.

ANSWER: Working together, Butler County government officials can ensure fairness and efficiency in the processing of all criminal case records. With less red tape and more proactive initiatives, the clerk of courts can substantially improve the flow of information through our judicial system. Additionally, I'll open the doors of my office wide to the citizens and their input. By adopting this approach, the clerk -- and all row officers -- can streamline county government.

Controller

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $52,067

DUTIES: General supervision and control of county fiscal matters. Must pass on validity of all claims against the county.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Republican

GARY MCGINNITY

Age: 44; Adams

EDUCATION: B.A. accounting, Walsh College.

OCCUPATION: Accounting supervisor, Union Drilling Inc.

QUALIFICATIONS: Supervisor of 11 staff accountants for a company with four divisions across the United States, 700 employees and revenues of $85 million. Responsibilities include audit coordinator, job cost analyst, cash disbursements manager and company credit card administrator/auditor. Previous qualifications include business owner and IBM account executive.

ANSWER: Butler County has a history of slow payments to vendors. Establishing accounting guidelines for each row office and reducing the time it takes to pay vendors will be my first duties as county controller. As an accounting supervisor in a multimillion-dollar company, I know when you pay vendors timely you can demand much better pricing. As county controller, I will vigorously work with individual department heads, not against them, reduce costs and return more dollars to the taxpayer.

JOHN R. MCMILLIN JR.

Age: 48; Zelienople

EDUCATION: B.A. economics; M.B.A. accounting/finance; certified government financial manager.

OCCUPATION: Butler County controller.

QUALIFICATIONS: A combination of over 25 years of private- and public-sector experience which includes 15 years' experience in the private sector (as a cost accountant and general accountant). Currently president of the Pennsylvania State Association of County Controllers.

ANSWER: For county government to be efficient, it first must be accountable. The accounting and auditing programs I supervise are designed for one purpose: to provide reasonable assurance that $100 million in public expenditures are properly accounted for each year. The professionals of this office work cooperatively and proactively with county officials. Our internal audit reports contain written recommendations that can help officials improve their record-keeping and assist them in adopting modern informational technologies.

Democratic

BILL NEEL

No reply.

Coroner

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $39,339

DUTIES: The coroner investigates deaths of suspicious or violent nature. When necessary, he orders autopsies and subpoenas witnesses for inquests. The coroner is required to issue a certificate if death occurs without medical attendance.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Republican

WILLIAM F. YOUNG III

No reply.

Democratic

JEFFREY A. KENNEDY

Age: 38; Butler Township

EDUCATION: Graduate, Knoch High School.

OCCUPATION: Financial services manager.

QUALIFICATIONS: Six years as an emergency medical technician with Saxonburg Volunteer Fire Co.; 15 years as deputy coroner for Butler County.

ANSWER: Upon winning the election, I plan on meeting with all funeral directors, state and local police, fire departments, ambulance services and the district attorney to see what I can do to help them and streamline the entire process. I also plan on using my past experience to run a professional and efficient office. Upon these trying times of death, by streamlining the operations of my department this should help reduce costs and be more comfortable for the victims and family members of the deceased.

Jury commissioner

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $11,570

DUTIES: The jury commissioners (two to be elected, one from each party) annually prepare lists of qualified voters from which are drawn names of persons for jury duty for the ensuing year.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Republican

DOROTHY R. BUPP

No reply.

Democratic

NANCY JANE OESTERLING

No reply.

Sheriff

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $49,753

DUTIES: The sheriff, as an officer of the court, serves writs, warrants, summonses and other judicial documents, impanels jurors, executes sheriff's sales and carries out orders of the county court.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Republican

DENNIS C. RICKARD

No reply.

FAYETTE COUNTY

Common Pleas judge

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $116,065

DUTIES: The Court of Common Pleas is primarily a trial court. Judge candidates can run on both the Republican and Democratic tickets.

QUESTION ASKED: Do you have any specific suggestions for improving the administration of justice?

Republican-Democratic

NANCY D. VERNON

Age: 45; Uniontown

EDUCATION: Uniontown Area Senior High School, 1973; West Virginia University, A.B. in psychology, 1976; Duquesne University School of Law, juris doctorate, 1980.

OCCUPATION: District attorney of Fayette County.

QUALIFICATIONS: Member, Fayette bar, Pa. bar, Supreme Court, federal court; attorney for 20 years; district attorney; has handled extensive general practice of law, both civil and criminal law; head of drug task force; litigated hundreds of criminal, civil, custody and divorce cases before the courts.

ANSWER: As district attorney, I have taken a firm stance on domestic violence and have worked closely with victim advocate groups in offering the victims of crime support as they are encouraged to testify against the accused. In addition to supporting victims of crime who are at times overlooked, I have supported the Interlock device for intoxication-related automobile cases as well as instituting the Fayette County Drug Task Force. These are the areas in which the justice system needs to keep a watchful vigil.

STEVE P. LESKINEN

Age: 47; Hopwood

EDUCATION: B.A. economics, Bucknell University, 1975; J.D., University of Pennsylvania Law School, 1978.

OCCUPATION: Trial lawyer.

QUALIFICATIONS: 23 years practicing lawyer; 10 years as assistant district attorney; 15 years as solicitor, Fayette County Domestic Relations section; represent five municipalities; prosecuted more than 100 criminal jury trials and more than 50 civil trials.

ANSWER: Canon 7 B. (I)(c) states: "A candidate ... for a judicial office ... should not ... announce his views on disputed legal or political issues ..." That said, there are points that cannot reasonably be disputed: 1) The quality of the justice system should not vary from county to county due to local political and budgetary considerations. 2) Cutting corners on the justice system costs society more in the long run. 3) Statewide standards, adequate funding and the best people available will help.

GRETCHEN MUNDORFF

Age: 42; Connellsville

EDUCATION: B.A. psychology, Chatham College; summa cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa, Mortar Board, Psychology award. J.D., Marshall-Wythe School of Law, College of William and Mary.

OCCUPATION: Attorney/partner, Watson Mundorff & Brooks law firm, Connellsville; civil litigation, plaintiffs' personal injury, family law.

QUALIFICATIONS: Experience, honesty and integrity.

ANSWER: The administration of justice would be enhanced in Fayette County if our bench was comprised not only of prosecutors from the district attorney's office but also by lawyers with civil litigation experience and most particularly family law litigation experience. Most of us will be touched by a family law matter. Most of us will not be victims or perpetrators of crime. We need a judge who has both the experience and the motivation to do a better job for our family law litigants and their children.

GARY N. ALTMAN

Age: 51; Uniontown

EDUCATION: Graduate of Duke University and Vanderbilt University School of Law.

OCCUPATION: Attorney for 26 years.

QUALIFICATIONS: My years of experience include civil and criminal law in both state and federal courts. My practice is diverse and includes corporate and business law, real estate, zoning law, estate and school law. As a result of the variety of my practice and my seven years of practicing law with a prestigious firm in Downtown Pittsburgh, I have an encompassing perspective of the law. No other judicial candidate has as much experience as I do, not only in years, but in the quality of practice.

ANSWER: I am a member of the Pennsylvania Bar Association's Judicial Administration Committee, which for years has advocated the statewide appointment of judges through a merit selection process. I support merit selection, vs. election, because it has been shown in other jurisdictions to lead to a better overall quality of judge. Certainly, the political process is present in any merit selection process, but, in general, the politicians cannot appoint just anyone, particularly when that person is not highly rated by an independent evaluation commission. Thus, the merit selection of judges should improve the overall administration of justice.

Treasurer

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $37,551

DUTIES: Collects taxes and other money due the county.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Democratic

ROBERT DANKO

Age: Did not provide; Masontown

EDUCATION: No reply.

OCCUPATION: Danko is seeking his fourth term as Fayette County's treasurer.

QUALIFICATIONS: He has brought about many changes, including full computerization. The method used for issuance of the various licenses sold has been used as a model for many counties. He has been very active in the Pennsylvania Association of Treasurers, serving as president, vice president and a member of the association's executive committee.

ANSWER: Danko has always been one of the most conscientious row officers regarding his office budget. He is well known for saying "I watch my office budget as closely as I watch my budget at home." Overspending in this office is unacceptable and his office typically comes in under budget. Danko will also play an active role in the administration of the new bond issue. His conservative spending practices and watchdog approach to managing these funds will ensure that the money is spent to benefit all Fayette County residents.

Recorder of deeds

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $37,551

DUTIES: The recorder of deeds maintains the record of real property in the county, including titles and liens. The recorder also keeps records of military discharges.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Democratic

DAVID G. MALOSKY

No reply.

Jury commissioner

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $8,734

DUTIES: The jury commissioners (two to be elected, one from each party) annually prepare lists of qualified voters from which are drawn names of persons for jury duty for the ensuing year.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Republican

MARION J. DEAN

No reply.

Democratic

TIMOTHY S. MAHONEY

No reply.

GREENE COUNTY

Coroner

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $27,708

DUTIES: The coroner investigates deaths of suspicious or violent nature. When necessary, he orders autopsies and subpoenas witnesses for inquests. The coroner is required to issue a certificate if death occurs without medical attendance.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Democratic

GREGORY P. ROHANNA

No reply.

Jury commissioner

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $4,890

DUTIES: The jury commissioners (two to be elected, one from each party) annually prepare lists of qualified voters from which are drawn names of persons for jury duty for the ensuing year.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Republican

JENNIE CONFORTINI

No reply.

Democratic

ROSALIND B. LAUR

No reply.

Sheriff

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $27,708

DUTIES: The sheriff, as an officer of the court, serves writs, warrants, summonses and other judicial documents, impanels jurors, executes sheriff's sales and carries out orders of the county court.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Republican

No candidate filed.

Democratic

JIM ZIMMERMAN

No reply.

RICHARD C. KETCHEM

Age: 53; Waynesburg

EDUCATION: Waynesburg College, criminology course; Act II deputy sheriff training; Morgantown Business College.

OCCUPATION: Sheriff.

QUALIFICATIONS: Commissioned officer of Department of Health and Human Services; deputy fish commissioner, 19 years; warden, Greene County Prison; chairman, Prison Board; drug task force; DUI task force; crime prevention officer; Civil Air Patrol counteroperations; threat management course; Academy of Counterterrorist Education; Harrisburg Area Community College vehicle code criminal procedures.

ANSWER: For the past 11 years I have stayed within my budget. I have obtained over $40,000 in grant money, have obtained several grants enabling us to obtain all new radios for the cars and office, sent my deputies and myself to courses where we have become instructors, worked with SCI Greene and SCI Waynesburg, where we have been able to obtain free training. Full-time deputy through STOP grant.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Controller

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $54,724

DUTIES: General supervision and control of county fiscal matters. Must pass on validity of all claims against the county.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Republican

THOMAS FLICKINGER

Age: 45; Washington

EDUCATION: 1977 B.S. degree, Washington and Jefferson College, economics/psychology; 1984 M.B.A., Waynesburg College, finance.

OCCUPATION: Vice president/chief financial officer/general manager of Packaging Specialists Inc.

QUALIFICATIONS: I have 24 years' experience in the financial community, providing expert financial systems and strategies in the private sector. Managed all financial controls including payroll, audits, budgets, pension and investment decisions. Four years on the Trinity school board as treasurer and one year as president.

ANSWER: It is my desire to apply my years of financial experience to the office of county controller, to run the office like a business, increasing its efficiency and responsiveness. An effective controller's office can maximize the value of each tax dollar, thereby minimizing the need of increasing taxes. In the next four years I will transform the office of controller into a modern, technologically efficient, cost-effective, accountable and responsible arm of county government.

Democratic

MICHAEL L. NAMIE

Age: 37; Canton

EDUCATION: B.A. business administration, Washington and Jefferson College.

OCCUPATION: Washington County deputy controller.

QUALIFICATIONS: Due to my 10 years' experience as deputy controller and knowledge of county government, I am uniquely qualified to be controller. During my tenure, our accounts payable processing was found to be 99.9999 percent accurate by Profit Retrieval Systems, an independent auditing firm.

ANSWER: The controller's office is in the unique position of affecting almost every aspect of county government through accounts payable and payroll functions. In working with county officials, I have developed an accounts payable network that allows us to audit, process and pay invoices promptly and efficiently. Because vendors are now eager to do business with the county, bidding is more competitive, costs are lower and valuable tax dollars are saved.

Sheriff

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $54,724

DUTIES: The sheriff, as an officer of the court, serves writs, warrants, summonses and other judicial documents, impanels jurors, executes sheriff's sales and carries out orders of the county court.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Democratic

ROBERT ROSIE KMETT

Age: 54; Amwell

EDUCATION: Indiana University of Pa., criminology program; Wilson College, district justice program; Advanced International Security, tactical security operations; Duquesne University, paralegal program.

OCCUPATION: Heavy equipment operator, Trumbull/P.J. Dick construction; retired state trooper.

QUALIFICATIONS: 18 years of law enforcement experience as a trooper; six years of leadership experience with the Army National Guard; licensed private investigator.

ANSWER: My goal is to serve you and your family in the overdue, professional manner which you deserve. I will insure that juveniles and issues concerning the elderly are top priorities. The sheriff's office will initiate an "open door policy" for the public, employing professional budget management practices by justifying full accountability for expenditures, encouraging community involvement by deputy personnel, basing promotion on ability and established criteria and eliminating political pressure.

LARRY MAGGI

Age: 50; Buffalo

EDUCATION: Graduate of McGuffey High School and California University of Pennsylvania; served in the U.S. Marine Corps.

OCCUPATION: Served 24 years as a Pennsylvania state policeman and currently serving as the Washington County sheriff.

QUALIFICATIONS: Born, educated and worked in Washington County. Active in community and veterans activities. A Sunday school teacher and active in church.

ANSWER: The past three years I have served as sheriff. I have kept my campaign promises. The sheriff's office has been under budget every year since I took office. I have implemented changes: computerized the office, new uniforms, equipment, bulletproof vests and hours of training for the deputies. We instituted a bicycle patrol, involved in numerous community programs from children to senior citizens. We will continue efficiency and responsible leadership to stay under budget.

Recorder of deeds

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $54,724

DUTIES: The recorder of deeds maintains the record of real property in the county, including titles and liens. The recorder also keeps records of military discharges.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Republican

ERIC FLINT

Age: 35; Chartiers

EDUCATION: U.S. Navy; Maryland Bible College and Seminary.

OCCUPATION: Settlement coordinator.

QUALIFICATIONS: I have six years' diversified experience in the mortgage industry. As a settlement coordinator, I work with the recorder of deeds office in every county in the United States. This experience brings practical insight to the recorder of deeds position.

ANSWER: One word: accountability -- by making myself accountable and asking the county officials to make themselves accountable to Washington County residents. County government needs to learn to be a good steward of the taxpayers' money and be held accountable for how that money is used.

Democratic

DEBBIE BARDELLA

Age: 46; Speers

EDUCATION: Honor graduate, Avella High School, 1972.

OCCUPATION: Washington County recorder of deeds.

QUALIFICATIONS: 21 years' experience as clerk in this office; eight years serving as deputy recorder of deeds; three years as recorder of deeds.

ANSWER: My goal is to deliver a balanced budget to the commissioners each and every year while maintaining efficient service to the public. Each year I have been under budget, $24,000 alone in 2000. Sharing mapping cabinets and computer hardware/software with the tax assessment office saves valuable space and revenue. Due to implemented technology, books requiring additional space have been eliminated, allowing the recorder to provide much-needed office space to the district attorney.

Jury commissioner

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $12,727

DUTIES: The jury commissioners (two to be elected, one from each party) annually prepare lists of qualified voters from which are drawn names of persons for jury duty for the ensuing year.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Republican

SANDRA W. ORTWEIN

Age: 58; North Strabane

EDUCATION: Southern Virginia College (formerly Southern Seminary), assoc. B.S. education; Moravian College.

OCCUPATION: Washington County jury commissioner.

QUALIFICATIONS: As jury commissioner, I've instituted the office's progression to the present efficient level. I've increased the capacity to compromise, therefore working cooperatively within the court system. I also understand the importance to show respect and compassion to the jurors who will serve on jury duty.

ANSWER: The incentive to improve county government is to control cost efficiency without compromising standards. Administrating this concept in the jury commissioners office is with numbers and eliminating waste. I am consistently making efforts to issue the number of summonses to correlate with the need of the courts, therefore eliminating added costs of wastes incurred by excessive juror payment vouchers. Also, issuing a current and updated summoning source eliminates wasted postage and summonses. Conserve for efficiency.

G. RICHARD ZIMMERMAN

Age: 70; South Strabane

EDUCATION: Bachelor of music education, Westminster College; M. Litt. History of Music, University of Pittsburgh; M.A. spirituality, Duquesne University.

OCCUPATION: Semiretired church organist.

QUALIFICATIONS: I have always been involved in public affairs. Several commissions of the Trinity Area School District plus eight years on the board; Washington Council of Churches president; Sunset Lodge 623 master and trustee.

ANSWER: I will do whatever the Washington County courts direct us to do in the most efficient manner I know. Public funds have been a part of much of my life and I spend them much as I do my own because I pay the taxes just like other residents.

Democratic

JUDITH L. FISHER

Age: 62; South Strabane

EDUCATION: Graduate, California Area High School; honor student, California University of Pennsylvania; attended various seminars and conferences.

OCCUPATION: Jury commissioner.

QUALIFICATIONS: Seven years' experience as jury commissioner; research Pennsylvania statutes to keep office in state compliance.

ANSWER: I have met with the jury selection commission and proposed having the trial term jury summons ordered and printed directly from my office, thereby freeing up the use of information technology personnel. I am also proposing to the controller's office that, if possible, they use our computerized juror name and address files to process the juror payment checks. They issue approximately 2,000 checks each year and their employees now enter this information by hand.

WESTMORELAND COUNTY

District attorney

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $115,605

DUTIES: Prosecutes all criminal cases in Court of Common Pleas. Prepares criminal information, requests and conducts investigative grand juries, prepares cases for court.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Republican

No candidate filed.

Democratic

JOHN W. PECK

Age: 54; New Kensington

EDUCATION: B.A. University of Texas at Austin (1969); J.D. Duquesne University School of Law (1973).

OCCUPATION: District attorney.

QUALIFICATIONS: I have served as district attorney for seven years and previously as chief trial attorney and assistant district attorney for 13 years. I have directed investigations and prosecutions of all types of crimes including multiple homicides, sexual assaults and complex theft cases. I have maintained the integrity, independence and competency of the office of district attorney.

ANSWER: The office of district attorney will continue to seek grants through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency for funding of victim/witness advocates, advocates for the victims of juvenile crime, a prosecutor and detective dedicated to the investigation and prosecution of domestic violence. The office has begun bond forfeitures to recover bonds of absconded defendants. Lastly, the office will continue to aggressively pursue forfeitures from drug traffickers and organized gambling to defray the cost of drug investigations and prosecutions.

Prothonotary

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $48,307

DUTIES: The Prothonotary is a clerk of the Court of Common Pleas, administering the records of civil proceedings.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Republican

BARBARA GENTER

No reply.

Democratic

RON DIEHL

Age: 57; Greensburg

EDUCATION: Greensburg-Salem High School; Penn State University labor studies, CED program.

OCCUPATION: Prothonotary

QUALIFICATIONS: Currently serving seventh year as prothonotary. Implemented technology-based records management system that streamlined office procedures and cut costs. We are recognized as one of the most efficiently run and technologically advanced 3rd Class County prothonotary's office in Pennsylvania.

ANSWER: During the past several years we have streamlined procedures with the use of technology and systems management. This eliminated the need for additional personnel, despite a growing caseload. Through revenue enhancements and legislative initiatives we have been able to pay the entire cost of the operation of our office and returned over $250,000 in excess revenue to the general fund. No tax dollars were used for the operation of the prothonotary's office.

Clerk of courts

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $48,307

DUTIES: Keeps all the criminal records of Common Pleas Court. Duties include docketing and recording cases, filing court decisions, issuing criminal bonds, taking bail, collecting court costs and paying witness fees.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Republican

HARRY F. SMAIL JR.

Age: 35; Greensburg

EDUCATION: B.A. business administration, marketing, political science, pre-law, Grove City College, 1988; J.D., Duquesne University, 1997.

OCCUPATION: Attorney at law, sole practice.

QUALIFICATIONS: Five-plus years as a Westmoreland County Adult Probation parole officer, working daily in clerk's office with records. Four-plus years litigation attorney knowing the value of records.

ANSWER: It is the elected row officer's responsibility to initiate cost efficiency and streamline when possible. To effectively accomplish this, the row officer must attend meetings with the commissioners, contrary to the incumbent's current practice. I will be diligent in protecting and utilizing the existing budget without increase through productivity review, employee encouragement and incentive.

Democratic

JIM GEBICKI

Age: 49; Latrobe

EDUCATION: B.A. Saint Vincent College.

OCCUPATION: Consultant to TRACK Entertainment.

QUALIFICATIONS: As a mayor (twice elected), I was charged with the oversight of a broad range of administrative functions; resolving personnel and fiscal matters in police, fire, streets and tax departments. Long-term planning duties included annual budget development, capital improvements and projects.

ANSWER: As a row officer, my first duty is to the taxpayers. Reducing costs without jeopardizing quality in performance by creating unmanageable work demands is a delicate and deliberate process. It has been my experience that the best results are attainable by actively soliciting the participation of my fellow employees in creating the most efficient and cost-effective work environment. Mutual respect and an ear tuned to experience create a winning combination for all.

DAVID L. PATTERSON

Age: 52; Greensburg

EDUCATION: Greensburg Central Catholic High School, 1966; University of Pittsburgh, B.S., 1984; Carnegie Mellon University, M.P.M. in progress.

OCCUPATION: Clerk of courts.

QUALIFICATIONS: 12 years' experience as clerk of courts; education in management, administration and human resources and strategic planning.

ANSWER: I have always been responsive to the commissioners' call to fiscal restraints in terms of materials and supplies. By implementing the most modern, up-to-date technology and reducing redundancy, efficiency is improved and corrective (down time) reduced. Our highest budget consideration is that of personnel costs. I have asked the commissioners to consider a four-day/eight-hour work week to expand hours of operation and reduce equipment needs (desks, computers) and save space. This, however, is a negotiable item and must be brought before the bargaining unit.

Coroner

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $48,307

DUTIES: The coroner investigates deaths of suspicious or violent nature. When necessary, he orders autopsies and subpoenas witnesses for inquests. The coroner is required to issue a certificate if death occurs without medical attendance.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Republican

GREGORY C. SPAIN

Age: 45; Unity

EDUCATION: University of Iowa, 1974-77; Illinois College of Podiatric Medicine, 1977-81 (D.P.M./B.S. degrees); Podiatric surgical residency, the Podiatry Hospital of Pittsburgh, 1981-82.

OCCUPATION: Podiatrist, Greensburg.

QUALIFICATIONS: Four-year medical degree with surgical training credentials; administrative experience with corporations with budgets over $500,000 and multiple professional members. Networked with county hospitals and physicians.

ANSWER: I would regionalize the coroner network. Dividing Westmoreland County into zones, I would appoint deputy coroners within those zones. These coroners would be independent contractors, the qualifications and resources of which would be determined later. These deputy coroners would be paid on a case-by-case basis. This would limit payroll liabilities for the county. It would also serve to provide a quicker response time to the scene of a death. Working closely with our local hospitals, we will develop a local facility with our own medical examiner. The facility such as the laboratory and morgue could be jointly shared with that hospital and the county.

Democratic

KENNETH A. BACHA

Age: 39; Southwest Greensburg

EDUCATION: B.S. in safety science, Indiana University of Pennsylvania; graduate funeral director, mortuary arts and sciences, Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science; death scene investigation, Mercyhurst College; forensic science and the law, Duquesne University; deputy coroner con-ed training, Pennsylvania Coroners Association.

OCCUPATION: Licensed funeral director/embalmer and deputy coroner.

QUALIFICATIONS: A unique, well-rounded background in a combination of fields that are directly related to the duties and job description of the coroner. My education, training, involvement in emergency services and life experiences have truly given me the kind of credentials to fully qualify me to serve as Westmoreland County coroner.

ANSWER: There will be an automatic savings to taxpayers as new replacement employees are hired. New hires will start at a much lower rate than current employees. The current seasoned, full-time deputies will be complemented with part-time deputies at a lower pay scale. There will be an ongoing cooperative effort with the district attorney's office as to not duplicate services in investigations. Continue to utilize Westmoreland County's "best buy" in contracting the services of world-renowned forensic pathologist Dr. Cyril Wecht for autopsy services. Our prosecutors and law enforcement community deserve this top-quality information and service and all for a very reasonable cost to the taxpayers.

Jury commissioner

Vote for one

TERM: 4 years SALARY: $13,348

DUTIES: The jury commissioners (two to be elected, one from each party) annually prepare lists of qualified voters from which are drawn names of persons for jury duty for the ensuing year.

QUESTION ASKED: How will your row office cooperate with the county officials to make county government more efficient and less expensive?

Republican

JUDY VACHAL SINEMUS

Age: 58; Derry Township

EDUCATION: High school graduate; licensed cosmetologist; government leadership forums.

OCCUPATION: Jury commissioner.

QUALIFICATIONS: Seven years' experience enables me to provide Westmoreland County, in an ethical, efficient and cost-effective manner, a pool of qualified jurors diverse in age, ethnic background, gender, education and life experience.

ANSWER: As jury commissioner I have used a conservative constructive approach in managing the office. I will continue this practice, assuring a more cost-efficient government office while meeting all state and court mandates prescribed by law.

Democratic

MARY ANN DOMINICK

Age: 66; Salem

EDUCATION: Greensburg Salem High School.

OCCUPATION: Democratic jury commissioner.

QUALIFICATIONS: Currently in second term of office as Democratic jury commissioner.

ANSWER: Continue to analyze positions as they are vacated to determine the need to fill them. Advance technological changes to create greater efficiencies.

COUNTRY:  UNITED STATES (79%);

STATE:  PENNSYLVANIA, USA (79%);

SUBJECT: ELECTION  COUNTIES (92%); CORONERS COURTS & OFFICES (92%); INVESTIGATIONS (91%); COUNTY GOVERNMENT (91%); JUSTICE DEPARTMENTS (90%); HEALTH DEPARTMENTS (90%); WITNESSES (90%); SUBPOENAS (90%); AUTOPSIES (90%); REGIONAL & LOCAL GOVERNMENTS (90%); JURY TRIALS (89%); US REPUBLICAN PARTY (89%); HIGH SCHOOLS (89%); LAW COURTS & TRIBUNALS (87%); GRAND JURY (73%); PATHOLOGY (73%); JURY DUTY (71%);

LOAD-DATE: May 9, 2001

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

NOTES:

2001 VOTERS GUIDE PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE/LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS GUIDE TO PRIMARY ELECTION

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

May 9, 2001 Wednesday SOUTH EDITION

CAMPAIGN 2001/WASHINGTON COUNTY CHALLENGER FOR SHERIFF CRITICIZES INCUMBENT'S IRON FIST THIS STORY RAN PREVIOUSLY IN WASHINGTON SUNDAY.

BYLINE: JOE SMYDO, POST-GAZETTE STAFF WRITER

SECTION: METRO, Pg.S-14

LENGTH: 732 words

When Washington County Sheriff Larry Maggi took office in 1998, he demoted Stephen Svitek from lieutenant to corporal and cut his annual pay about $3,500. Yet Svitek is backing Maggi's re-election bid.

"We have seen a vast improvement in the office -- more professionalism, much more training," said Svitek, now a sergeant and president of the deputies' union that endorsed Maggi.

Maggi, 50, a retired state trooper, has one opponent in the Democratic primary May 15. He is former state Trooper Robert Kmett, 54, of Amwell, who was convicted of simple assault after an altercation with an ex-girlfriend in 1991 and is backed by deputies who dislike Maggi.

"I think we definitely need a change. As far as the sheriff bringing any good to the office, I think he brought more animosity to the office than there's ever been," said Paulette Benard, a deputy ousted as union president in 1999 by colleagues who wanted a better relationship with Maggi.

No Republicans are running for sheriff, a position that pays about $56,000 a year. Maggi took over a department reeling from a job-selling scandal that erupted under his predecessor's predecessor. He vowed to repair the department's image and end budget overruns. In his view, he's succeeded on both fronts.

The department ended the past three years under budget and is projected to end 2001 in the black, an accomplishment Maggi attributes to better scheduling of deputies.

Focusing on rules, regulation and discipline, he said, he upgraded education requirements for new hires, worked with the union to implement a promotion system based on ability and seniority and offered 5,000 hours of training last year. He replaced the department's drab brown uniforms and standardized the weapons that deputies carry.

After demoting the three lieutenants, Maggi hired as captains two of his longtime colleagues, one a retired state police sergeant and the other a retired Washington police lieutenant. As chief deputy, he hired his old boss at the state police.

"We try to lead by example," Maggi said.

He said he has tried to raise the department's profile by establishing a "police academy" for senior citizens and a bicycle patrol at Mingo Creek County Park.

Kmett, a heavy-equipment operator and shop steward for Operating Engineers Local 66, said Maggi likes to sweet-talk the public while running the office with an iron fist.

Deputies are afraid to criticize Maggi, said Benard, who tangled with the sheriff over reimbursement of travel expenses and other matters. Svitek said the union replaced her because she was squandering money on frivolous grievances. Kmett said the only union "officers" now are Maggi and Chief Deputy John Rheel.

Kmett was charged in 1991 with forcing his way into an ex-girlfriend's Chartiers home and assaulting her. He was convicted of simple assault, placed on probation for 23 months and ordered to perform 100 hours of community service.

In 1993, state police arrested Kmett for drunken driving. His driver's license was suspended for 30 days.

Kmett said the offenses occurred when he had a drinking problem and should have no bearing on the campaign.

He has taken criminology courses at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and paralegal courses at Duquesne University. He completed a district justices training course and is vice president of the Washington-Greene chapter of Pennsylvania Federation of Injured Workers.

Kmett said the office's financial picture isn't as bright as Maggi makes it out to be because workers' compensation claims, previously paid from the sheriff's budget, now come out of the county's general fund.

County officials changed the method of funding compensation claims for a variety of offices, including the sheriff's office. If claims were still paid from the sheriff's budget, the commissioners would have to give Maggi more money each year, the county budget office said.

Kmett criticized Maggi for buying the department machine guns, saying, "I put them on the same order as buying hand grenades." Maggi said he merely replaced old weapons in the department's arsenal.

Kmett questioned the fairness of the new promotion system, saying two deputies on workers' compensation weren't given an opportunity to take the exam. At the union's request, Maggi said, only active-duty full-time deputies were eligible to take the test.

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The Associated Press State & Local Wire

April 28, 2001, Saturday, BC cycle

Deputy undone by stripping sentenced to prison

SECTION: State and Regional

LENGTH: 312 words

DATELINE: WASHINGTON, Pa.

A former sheriff's deputy who stripped on stage under the name "Dimitri" has been sentenced to three to 12 months in prison for worker's compensation fraud.

Authorities said Andreas Veneris worked as a stripper after reporting that he could not work for the Washington County Sheriff's Department because of a back injury.

Veneris, 34, of Finleyville was sentenced Friday by Washington County Judge Paul Pozonsky and also was ordered to repay the county $6,649 in benefits.

Attorney General Mike Fisher said Veneris falsely reported that he hurt his back while chasing a suspect in January 1997. He actually hurt himself in motorcycle accident one year earlier, Fisher said.

Veneris left work on disability in March 1997 and told county officials that he could not work. However, he was spotted dancing at Gloria's Hindquarter Room in suburban Pittsburgh in 1998. That's when the county sheriff, Larry Maggi, started an investigation and fired Veneris.

Veneris told investigators that he also danced at private parties. His pay at Gloiria's was $20 per night plus tips.

At Friday's hearing, he apologized for embarrassing the county but said he was innocent.

"It's obvious that you still have difficulty accepting the jury's decision," Pozonsky said. "It's amazing to me that you continue to profess that others are to blame here."

Pozonsky said Veneris has blamed the sheriff, a former sheriff, his defense attorney and the county court administrator.

Defense attorney Edward Terreri asked for leniency.

"Primarily and most importantly, his prior service to the county should be taken into consideration," Terreri said.

A jury in Washington - about 20 miles southwest of Pittsburgh - found Veneris guilty in February of one count of worker's compensation fraud, two counts of attempted theft by deception and one count of perjury.

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

July 10, 1999, Saturday, AM cycle

SECTION: State and Regional

LENGTH: 498 words

DATELINE: PITCAIRN, Pa.

The suburban Pittsburgh borough of Pitcairn will sue one of its neighbors for damages from a flood in 1997.

Officials in Pitcairn allege that development in nearby Monroeville diverted water into their streets on July 1, 1997, after 4 inches of rain fell in 90 minutes.

The borough filed notice of its intent to sue last month because of a two-year statute of limitations, Mayor Margaret Stevick said. She said she wants "to make sure Monroeville keeps being a good neighbor."

Monroeville has about 28,000 residents, and Pitcairn has about 3,500. Pitcairn residents believe that runoff from parking lots at new Monroeville buildings made their flood worse.

Monroeville Mayor Sean Logan said attorneys for the municipality have told him not to participate in meetings on flood control because of the pending lawsuit.

"It's unfortunate that this happened. It's actions like these that will cost us both grants to alleviate the problems," Logan said.

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LIBRARY, Pa. (AP) - Two employees of Allegheny County's golf course south of Pittsburgh have been fired for fighting on the job.

And South Park's golf pro, Charles Cullison, was suspended for two weeks for letting one of the fired employees play for free.

Fired were laborer David J. Connors and Edward Thomas, a seasonal employee who helped run the course in South Park Township.

Cullison told Tom Donatelli, the county's public works director, that he let Connors play for free to build morale.

The fight on June 17 started when Thomas told Cullison to check in with the starter before playing. The men traded punches, and Thomas was treated for bloody knuckles and shortness of breath, Donatelli told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

It costs $ 17 to play 18 holes at the course on weekends.

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WASHINGTON, Pa. (AP) - Washington County and the city of Washington will bill the Ku Klux Klan $ 6,269.42 for security at a Klan Rally on June 19.

Klan members rallied at the county courthouse.

Sheriff Larry Maggi, his chief deputy and captain and 26 deputies put in 174 hours of overtime. Their work included checking garbage cans for weapons and explosives.

"We had to make sure it was a safe environment," Maggi said.

City Manager Joseph Thomas said Friday that the city paid overtime for its police, as well.

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PITTSBURGH (AP) - Three executives at the western division of Allegheny University Hospitals have been removed to make way for new managment.

The posts will be filled by executives of the parent company of West Penn Hospital, which is taking over Allegheny General Hospitals and three others that were part of the Allegheny chain.

The transfer approved by U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Bruce McCullough is effective Monday. The Allegheny chain is operating with court protection from its creditors.

AUH West President Anthony Sanzo, Chief Financial Officer Joseph Dionisio and personnel manager Dwight Kasperbauer. McCullough has forbidden the company from making severance payments to the officials.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

November 29, 1998, Sunday, WASHINGTON EDITION

RING OVERFLOWS WITH HATS IN RACE FOR COMMISSIONER

BYLINE: DAVID TEMPLETON, POST-GAZETTE STAFF WRITER

SECTION: METRO, Pg. W-1

LENGTH: 1320 words

The bigger the race, the spicier the speculation.

Perhaps that's why the political rumor mill has been working overtime to churn out name after curious name of people interested in running for Washington County commissioner next year.

Speculation, now in full tilt, has included local state legislators, the county sheriff, former officeholders and county employees, noted residents, various municipal and school officials and probably some wishful thinkers.

The only names not yet mentioned seem to be Bill Clinton and John Glenn but there's plenty of time before petitions are circulated.

Incumbent Republican Diana Irey of Carroll and incumbent Democrat J. Bracken Burns say they will be candidates, unless something dramatic happens. Burns, a "frustrated actor," said he's put his name in to replace the Jimmy Smits character on NYPD Blue. That's to say, he'll be running for the Democratic nomination in the spring.

Republican Commissioner Scott H. Fergus, the Washington attorney appointed to fill the term of Republican Joe Ford who resigned in June, is reportedly considering running for the seat he now holds, but could not be reached for comment.

Speculation is swirling about others who might be interested.

State Rep. Anthony Colaizzo, the Canonsburg Democrat who will retire his legislative seat in the 47 th District at year's end, did not return phone calls. But colleagues and party leaders say he is seriously considering a try for commissioner.

Other Democratic candidates who said they are almost certain about running include Speers Mayor Joe Hurley, Cecil Supervisor Tom Casciola and Fallowfield Supervisor Donn Henderson. Samuel Marra, the Monongahela man who served as county director of administration in 1994, said he has not decided whether to run.

Those who are reportedly considering a run include Charleroi School Board member and Mon Valley Black Caucus President Dennis Stitch, and James McDonald, president and owner of Monaloh Basin Engineers. They couldn't be reached for comment.

The Republican side of the ledger is equally busy with names. In addition to Irey and possibly Fergus, there are Washington County Republican Jury Commissioner Sandra Ortwein of Peters, who is supposedly interested, and as early as Tuesday, Nottingham Republican Robin Cole, the 42-year-old former Pittsburgh Steelers linebacker, is planning to announce his candidacy.

Martin O' Brien, a South Strabane resident who is president of the Trinity Area School Board, ran as the Republican candidate for controller last year, but was defeated by Democratic incumbent Paul Belcastro. He said he is strongly considering running for commissioner.

Another possible Republican candidate is David Antion, a member of the McGuffey School Board, who has been a critic of various spending plans in the district. He was not available for comment.

Potential candidates and leaders of both parties say the commissioners' race is attracting early interest because the board includes two first-term incumbents, Irey and Burns, and Fergus, an appointee.

"For many years, the board of commissioners was almost a done deal before the primary started. It was not a race up for grabs," Burns said. "It was something that wasn't on people's screens before. But there has been so much flux in the position from what it was. Things have changed dramatically. In fact, it has changed just in the past year [with Ford's resignation]."

Democrats feel they can capture control of the board because they won't have to unseat an elected incumbent like Ford.

"I am very much encouraging Democrats with qualifications to run," said county Democratic Committee Chairwoman Rose Ann Masters. "People have felt that things were tied up in the county. With new leadership, they now feel everyone has an equal chance. Anyone who wants to run who is qualified and wants to be a public servant - and not a public dictator - has a fair chance and we will let the people decide who will govern. It will not be prearranged by the good-ol' boys."

But Republicans know there's been a rift between Democratic Party leadership and Democratic officeholders and hope that will work to their advantage. Citing victories of Republicans in recent elections, including Gov. Tom Ridge's victory in Washington County on Nov. 3, county Republican Committee Chairman Robert A. Keagy says his party is confident they can retain the board majority if they offer voters quality candidates.

"Looking at the [2-1 Democratic advantage in] registration, it takes a lot of doing," he said. "We feel that if we can show two or three or more good candidates, it's been proven over and over again that we can win."

Keagy said Washington County residents vote party line only if the party's candidates are strong.

Noting the interest in the race, Irey said Republican candidates are coming forth because they know Republicans can win two seats, as they did four years ago when she and Ford were elected.

"Republicans are hopeful it can be done again," she said. "Republicans feel they can keep the seat and that's a good thing for the Republican Party."

Irey said anyone running for commissioner should expect to spend a minimum of $ 100,000, and plan to work hard, know the issues, have a good advertising campaign and generate a good grassroots effort.

A survey of potential candidates proves that speculation had overshot reality, especially with name Democrats holding state and county positions who have decided to stay where they are rather than jump into what could be a political gang fight.

State Rep. Leo Trich Jr., D-North Franklin, already has held a news conference to reveal that he'd been thinking about running for the Democratic nomination in May, but decided against it after talking to family, friends and campaign staff.

On Nov. 3, Trich was elected to his sixth term in the House, and said he is setting his sights on the state Senate or Congress once state Sen. J. Barry Stout, D-Bentleyville, and U.S. Rep. Frank R. Mascara, D-Charleroi, resign. Stout is 62 and Mascara is 68.

Rumors that Stout and state Rep. Victor J. Lescovitz, D-Midway, might opt for commissioner also are unfounded.

"I'm not interested in county commissioner," Stout said. "I've just been elected to another four-year term [on Nov. 3] and feel that I can do the most good and best serve my constituents by remaining in the Senate, particularly as chairman of the Transportation Commission."

Lescovitz had a similar reaction, saying he's been approached about running, but quickly decided to stay in the House, where his experience and seniority have landed him a leadership role as chairman of the Democratic Policy Committee.

"People asked me last spring, ' Why don't you consider running for commissioner? Lescovitz said. "But I enjoy this job where you deal with a thousand issues."

Washington County Sheriff Larry Maggi also said he briefly considered the idea, and is not ruling out a future run for commissioner.

"Anything is possible in the political world, but not right now," he said. "It's something that everyone thinks about. I also might hit the lottery, but the odds are against it. I've heard the rumors, but I like this job."

Lou Lignelli, an aide to Mascara and former county director of administration, said he considered running but decided against it, especially in the wake of Mascara's re-election to a third term.

And how about Melvin Bassi, the former county solicitor who was appointed to fill the unexpired term of Mascara, who was serving as county commissioner when he was elected to Congress? Bassi said he has been put out to political pasture.

"My service was temporary and done at the request of the court to provide continuity of government," Bassi said, noting some surprise at his name surfacing as a candidate. "Once it terminated, my involvement came to an end."

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

July 19, 1998, Sunday, WASHINGTON EDITION

NEW LOOK FOR COUNTY DEPUTIES

BYLINE: JANICE CROMPTON

SECTION: METRO, Pg. W-1

LENGTH: 670 words

In the past seven months, a lot has changed in the Washington County Sheriff's office.

Larry Maggi, who took over as sheriff in January, is setting out to change the image of the office with everything from new programs to a new look for his county deputies.

Earlier this month, the standard brown uniforms that sheriff deputies have been sporting for at least the past 25 years were replaced with ''LAPD Blue''-colored ones. Maggi said that studies done on color perception revealed that most people thought of the color brown as dull and uncomfortable.

''Brown was never related to respect or high esteem,'' he said of the studies. ''Certain colors represent authority and respect.''

So, when deputies decided on the navy blue uniforms, they saved their allotted uniform allowance from the county for six months until they'd put aside enough to purchase the new uniforms. Although deputies have been donning their new colors for only the past couple of weeks, Maggi said the positive feedback has been encouraging.

Another project of Maggi's is bike patrols. By the end of the summer, he is hoping to have deputies on bicycles on duty at the Mingo Creek County Park. Deputies will use mountain bikes to routinely patrol the park, including its bike trails. Although Mingo Park is not known as a high crime area, Maggi said he has received reports of assaults and suspicious activities in the past.

Maggi plans to add a deputy to handle domestic relations cases. Since the beginning of the year, Maggi said the sheriff's office has served 225 protection from abuse orders and served dozens of warrants for non-payment of child support. Although the department has a fugitive warrant detail that works on a daily basis to bring in offenders, it has only four deputies. They must handle all outstanding bench warrants, including those involving domestic relations cases. So Maggi has taken advantage of a program offered by the state Department of Health and Welfare to fund the salary of a full-time deputy who will handle only domestic relations cases.

''Their primary focus will be with the domestic relations office and domestic relations work,'' he said. Maggi has been working on the project for months, and said Washington County domestic relations court Judge Paul Pozonsky has approved the application, which is awaiting state ratification. Both Allegheny and Butler counties have also received funds to hire full-time domestic relations deputies. Maggi believes the volatility of domestic relations issues has pushed the state to make the monies available.

By September, Maggi is also hoping to start a program with the Boy Scouts of America geared toward area youth interested in a career in law enforcement. The Law Enforcement Explorers Post will be offered to 14- to 21-year-olds and will be sponsored by the sheriff's office, under the guidance of the boy scouts. The post is designed as an early training program, and would include learning vehicle and crime codes, fingerprinting techniques, and trips to area prisons and police departments. Maggi said he hopes to use field trips to the state police crime lab in Greensburg to illustrate investigative techniques.

Many of Maggi's projects may sound as if they carry a hefty price tag, but the sheriff's office is expected to finish the year $ 25,000 under its annual budget of $ 1.2 million. Maggi credits the expected surplus to reduced overtime costs through improved scheduling, and mileage reductions. Although the sheriff's office has transported more prisoners so far this year than in the first part of 1997, Maggi said mileage figures show about 53,000 less miles on county cars so far this year.

Maggi, who served with the Pennsylvania State Police for 24 years, beat out incumbent Sam Secreet for the sheriff's job in November. Maggi said he's been enjoying the freedom the sheriff's job offers.

''I enjoy it, it's a challenge. . . . I can be involved,'' he said.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

October 26, 1997, Sunday, WASHINGTON EDITION

SLIPPERY ROCK STUDENT VS. FORMER STATE TROOPER

BYLINE: DAVID TEMPLETON, POST-GAZETTE STAFF WRITER

SECTION: METRO, Pg. W-2

LENGTH: 772 words

The issues are few. But the energy level is high on both sides as an upstart Republican challenges the Democratic front runner for Washington County sheriff.

Democrat Larry Maggi, 47, of Buffalo Township defeated incumbent Democrat Sam Secreet in the May primary election on a campaign based on the department's financial deficit, professionalism and public image.

''Basically, we're offering the same message as we did before,'' Maggi said. ''The problem with the budget has to be addressed. The problem with the public image of the sheriff's office has to be addressed. And the office's mission has to be addressed. My 24 years of law enforcement experience and various community projects that I've been involved with gives me the experience to address these issues.''

On Nov. 4, Maggi faces Brian Gillespie, a 23-year-old Chartiers resident who has been an active Republican since he was 18, but is seeking elective office for the first time.

Gillespie, who worked in a job-training internship in the sheriff's office, is a manager trainee at 84 Lumber Co. He's also pursuing a political science degree at Slippery Rock University.

He acknowledges a lack of money and experience, but said he hopes voters will consider his ideas and energy, and give him a chance.

He entered the race when the Washington County Republican Committee encountered problems recruiting a candidate, and suggested that he give it a shot. The focus of Gillespie's campaign has been ''government in crisis'' that continues ''pumping in more money and getting less product.

''The days of candidates who talk well but have no substance are over,'' he said. ''We need leaders who are exactly that - leaders. What fascinates me is the way things are going in the last part of the 20th century. I'm doing my part to make sure I'm doing something right going into the 20th century.''

Gillespie acknowledges that his chances are slim to defeat Maggi, who was a state trooper for 24 years, retired in January as a criminal investigator, then defeated the incumbent in a high-spirited primary battle.

Without money to run the campaign, he said he's following a guerrilla warfare approach where he concentrates on one small area of the county at a time. And if you want his true feelings, Gillespie is obliging.

''I'm running against a man who is beyond reproach, whose reputation precedes him,'' he said. ''I think Larry Maggi would make a tremendous sheriff.''

But Gillespie questioned why Maggi has spent $ 80,000 on his primary and general election campaigns, and what that bodes for his ability to manage the department budget.

''The sheriff's office has a history of being over-budget,'' he said. ''How can you justify spending that much money and say you want to make the department fiscally responsible when your campaign isn't?''

Maggi said Gillespie's assessment is wrong.

''We didn't go over-budget,'' he said. ''We were prepared and had support from friends, family and people who wanted change. We had a hard campaign in the spring and we're going against an incumbent with a lot of money. We were prepared for that. We did fund raising, put personal money in, and got money from people wanting change.''

Maggi said he's running as strenuously as he did in the spring. He said he's meeting voters in labor halls, churches and fire halls.

His ideas include bringing law-enforcement professionalism to the department. He also said he would address the budget by looking ''real hard at scheduling,'' including better allocation of manpower and overtime.

''You have to watch what's going on and have a good administrative team to make sure that you stay with your goals and responsibilities to the county,'' he said. ''This (election) is for the first sheriff in the 21st century and it will be important to get started with the right policies, experience and administration.''

Gillespie, who describes himself as a ''card-carrying Republican,'' said he hopes to draw votes from Republicans and Secreet supporters to his campaign.'' He also said he didn't need the full $ 52,500 salary because he still lives with his parents, and would devote a portion of his salary to reducing the department deficit.

In considering his candidacy, he said, voters should look at the statue of George Washington on top of the county courthouse and realize that someone believed in ''George as a young man.

''I'm just asking someone to believe in me,'' he said. ''I'm going to turn heads. People might be shocked by what I say, but I'm not government as usual. I'm going to do more with less.''

SHERIFF

ELECTION '97

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

July 24, 2005 Sunday WASHINGTON EDITION

SOME;

BACK;

VICTORY;

CENTRE 4 ON SCHOOL BOARD;

INCLINED TO SUPPORT;

TAX-DIVERSION PLAN

BYLINE: Joe Smydo Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

SECTION: LOCAL, Pg.W-1

LENGTH: 1624 words

Four members of Trinity Area school board told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette they supported or were inclined to support a controversial financing proposal for the Victory Centre development in South Strabane, nearly the majority needed to participate in the plan.

One board member supporting the proposal, Gerald D. Chambers, said he believed a majority, at least five of nine school directors, had decided to vote for the plan. If so, Tanger Outlet Centers and Bass Pro Shops have won a big part of their fight to divert $23.6 million in real-estate taxes for infrastructure costs.

Two of the three Washington County commissioners said they would vote to participate in the plan, while the township's position remained unclear last week. The school board's vote, set for Aug. 4., is particularly important because the school district would forfeit the lion's share, about 79 percent, of the taxes developers want to use for power line relocation, sewer construction and other infrastructure work.

"Personally, how I feel is, it's a very good project. It's viable for the community," school board President Charles McCrerey said, noting the district, while giving up real-estate taxes, would realize other revenues during the 20-year life of the TIF.

Those revenues would include a $700,000 lump-sum payment from a bond floated for the development and additional mercantile, wage and emergency and municipal services taxes to be collected as stores opened.

Tanger and Bass Pro envision a $365 million project on 333 wooded acres at Racetrack Road and Interstate 79, a development they said would create nearly 2,700 construction jobs and as many permanent jobs, help make the county a tourist destination and give a long-term boost to the tax base.

With infrastructure costs of $51 million, however, the developers have said they will scuttle the project without the TIF.

The proposal has stirred controversy in a township that's never given financial assistance to a developer. Those calling Victory Centre too good to pass up have clashed with those saying Tanger and Bass Pro shouldn't be treated better than the developers who came before them.

An opposition group, Citizens Against Tax Increment Financing, has mounted an effort to defeat the proposal and raised additional concerns last week. Because the TIF represents a modest percentage of the project cost, group leader Ed Mazur said, he can't believe the developers would follow through on their threat to walk away.

"It's kind of like saying, 'If I can't have the maraschino cherry on top of my sundae, you can take the whole sundae away,'" he said.

Gov. Ed Rendell was an early supporter of the project, summoning school district, county and township officials to Harrisburg about two years ago to discuss the developers' plans. Legislators also have endorsed the project, leading some to fear repercussions if local officials don't get on board.

"If we need something from Harrisburg and we would say no to this, our roads would crumble. Figure it out. It's Politics 101," said South Strabane Supervisor Bob Koman, who described himself as undecided.

Give and take

The TIF would work this way, according to details unveiled at a July 11 meeting and now available for public review:

Tanger and Bass Pro would continue paying the $27,000 the vacant land generates each year for the school district, county and township, combined. In fact, the developers would pay more on the so-called base assessment if any of the three local governments increased millage.

The TIF would affect additional real estate taxes, called an increment, generated by development of the property.

As buildings go up and the land increases in value, 20 percent of the new real-estate taxes would be paid to the school district, county and township, while 80 percent would be diverted to retire bonds Washington County Redevelopment Authority would float to pay for infrastructure work. The three governments jointly would forfeit about $23.6 million in taxes during the 20-year period.

As incentives, the Redevelopment Authority and developers have offered the school district $700,000 from bond proceeds in year one of the TIF and offered the township $125,000 a year for 10 years. The township would use the money to provide police, fire and other services during development.

As McCrerey noted, the governments also would be likely to see certain revenues increase during the TIF.

Besides 20 percent of new real estate taxes, for example, the township and school district would collect more in wage, mercantile and emergency and municipal services taxes as stores open. Because many customers travel a considerable distance to a Bass Pro store and stay overnight, the county is likely to collect more in hotel taxes once the store opens.

Together, while giving up $23.6 million in real-estate taxes, the governments could realize as much as $37 million in assorted revenues during the TIF, according to the plan. After the TIF, with 100 percent of real estate taxes kicking in and the other taxes in play, the governments together could realize $3.6 million a year from the development, according to projections.

But critics say TIF proponents have missed the point. If local officials provide no financial assistance to Tanger, Bass Pro or whoever develops the property, critics said, local governments would reap far more in taxes than they would under the TIF.

Neighborhood Improvement District

The TIF alone wouldn't generate the amount needed to finance $51 million in infrastructure costs and pay for the bond issue. The state has committed $15.5 million for infrastructure, the developers would kick in about $8 million, and the developers want to generate $20.5 million through creation of a Neighborhood Improvement District.

That would require the developers to levy a special assessment on themselves. In Tanger's case, the assessment probably would be passed to tenants of the outlet center, said William R. McGowen, Redevelopment Authority executive director.

Members of the opposing citizens group, who have said it is unnecessary to give the developers financial assistance, decried the low wages of retail jobs and objected to the closed-door meetings officials held to design the TIF, said plans for the improvement district raised additional concerns.

In a rush to vote on the TIF, they said, officials did not follow steps outlined in state law for creation of an improvement district. They said they were concerned the management association formed to run the improvement district could expand the district's boundaries and take neighboring property by eminent domain, something McGowen maintained would not happen.

Differing opinions

After details of the TIF were announced July 11, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette polled school board members, county commissioners and township supervisors to gauge the likelihood of the TIF's passage.

The Post-Gazette wasn't able to verify Chambers' assertion that a majority of school directors had decided to support the plan.

Chambers, McCrerey and school board member Dennis McWreath said they supported the TIF, at least in concept. Member Kathleen Pienkowski said she was leaning toward supporting the plan.

Board Vice President Elaine C. Burda said she opposed the TIF, members Helen P. Anderson and Stephanie Komorowski said they were undecided, and members William A. Loar and Emily Minor couldn't be reached.

Burda said the land is in a prime location, near the coming slot machines at The Meadows, and can be developed without taxpayer assistance. "It's cut and dried for me," she said.

Commissioners J. Bracken Burns and Larry Maggi said they supported the plan, providing the majority needed to implement it at the county level. Commissioner Diana L. Irey said she had lingering questions and cautioned against rushing to a vote.

Citing the number of jobs the project would create, the potential boost to tourism and likelihood of spin-off customers for other area businesses, Burns called Victory Centre a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

"How [and why] do you say no to that in a community that is only now beginning to recover from the collapse of the steel, coal, glass and other industries that were the core of our economy?" said Burns, who was traveling, in an e-mail.

Maggi said most people seemed to support the TIF and so he expected all three governments to adopt the proposal. "I have a good feeling it's going to pass," he said.

But Irey said she didn't know anyone could vote on the TIF at this point. Among other questions, she said, she wanted to know the development would accommodate traffic and how the neighborhood improvement district would operate.

Township Supervisors Anthony Zelenka and Charles Kosey said they supported a TIF, though Kosey said he'd have to be sure taxpayers weren't going to subsidize municipal services for the developers while they used taxes to build infrastructure.

Supervisor Donald Trautman expressed concern about traffic and other issues. Supervisor Billy Bell refused to give his views, and Koman said he was studying "every inch of detail" to help him make up his mind.

While the school board's vote is key, because it would forfeit most of the taxes under the TIF, the township's vote also is key. The township is official sponsor of the proposal, and the TIF collapses if supervisors reject it, McGowen said.

School Director Pienkowski said there was still plenty of time for elected officials to change their minds before voting.

"You can change your mind up until the second before," she said.

Pittsburgh Tribune Review

August 22, 2009 Saturday

Washington County Retirement Board nixes ban on buying tobacco-related stocks

BYLINE: The Tribune-Review

LENGTH: 116 words

Tobacco might be dangerous to your health, but officials in Washington County have decided their pension fund cannot live without it.

The county Retirement Board voted 2-1 to do away with a ban imposed in 1997 that prevented its pension fund from investing in tobacco-related stocks. Commissioner Bracken Burns angrily opposed lifting the ban, reading an eight-minute statement on the health ills of tobacco.

But Commissioner Larry Maggi and Controller Michael Namie, the other board members, voted this week to reverse the ban. They say the tobacco ban was largely responsible for the fund underperforming by 30 percent. Taxpayers contributed a record $2.4 million to shore up the fund this year.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

February 5, 2009 Thursday

SOONER EDITION

COUNTIES NOT INTERESTED IN 1% SALES TAX HIKE

BYLINE: Karamagi Rujumba, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

SECTION: STATE; Pg. A-7

LENGTH: 442 words

To help Pennsylvania's counties ride through the economic recession, [Gov. Ed Rendell](http://w3.nexis.com/new/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T14692042903&returnToId=20_T14692042906&csi=144577&A=0.3635865783587814&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23PE0009XP0%23&searchTerm=Gov.%20Ed%20Rendell%20&indexType=P) yesterday proposed allowing counties except Allegheny and Philadelphia to impose an additional sales tax of up to 1 percent as a means of generating revenue.

But local counties say they aren't interested in charging higher taxes.

Under the proposal, the counties could share up to 50 percent of the additional revenue they collect from the levy with their municipalities, the governor said. At the moment, the state sales tax is 6 percent in most counties, except Allegheny and Philadelphia, which have a 7 percent sales tax.

"I believe that we should do more to help cities and counties address the budget challenges they face, and that's why I am proposing to give counties the ability to broaden their tax base by allowing them to impose a sales tax increase of up to 1 percent on top of the state sales tax, and share 50 percent of those proceeds with our hard-pressed cities," said Mr. Rendell.

But officials in four counties that border Allegheny were not quite as optimistic or impressed with Mr. Rendell's proposal.

"In these economic times that we're in, I don't see that imposing a higher sales tax will be in the interest of the people of Pennsylvania. I don't know that adding a 1 percent sales tax will solve our problems," said Westmoreland County Commissioner Tom Balya.

"[The governor's proposal] may be politically expedient in Harrisburg, but I don't think it would be very popular with many county commissioners around the state," he added.

Beaver County Commissioner Tony Amadio said "the concept sounds good," but he and others probably wouldn't support the plan unless the sales tax increase could be offset by a reduction elsewhere, like in property taxes, for example.

"I'm not for any new taxes in my county," he said.

Washington County Commissioner Lawrence Maggi aired similar sentiments, saying, "it's something that we would look at, but I'm always wary of raising new taxes."

The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, Mr. Maggi added, discussed the proposal with Mr. Rendell in recent months, but those discussions were conditioned on a sales tax increase offset by a property tax reduction.

"When we talked with the governor a few weeks ago, we understood that this plan would not be about creating a new tax," Mr. Maggi said.

For Butler County Commissioner Dale Pinkerton, Mr. Rendell's proposal seems to be dead on arrival, politically speaking.

"He wants to give us the power to do this because he doesn't want to do it," said Mr. Pinkerton. "In this economy, when everyone is struggling, nobody wants to see any kind of tax increase."

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)February 3, 2012 |  |
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Topics:Index Terms: Loc CITYSalary board grants raises, makes changesArticle Text:By Barbara S. Miller, Staff writerbmiller@observer-reporter.comOne month after the annual salary board reorganization, Washington County officials reshuffled positions and granted raises to some employees beyond the 3 percent already adopted, retroactive to Jan. 1.“There was already money that was in the budget,” said Commission Chairman Larry Maggi after the meeting.“The only reason we’re going through it now is that Harlan Shober was not involved in the budget hearing process. It was an extension of those hearings, I guess.”Shober, elected in November, took office a month ago, replacing Bracken Burns on the board of commissioners.On a motion by President Judge Debbie Seneca, court audit attorney Dan Svidro will be making $50,000 instead of his previous $43,360, and Carl DiMarco, juvenile justice technology specialist, will now be application trustee and court interagency technology manager, making $41,200 instead of $35,469.The Furlough-Into-Service program for jail inmates, known as the FITS, has been reorganized at the judge’s request, elevating Gregory Thomas, former coordinator, to community services director, who is making $56,450 instead of his previous $53,950. The community services foreman and FITS foreman positions have been eliminated, and a full-time $35,000 salaried position of FITS manager is yet to be filled.Adult probation supervisor Randy Jackson received a raise to $60,781 from $59,780, and two juvenile probation supervisors, Randy Butka and Anson Zacour, who formerly were paid commensurate with Jackson, will be receiving identical raises, as will a vacant supervisory position in juvenile probation when it is filled.District Attorney Eugene Vittone requested that county Detective John Sweeny be paid $42,000, up from $30,238, and in Public Defender Glenn Alterio’s office, Deputy Thomas Cooke will be paid $61,607, up from $56,275. Assistant Public Defender Preston Pizzi has switched from a part-timer paid $43,124 to a full-timer paid a salary identical to Cooke’s.The public safety department created a new, full-time position of geographic information systems manager at $40,000 which has yet to be filled. The Information technology department abolished a network and systems support specialist’s position while creating an identical position, paying $38,450, in the public safety department.Buildings and grounds Director Gary Bertosh will be making $58,850, up from $56,275, while maintenance coordinator Janet Osiecki, formerly paid $34,333, will be paid $35,838. Electrician Scott Smiechowski, formerly paid $42,075, will be making $43,878. Director of Veterans Affairs Barry Grimm will be making $42,915, up from $40,314.The vote of salary board members, which includes a rotation of elected officials, with the exception of Alterio, and Controller Michael Namie, was unanimous.Copyright, 2012, Observer Publishing Company of Washington, Pa.Record Number: 13CAF44C43FAB8F8 |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)January 21, 2012 |  |
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Topics:Index Terms: Loc CITYNewest commissioner abstains on Chartiers bridgework financingArticle Text:By Barbara S. Miller, Staff writerbmiller@observer-reporter.comThe Washington County board of commissioners approved payment to Gregori Construction and Engineering Inc. for the new Paxton Bridge over Chartiers Creek in Chartiers Township, but the newest member of the board abstained from the vote Thursday.Commissioner Harlan Shober was a Chartiers Township supervisor until taking the oath for the county office, and although he was not required to abstain, he decided to go that route because he advocated the construction project.Heavy trucks damaged Paxton Road, a road repair issue that Shober said he steered clear of because it occurred after he was elected commissioner.“No one anticipated what happened, but the road was totally damaged by heavy trucks carrying rock and fill,” Shober said Wednesday.“I really stayed out of the negotiation on this. I felt I didn’t know what would be the final resolution, and since I was moving out and coming up to the county in January, it was probably prudent for me to stay out of the negotiation.”Total amount for bridge construction by Gregori, of Sarver, Butler County, and road repair is $1.9 million, which is being financed with state taxpayer dollars.Commissioners Larry Maggi and Diana Irey Vaughan approved the amount.County tax dollars paid for 20 percent of the cost of preliminary design of the bridge, which was $152,000.The new bridge, which opened around the recent holidays, replaces a 1919 structure that was closed in 2007 because the county deemed it unsafe.The detour around the closed bridge and replacement project was a significant issue for many because it halted a shortcut from Route 519 to Allison Hollow in central Chartiers Township.Copyright, 2012, Observer Publishing Company of Washington, Pa.Record Number: 13C6A9979CA82A98 |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)December 15, 2011 |  |
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Topics:Index Terms: Loc CITYCommissioners to adopt budget with no tax jumpArticle Text:By Barbara S. Miller, Staff writerbmiller@observer-reporter.comThe Washington County commissioners expect to adopt a 2012 spending plan Thursday that keeps the tax levy for property owners at 24.9 mills.“To the taxpayers of Washington County, Merry Christmas! There’s no tax increase,” said Commissioner Diana Irey Vaughan after Wednesday’s agenda-setting meeting.Because of competition between Highmark and UPMC health insurance plans, premiums decreased by 1 percent, only the second time in the past 15 years health care is costing county employees less.Expenditures in the $68,891,871 budget include 3 percent raises as called for in various union contracts. Employees not covered by these pacts also will be receiving a 3 percent raise, said Commission Chairman Larry Maggi.The board, which will include new Commissioner Harlan Shober, is scheduled to vote separately on this issue at its salary board reorganization at 2 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 3, in the public meeting room of the Courthouse Square Office Building.Washington County’s last tax increase of 3.5 mills took effect Jan. 1, 2010, as part of a resolution approved by Maggi, Irey Vaughan and outgoing Commissioner Bracken Burns.The most recent budget does not include an estimated $981,000 in revenue from the county’s latest lease with Range Resources for Marcellus Shale natural gas rights under 327 acres in Chartiers and South Strabane townships, including the fairgrounds and health center. The lease does not include surface drilling rights.The county has not received the money, and Burns last month asked that part of the sum be reserved “for future projects that provide long-term benefits for the residents.”Copyright, 2011, Observer Publishing Company of Washington, Pa.Record Number: 13BA7C54C558E968 |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)December 17, 2010 |  |
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Topics:Index Terms: Loc CITYWashington County budget approvedArticle Text:By Barbara S. Miller Staff writerbmiller@observer-reporter.comWashington County commissioners unanimously approved a balanced $66.9 million budget for 2011 Thursday with no property tax increase.The property tax levy for next year will remain at 24.9 mills, the same place it stood Jan. 1, 2010, when the board’s 3.5-mill increase took effect.Commission Chairman Larry Maggi said, “We held the line on a lot of requests and upset some people in government.”Although the expensive prospect of a reassessment looms for 2011, Maggi said the cost of that project is not a line item in the budget.“It impacts it as far as borrowing $8 million,” he said.Although a stipulation and consent order require the commissioners to begin a property reassessment during their current terms of office, which end Jan. 1, 2012, the county has not yet contracted with a firm to reassess.“These are tough times,” said commission Vice Chairman Bracken Burns. “The federal government is cutting back, the state budget has a $500 billion budget hole in it next year, so I guess we should be proud of the fact that we can pass a balanced budget without a tax increase.”At the same meeting in which the board heard questions and complaints from Robert Donnan, a Peters Township resident, about the extraction of natural gas from Cross Creek County Park, Commissioner Diana Irey-Vaughan noted that the enterprise has added $776,000 to county coffers since it entered into a lease with Great Lakes Energy in May 2003.Range Resources took over the lease in 2007.Three percent raises for salaried employees are included in the current budget, but the matter won’t be finalized until the annual salary board reorganization meeting, this year scheduled for 10 a.m. Jan. 3.“We have not discussed it,” Irey-Vaughan saidIn addition to last year’s pay freeze and a new contribution to the cost of health care, Irey said a 3 percent raise this year would “try to catch them up.”Under union contracts negotiated or decided by a labor arbitrator, some county employees received 3 percent raises during the past year.The county’s largest union, Service Employees International, accepted a pay freeze for 2010 in May, five months after its previous contract expired.Copyright, 2010, Observer Publishing Company of Washington, Pa.Record Number: 1343DADA0E5069D8 |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)May 24, 2010 |  |
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Topics:Index Terms: Loc CITYCounty owes $3.5M for retireesArticle Text:By Barbara S. Miller Staff writerbmiller@observer-reporter.comWhen Washington County taxpayers had to make a $2.4 million contribution this year to the county employeesÕ pension fund, it was a record amount.The amount taxpayers will be required to hand over next year makes $2.4 million seem small.The figure the county commissioners received this month is $3.5 million, Commission Chairman Larry Maggi said Thursday following the countyÕs quarterly retirement board meeting.A small consolation is that the $3.5 million figure is $100,000 less than anticipated.State law requires counties to have what is known as a defined benefit plan for retirees. If a countyÕs retirement investments donÕt earn 7.5 percent income each year, taxpayers have to pony up the money.The board of commissioners in December voted for a 3.5-mill tax increase, raising the county property tax levy to 24.9 mills to pay for a general fund spending plan of $67.4 million. It was the third countywide tax increase in 14 years.Meanwhile, Greene CountyÕs actuarial recommended contribution for 2010 is $634,200, up from an actual contribution of $528,000 in 2009.Greene County Controller Dave Balint said the reason for the increase was based on market performance.Taxpayers are still making up for the stock market crash in September 2008 because an actuary calculates contributions based on a five-year average. The slide continued through the end of 2008, and the stock market bottomed out on March 9, 2009.In response to news of last yearÕs taxpayer bailout in Washington, a county employee wrote, ÒTo be fair, your article concerning the county pension plan should have included the fact, as reported by your newspaper, that in previous years the county took money from the pension plan to fund general county obligations.ÓCounty Controller Michael Namie, who is also a member of the retirement board, said Thursday that pension investment losses of 2008 continue to haunt the county Òbecause the actuaries use a smoothing until that year drops out of the five-year average so you donÕt take the hit all at once.ÓÒItÕs just like a bill presented to us,Ó Maggi said. ÒWeÕre told by the people who take care of our pension what weÕre short and what we need to make up.ÒWhen the stock marketÕs not doing well, the taxpayers get stuck with bailing out the pensions.ÓThe county pension fund has gained back $27 million, outperforming 96 percent of other similar funds, Lee Martin, senior consultant for Peirce Park Group, told the retirement board. ÒOut of all of clients, you probably have the best diversification. YouÕve actually put round pegs in round holes.ÓAlthough most of the private sector has substituted 401Ks for defined-benefit pensions, it would take a change in state law to make a substitution in county employeesÕ pension plans and roll with the punches when the stock market collapses.The status quo would probably have to be preserved for current government employees, any change in law applying to the newly hired.ÒItÕs one of the tough issues the Legislature will have to face,Ó Maggi said. ÒThe pension crisis is coming home to roost Ð schoolteachersÕ pensions and state workersÕ pensions.ÓBecause of a previous downturn in the stock market, county taxpayers were last required to make a contribution of nearly $2 million to the county employee retirement fund in 2004. That year represented the first time taxpayers had to do so since 1995.Greene County bureau chief Jon Stevens contributed to this story.Copyright, 2010, Observer Publishing Company of Washington, Pa.Record Number: 12FE95AD9D71CFB0 |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)April 16, 2010 |  |
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Topics:Index Terms: Loc CITYPrison board OKs inmate fee increaseArticle Text:By Barbara S. Miller Staff writerbmiller@observer-reporter.comBeginning Monday, work-release inmates and weekend prisoners at Washington County Jail will be paying more for the privilege of working outside the facility.The Washington County prison board unanimously approved the first change in the work-release fee schedule in 10 years.During that period, programs such as furlough-into-service and community service have been added.ÒIt takes more people just to run the program,Ó said Warden Joseph Pelzer.Work-release prisoners who have been paying 23 percent of their gross wages to the jail will next week be assessed 27 percent.Those who earn minimum wage will be paying $42 a week, up from $40. Top earners at the jail will be paying $280 instead of the previous $200. The fee a weekend-only prisoner pays when entering the jail will be $50, up from $40.Pelzer said after the meeting that those who employ inmates are required to provide a copy of a pay stub to the jail. It is up to the employee to remit the required amount to the facility.ÒIs that enough?Ó asked Larry Maggi, chairman of the prison board.Pelzer estimated the increased fees will generate more than $65,000 for the jail, which has an annual budget of $5.6 million.When proposing the change, Pelzer said it was Òdue to increases in inmate population and staffing costs.ÓThe jail housed 332 inmates in March, including 52 men and six women on work-release. Those servings weekends-only sentences are a much smaller group: seven men and five women.Serving sentences on work-release or weekends is a condition set by a judge, and employment must be verified by the jail administration.Inmates are typically limited to a 40-hour work week.The number of inmates on work-release and related programs has increased 10 to 15 percent in the past 10 years, and the inmate population is typically 100 more than it was a decade ago, Pelzer said.Copyright, 2010, Observer Publishing Company of Washington, Pa.Record Number: 12F2116E8BEFFFF0 |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)December 18, 2009 |  |
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Topics:Index Terms: Loc CITY3.5-mill tax jump for countyArticle Text:By Barbara S. Miller Staff writerbmiller@observer-reporter.comWashington County property owners will be seeing an increase in their county tax bills for the first time in six years.On Thursday, the Washington County commissioners unanimously adopted a 2010 budget that calls for a 3.5-mill tax increase.The vote raises the rate to 24.9 mills to pay for a $67.4 million spending plan.Even the opening prayer at the commissioners' meeting referred to the decision.Robert Vankirk of the Alliance Church of Washington noted the board would be dealing with "budgets, an issue that weighs heavily on our hearts."Although the commissioners had alluded to the possibility of a tax increase for several weeks, the exact amount was unknown until very late Wednesday.Commission Chairman Larry Maggi called the give-and-take on the budget "down to the wire" and he even allowed that a budget might not be approved at Thursday's meeting.The commissioners' action represented the third countywide tax increase in 14 years. Commissioner Diana Irey voted against the last tax increase that took effect in the 2004 budget, a measure that both Maggi and Commission Vice Chairman Bracken Burns supported.All three commissioners said they raised taxes reluctantly.After the tax increase passed, Maggi said, "We ended up being responsible for things we had no control over. We have no control over the state budget. We're mandated to have corrections, courts, children and youth services."He called whittling of the budget "an ongoing process, from cell phones to (health) insurance to employees. Next year is going to be a tough year. Some of the numbers that came in from these insurance companies are just unbelievable."When you have a $6.5 million hole, you aren't going to fill that with belt-tightening," Burns said. I know it's very much in vogue to hate government. For better or for worse, I see people helping people, I see problems being resolved, I see the elderly being cared for, I see abused children being protected. I see government as a half-full glass."Judicial and public safety represent the largest chunk of county expenditures at $26.5 million.He also called the increase in health insurance premiums "astronomical."Irey said after the meeting, "The directors really stepped up to the plate and cut costs to the bare minimum. We started with an $8 million deficit and we were able to balance it with a small tax increase. Any tax increase is a hard thing to do."County management will be receiving a reduction in compensation next year. Wages are frozen but the managers will be contributing to the cost of health-care premiums for the first time.The county is not planning any layoffs, but they plan to grant requests for employees' unpaid time off.The commissioners could not lay off jail guards, court employees or probation officers because they are up against mandates that require certain staffing levels.The majority of elected officials will be rebating a 3 percent annual pay increase to the county treasury.Cutting $4 million to $5 million of the county's deficit would have required laying off 205 workers, Maggi said. Some county positions are partially funded by state government.The board rejected cutting the length of the work day or shuttering county offices one day a week, as some counties have done, because it would not result in enough of a savings.The commissioners pointed out that among nine Southwestern Pennsylvania counties, Washington County's taxes are among the lowest.Contracts with the county's largest unions expire Dec. 31, and negotiations are continuing, said Scott Fergus, county director of administration.The median home price in Washington County is between $72,00 and $73,000. Currently, the owner of a home in that price range is paying $211 a year in county taxes. The additional millage will result in a $35 per year tax increase, according to the county finance department.The owner of a home worth $200,000 will see a $66 increase next year in county taxes.Copyright, 2009, Observer Publishing Company of Washington, Pa.Record Number: 12CADB269B170B18 |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)March 24, 2009 |  |
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Topics:Index Terms: Loc CITYStimulus could mean $1.15M for authorityArticle Text:By Barbara S. MillerStaff writerbmiller@observer-reporter.comThe Washington County Redevelopment Authority could be eligible for up to $1.15 million from the economic stimulus package Congress approved in January.Executive Director William McGowen announced the possibility Wednesday to the redevelopment authority board but said he is awaiting further word within the next two months.The stimulus money appears to be in addition to the $4.25 million from federal taxpayers the agency will be receiving for the Community Development Block Grants around August. Another expected infusion of cash is $850,000 for the HOME renovation program.Should the authority receive the million-plus dollars, McGowen said it would be up to the county commissioners and the authority board to allocate the money.Commission Vice Chairman Bracken Burns is also awaiting details from McGowen and higher-ups."There are so many sub-categories within that funding stream, he could be talking about housing, he could be talking about infrastructure, he could be talking about some supplement," Burns said Thursday."I just don't know which pocket of money he's referring to. We're looking at energy savings, money for housing. We've already drawn down money for highway reconstruction and repair, so, it just depends on which category he's talking about."Commission Chairman Larry Maggi heard money was coming the county's way."We're ready," Maggi said. "We have some bridges that are ready, we have some road-paving jobs that are ready, we've got some projects at the airport, parks and stream-cleaning projects."If some of those other states don't want to use the money, we're going to use it."Copyright, 2009, Observer Publishing Company of Washington, Pa.Record Number: 12722F9676AD40E0 |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)December 19, 2008 |  |
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Topics:Index Terms: Loc CITYCounty avoids tax jump in 2009Article Text:By Barbara S. MillerStaff writerbmiller@observer-reporter.comProperty owners opening their 2009 Washington County tax bills will find no increase, but two of three commissioners foresee gloom for the budget process a year down the road.The county commissioners unanimously adopted the $61.2 million general fund spending plan Thursday, but Chairman Larry Maggi said, if he were able to wield a line-item veto, he'd have done it in this case."No budget can please everyone," Maggi said, then reiterated bad news that could derail the county's 2010 budget: The economic downturn, taxpayers' contribution to the county employees' pension fund that could potentially be $2 million in May, budget cuts expected from the state that are likely to affect services provided through counties to the indigent and the distinct possibility of a costly property reassessment."When you put together a budget, there are just some things you don't have control over," the chairman said after the meeting, referring to unfunded federal and state mandates. "I didn't want any increases in salaries above contractual increases."Maggi said neither did he want to see any additional court-related positions. The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania recently filed suit to have the state shoulder more costs associated with district and county courts."We know there will be state cuts; we don't know how much there will be, in what areas," said Commissioner Diana L. Irey. "We are going to watch carefully what happens throughout the year, and we may be reducing some of those expenditures throughout the year, looking to try to balance next year's budget, again without a tax increase."Their colleague was slightly more upbeat."We have again balanced the budget, and we have done it without a tax increase, which is always good news," said Commission Vice Chairman Bracken Burns as he was on his way to deliver a guest lecture on regional policy issues at Carnegie Mellon University. "We continue to have the lowest taxes in the region, and Merry Christmas."One county labor issue remained unresolved. Sheriff's deputies have been awaiting an arbitrator's decision on what is expected to be a three-year contract. Without salary or benefit information, finance director Roger Metcalfe said he was forced to estimate.Copyright, 2008, Observer Publishing Company of Washington, Pa.Record Number: 1252E2EB71DDA7D0 |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)May 2, 2008 |  |
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Topics:Index Terms: Loc CITYSparks fly over drugs in countyArticle Text:By Barbara S. MillerStaff writerbmiller@observer-reporter.comSparks flew Thursday between the Washington County commissioners and Charleroi Mayor Frank Paterra, who again urged them to step up efforts in declaring war on the illegal drug trade.For Paterra, elected mayor of the Mon Valley community in 2005, it was the latest of a series of appearances before the board dating back three years. Paterra brought Curtis Sliwa, founder of the Guardian Angels, a New York-based crime-fighting organization, to the borough last year and formed a local patrol.As a camera and tape recorders rolled Thursday, the exchange between the mayor and commissioners became heated after he asked the board for a plan to fight drugs.Commission Chairman Larry Maggi, a former state trooper, told Paterra, "I fought drugs for 35 years. I haven't seen you. The drug scourge didn't just happen. Where have you been for the last 35 years? Why is your council not here? We've been working with the district attorney."Paterra then asked Maggi why the commissioners wouldn't convene a meeting to form a plan of attack on the drug problem."Sir, you make $67,000 a year as a commissioner, and you represent 202,000 people. I make $2,100 and represent 4,800. Drugs are all over our county."Commissioner Diana L. Irey said she has twice met with Paterra in her office to discuss funding to combat drug-dealing."Why can't you make a proclamation to declare war on drugs?" Paterra asked."How do you know what's going on behind the scenes?" Maggi countered, adding, "Its a global problem. It's just not a Washington County problem. We are against drugs."Paterra, like Irey and Maggi, supported Steve Toprani last year in his successful run to become Washington County district attorney, and Toprani watched the shouting match from the sidelines.County records show that the first-quarter costs of the drug task force totaled $37,795 this year. A grant from the state attorney general covered $24,800 with the remaining $12,995 to be paid from drug forfeitures.Toprani said under former district attorney John C. Pettit, local police officers who worked for the drug task force were paid $12 an hour. At Toprani's request, the commissioners approved $15 an hour."The commissioners were happy to meet our request," Toprani said. " We've had no request go unfilled."Last year, there were seven municipal police officers deputized as members who logged more than one hour on the drug task force. Toprani said, "We're up to 25. We're able to do simultaneous operations at opposite ends of the county."The commissioners have been supportive. I appreciate that the mayor talks openly about the problem. I'd like to see more of his officers on that task force."Asked after the meeting why he didn't acquiesce to Paterra's request to convene a meeting on solutions for the drug problem, Maggi said, "We're county commissioners; we're not law enforcement. That would be up to the district attorney, which he has. Drug investigations are continuous; they're ongoing. They're done in secret."I'm in Charleroi weekly. These questions never come up."Maggi said county tax dollars go toward services to keep youth out of trouble, and the sheriff's office has a DARE program to keep schoolchildren away from drugs.Paterra linked drug use to the death of Amanda Lynn Faux, 22, whose beaten and strangled body was found in a Charleroi garbage bin in January. She and her boyfriend, who is charged in the death, both had a history of heroin use and had been arguing over drugs and money just before she was killed.Team Charleroi, a merchants' association, contributed $5,000 toward the purchase and training of Rex, a drug-enforcement dog, and Southwestern Pennsylvania Human Services contributed another $1,000, said Mark Alterici, local businessman and president of borough council,"I'm not an expert in this field," Alterici said. "Larry Maggi is an expert in this field, and a screaming match with the commissioners is definitely not the way to handle it."Every community has drugs, and every community has good people, too. To drag this through the media and make our community look bad, it gives your community a black eye."Copyright, 2008, Observer Publishing Company of Washington, Pa.Record Number: 1206BB3383EE9F50 |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)December 17, 2004 |  |
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Topics:Index Terms: Loc CITYWashington County maintains tax rateArticle Text:By Barbara S. Miller Staff writerbmiller@observer-reporter.comWashington County property owners will not see a tax increase in 2005 because the $58.2 million budget, adopted by a 2-1 vote Thursday, maintains the rate at 21.4 mills.There was no discussion among the three county commissioners about the budget, which Diana Irey, the lone Republican on the board, voted against.Harry Sabatasse of Burgettstown told commissioners before their vote that he wanted them "to stop the pay increases that every elected official gets at the county automatically."Irey said after the meeting that she earlier declined to comment because if she did so at that point, "it would have been nothing more than grandstanding. The work involved in the budget was done in trying to get my colleagues to see the cost reductions."She said she did not want her silence to be interpreted as a lack of work behind the scenes, and produced an eight-page memo proposing $3.7 million in budget cuts for which she said she received no response from the other two commissioners, Larry Maggi or Bracken Burns.Burns, board co-chairman, returned from Harrisburg to cast the deciding vote on the budget, which includes 19.05 mills for general purposes and 2.35 mills for debt purposes.He said he reviewed Irey's proposals for staffing cuts but called them a "pipe dream" that would cause the county jail and health center to be shut down by the state, and would result in a slew of lawsuits that the county would lose.Burns, president of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, was meeting in that capacity with Gov. Ed Rendell in the state capital.A $2.5 million contribution the county is required to make to its employees' retirement fund in 2005, plus the increasing cost of health care, were significant factors in balancing the budget, Burns said.He labeled a third factor "unfunded mandates.""These are very, very difficult times for counties, which is related to cutback in federal money that is passed on to the state and, in turn, passed on to the counties," Burns said."The $300 check you got from the federal government last year is coming back to you as a tax increase. Everybody looks at the federal government and says, 'Boy, they're doing a great job, I got money back,'" he said, noting that the refunds result in a ripple effect.More than half of all counties in Pennsylvania are raising taxes this year, Burns said. Although there was no tax increase this year in Washington County, taxes went up a year ago by 3.9 mills.Copyright, 2004, Observer Publishing Company of Washington, Pa.Record Number: 1070B0BD885461A7 |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)January 16, 2004 |  |
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Topics:Index Terms: Loc CITYCounty makes tax increase officialArticle Text:By Linda Metz, Staff writerlmetz@observer-reporter.comThe inevitable happened Thursday: Washington County commissioners voted to raise taxes.As anticipated, votes cast by Commissioners Bracken Burns and Larry Maggi made way for the passage of the county's 2004 budget, which includes a $57.7 million spending plan. The new tax rate is 21.4 mills.The budget, which called for a 3.9-mill increase, needed to be approved Thursday or the county would have been unable to meet the first payroll of the new year."I'm not happy about this, but something had to be done because the last board failed to do it," said Maggi, who marked his first official public meeting as county commissioner. "It was very hard for me to raise taxes."Maggi claims the budget was unfairly dumped on him because the previous board failed to approve a spending plan by Dec. 31.Meanwhile, Burns said he has to hope that taxpayers understand he was merely doing the job that he was elected to do."We have labored over this for months. We were able to cut $1 million out of the original budget, switch health care policies, but still the budget was short by about $4 million," Burns said. "Ideally, the previous board should have done it, but its upwards and onwards."The two commissioners voted for increasing taxes to cover the deficit, which has been mostly attributed to rising health care costs and to the $2 million contribution the county is being required to make to Continued from Page Oneits employee pension fund. One mill generates about $1.2 million.The average county property owner with a home having a market value of $39,500 pays $172 annually in county taxes. With the tax increase, that same property owner will now pay more than $207 a year.Commissioner Diana L. Irey, who voted against the budget, said the tax increase was far too high of a burden for the taxpayers, especially as many of her cost-cutting proposals were ignored by her colleagues.Irey continues to maintain that through her proposals, the county could have lessened the blow on the taxpayers by more than 2 mills. However, Burns and Maggi contend that Irey's proposals were unrealistic."They were not only unrealistic, they were silly," Burns said. "All three of us probably know that what happened today had to happen."Burns said instead of Irey stepping up to the plate and supporting the tax increase, she "decided to walk in the sunshine and leave the heavy lifting" to him and Maggi.Still, the reasoning provided little solace to the few people who attended the meeting and opposed the tax increase."If I don't have the money for a Cadillac, I buy a Chevy," said Harry Sabatasse of Burgettstown, who regularly attends the commissioners' meetings. "Let's start looking at things the way people with no money look at things."Sabatasse has long been pleading with the commissioners not to increase taxes and further burden property owners.Meanwhile, Dr. Al Sorensen of McMurray said he couldn't put all the blame on the commissioners for the tax increase."I put part of the blame on the people who are apathetic" about what's going on, he said. "Apathy and ignorance fuel poor government."Sorensen said he was surprised that more people did not attend Thursday's meeting to express their dissatisfaction over the proposed tax increase."We've got to take government back; it's not going to come from this table," he said.Copyright, 2004, Observer Publishing Company of Washington, Pa.Record Number: 1002F75B73B3D7BF |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)October 8, 2004 |  |
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Topics:Index Terms: Loc CITYCounty worker takes second shot at seeingtax office recordsArticle Text:By Linda Metz, Staff writerlmetz@observer-reporter.comA call was issued Thursday to the Washington County commissioners for an investigation into alleged favoritism in the county's tax revenue office."I'm here as a taxpayer. I feel there are some things that need to be looked into in the tax office," Diane Bova, a county maintenance employee who used to work in the tax office, said at the commissioners' meeting. "I hope you go in and take a look at things."She suggested that procedures for contracts, agreements and assessed values be reviewed.Bova was one of three tax office employees to be bumped from their jobs in March when the commissioners approved the elimination of three positions in the revenue department.The move was part of the county's restructuring of the office, which included the appointment of recorder of deeds Debbie Bardella as director of revenue and director of the county's tax claim bureau. Reorganization of the office was expected to save taxpayers almost $225,000 a year. Bardella replaced veteran director Ken Barna, who resigned in January.Only moments before the commissioners' public meeting Thursday, Bova, for the second time in a month, tried to secure tax records pertaining to local developer David Metzner. Commissioner Diana L. Irey, Burgettstown resident Harry Sabitasse and two news reporters accompanied Bova."The problem is that people come in here five minutes before commissioners' meetings asking for files," said Bardella, explaining why Bova again was denied the files.Bova had attempted to secure Metzner's tax files two weeks ago, just prior to the commissioners' meeting. She did not receive them because she did not fill out a request form for the information, said Bardella.In fact, no request form has been submitted since then. The office would have 10 days after receiving the completed form to provide the requested information."The staff is looking into filing harassment charges," Bardella said. "Now, they've pulled a commissioner in; they're just muddying the water."According to Bardella, her office has nothing to hide. She said she gladly will give Bova the records she requests but she is required by law to go through them to make sure that certain information is not released, such as medical data that is protected by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.Following the meeting, Irey said she was going to pursue an investigation into the tax office."I'm going to look at having an outside accounting firm coming in to do an audit of certain accounts," she said.Irey explained that if the allegations were more general in nature, she may not be so adamant about an investigation."But since there are names attached, I have to take it more seriously," she said. "Besides, when you have allegations, the best thing they could do is open up the books and invite everyone in to take a look."Commissioner Larry Maggi said he would support a review of the office, depending on who would examine the office and how much the process would cost taxpayers."As long as her proposal is reasonable, I would agree to it," he said.In the meantime, however, Maggi said he would like to see some credible evidence that supports Bova's allegations."I've asked repeatedly for evidence," he said. "No one has yet shown me any evidence of wrongdoing. Nobody will go on the record. Why is no one else coming forward?"Maggi added that before Bova began appearing at the commissioners' meetings, he had offered to put her in contact with the state police and have them investigate her concerns. She refused, he said.Copyright, 2004, Observer Publishing Company of Washington, Pa.Record Number: 10599F8CB249594E |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)February 19, 2004 |  |
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Topics:Index Terms: Loc CITYMaggi hopes task force helps put county on reduced-fat dietArticle Text:By Linda Metz, Staff writerlmetz@observer-reporter.comWashington County Commissioner Larry Maggi has formed his own task force to do a "bottom up" review of county operations."When I was campaigning, I said one of the first things I would do is look at county government," Maggi said Wednesday.The six-member task force, which includes the county's budget and human resources directors, will have at least two months to do the review and report back to Maggi.He said that while he wants the task force to concentrate on cutting waste in the county, he is more interested in receiving a truthful report on the state of the county."We had to raise taxes this year and I believe the people have a right to know how their money is being spent," Maggi said.While Maggi said he's interested in finding out if the county needs the additional 223 employees it has added on to its payroll since 1996. If so, fine, but he said he would also like to know if the county needs to make cuts or may actually need to add more employees."Overall, I want to see where we are at," he said.Maggi said he received approval from his fellow Democratic Commissioner Bracken Burns, to form the task force, but he had not told Republican Commissioner Diana L. Irey about it.Copyright, 2004, Observer Publishing Company of Washington, Pa.Record Number: 100D2BB01763E0F4 |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)January 17, 2004 |  |
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Topics:Index Terms: Loc CITYCounty commissioners OK comment policyArticle Text:The Washington County commissioners Thursday approved a new public comment policy that limits the time people can speak at the commissioners' meetings to three minutes.The policy was approved by Commissioners Bracken Burns and Larry Maggi.Commissioner Diana L. Irey voted against the policy because she believed the time limit should be longer. She also felt that it should be up to a group of people to determine their spokesman rather than the board chairman and did not agree that the chairman should decide if a person is out of order.She also felt the pre-meeting registration requirement may dissuade people from speaking, especially if they don't sign in and later decide there is an issue they want to address.Copyright, 2004, Observer Publishing Company of Washington, Pa.Record Number: 10055364FA052956 |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)January 8, 2004 |  |
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County salaries jump 3 percent across the boardAuthor: *Linda Metz, Staff writer**lmetz@observer-reporter.com*Article Text:The newly elected Washington County commissioners and row officers accepted not only new terms in office Monday but also salary increases.The perpetual annual increases, which were approved Dec. 3, 2002, automatically took effect Monday, at a time when the county is struggling to make ends meet and resolve its 2004 budget with a minimal tax increase.After unanimously approving the 3 percent salary increases more than a year ago, the commissioners were accused of pushing the raises through without properly notifying the public.Commissioners can set salaries in a nonelection year for the next term of elected officials. They must approve the increase prior to the filing of petitions by candidates for the elected offices, so prospective candidates know their compensation in advance.The commissioners defended their action by pointing out that the meeting was advertised in a legal notice in the Observer-Reporter a month before the meeting.They also said the elected officials hadn't received an increase since 1995, while it's customary to give employees an annual raise, including some county department directors who are paid more than the commissioners.The increases now put the commissioner chairman's salary at $61,299, while the other two commissioners will receive $60,299. Although Commissioners Bracken Burns and Larry Maggi are sharing the chairmanship, Burns will receive the additional compensation.The row officers' salaries were raised from $54,724 to $56,466, except for the recorder of deeds/clerk of orphans court, who is receiving an additional $2,000, for a total of $58,466.The salaries of the recorder of deeds, sheriff, controller and jury commissioners will be increased by 9.27 percent, effective the first Monday of January 2006, when new terms begin for those offices.Those same officials will receive a 3 percent increase in January 2007 and every year thereafter, just like their colleagues.The district attorney was not included in the action because his $122,000 salary is set by the state.In this first round of pay increases, the county must absorb an additional $13,478 in 2004, with the full impact of the commissioners' decision hitting in 2006.Although Commissioner Diana L. Irey said she looked into revisiting the issue and having the board possibly reverse its decision, she found that the commissioners could not change the salaries for the next four years.Irey said another salary board meeting could be held to halt the perpetuity of the increases."I've asked for that, but I've received no response from my colleagues," she said.Commissioner Larry Maggi said he was unaware of Irey's request, but agreed that the perpetuity issue should be looked at."Yes, I'm willing to look at that," he said.Commissioner Bracken Burns could not be reached for comment Wednesday.Copyright, 2004Record Number: 1056174092DEFC69 |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)January 6, 2004 |  |
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Burns, Maggi boot KrcelichArticle Text:By Linda Metz, Staff writerlmetz@observer-reporter.comWithin hours of being sworn into office, Washington County Commissioner Diana L. Irey accused her colleagues of following through on a "political vendetta" by erasing former human services director George Krcelich from the county payroll."It's very likely it was a political vendetta," Irey said shortly after the commissioners' reorganization and salary board meetings.Commissioners Bracken Burns and Larry Maggi denied that the decision to eliminate the post created last month and filled by Krcelich on Friday was politically motivated.Instead, they contend that the elimination of the position by the salary board was necessary, in light of the county's tight financial status, especially since no 2004 budget has been approved.Krcelich, who has 16 years of service with the county, accepted a position to oversee contract management for the county's Mental Health/Mental Retardation and Children and Youth Services. The position was created last month by the salary board. Burns, however, voted against the job creation.Krcelich said he accepted the job, which paid about $13,000 less than the human services post, rather than forfeit his years of service with the county. He said his relationship with Burns had been taut since the last election, and it intensified with the firing of Charles Rockwell as veterans director last year."Creating a new position at time of a budget crisis, well, I'm against it," Burns said Monday, referring to Krcelich's new position. "This was more a budget issue than a personal issue."In addition to Krcelich's position, the salary board, made up of the commissioners and Continued from Page OneController Mike Namie, announced the vacancy of human services director. But, Irey questioned whether the position was actually vacant, since Krcelich never formally resigned but, instead, began working in the other capacity."It's common sense that he resigned when he took a new job," Burns argued. "Nobody holds two full-time jobs simultaneously."Maggi said he didn't have a problem with Krcelich, but he couldn't "in good conscience" approve the creation of the position.Namie also voted to eliminate Krcelich's position. But it has always been Namie's contention that when it concerns administrative offices, he will vote in favor of issues agreed upon by at least two commissioners.Krcelich, who was notified about 3:30 p.m. Monday that his position had been eliminated and that he was to clear his office by day's end, said he didn't understand "how somebody could be so vindictive.""I don't know what I've ever done to either of them," he said. "Maggi is now Bracken's yes man."Krcelich also pointed out that while his position was eliminated, what really happened was that he was fired by Burns and Maggi."Larry Maggi calls himself a gentleman; well, he should look it up in the dictionary," he said. "And as for Bracken, may you fall on your sword."Krcelich said he was merely repeating the words that Burns said to former Commissioner John Bevec when he was named board chairman in 2001."He's not an honorable man, and the people shouldn't think he is," he said.As the salary board eliminated one position, it created another when it approved hiring Mary Helicke, secretary to former county Commissioner Metro Petrosky, to be chief clerk at an annual salary of $33,500.Only Irey voted against the job creation, saying that the position had been eliminated four years ago and merged with the responsibilities of the director of administration, now held by former state legislator Leo Trich Jr."I don't see enough work for an administrator and chief clerk unless they give Leo added duties," Irey said.Both Burns and Maggi responded that there was more than enough work to constitute the two positions."There's a tremendous amount of work that needs to be done in this office," Burns said.In addition, Irey argued that actions Monday came as a surprise to her and that she had been slighted from the decision-making process.Burns said it was hypocritical of Irey to complain about being excluded from anything after how she had treated him during the past term in office."Anything I give her now is a gift," he said.At Monday's meeting, the commissioners did manage to agree upon Trich becoming director of administration at an annual salary of $56,500; attorney J. Lynn DeHaven becoming county solicitor at $95,000, and Burns and Maggi serving as co-chairmen - the first time this has been done in state history.Although Irey voted in favor of the actions, she said she was skeptical about how the co-chairmanship will actually work."I'm not sure technically how they can do this," she said.Copyright, 2004, Observer Publishing Company of Washington, Pa.Record Number: 1002F73347B1BBBE |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)November 12, 2002 |  |
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Taxpayers shouldn't pay for campaign materialsArticle Text:Incumbency has its built-in political advantages, as anyone knows who has received a "newsletter" from a legislator in the mail just before an election. Our money is being used to tell us what a good job our officials are doing, even though the message is disguised as a kind of "report" to us on public affairs.On a local level, every Washington County building carries the names of the three current county commissioners, and each administration is vigilant about updating the signs when the makeup of the board changes.The first example may well be abusive, but it's at least provided for in the law, although admittedly that is defined by the people sending out the mailings. The second has always struck us as a rather strained, but minor, bit of self-promotion.Last week, the question was raised if Washington County Sheriff Larry Maggi had crossed a line by distributing material bearing his name at county expense. The county purchasing director challenged a purchase order from the sheriff for pencils and badge stickers costing a total of $697. Maggi also distributes coloring books for children that include a large picture of himself. The county paid $1,890 for 5,000 copies of the books.Commissioners John Bevec and Diana Irey last week accused Maggi of asking the county to finance his campaign by paying for the materials. For his part, Maggi said he has been distributing the coloring books since he became sheriff in 1998, with no objection from the commissioners' office.The belated timing of the protest is probably not coincidental. There has been speculation for months that Maggi will run for commissioner next year, posing a particular challenge to Bevec in the Democratic primary. That strikes us, though, as irrelevant to the issue.The pencils bearing the sheriff's name are probably no big deal. But the large pictures in the coloring books are something else, and the message in big letters that "Your Sheriff Cares" is entirely too much of a political slogan for the county to finance.The expenditure of $2,000 or $3,000 is a small one in terms of the whole county budget, and if the materials were limited to safety messages, nobody would probably care. But in their present form, they should be paid for out of Maggi's campaign fund, where they would represent a comparatively small amount of money also. |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)May 16, 2002 |  |
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3 Dems vying for nomination in new congressional districtAuthor: *LINDA METZ**THE OBSERVER-REPORTER**lmetz@observer-reporter.com*Article Text:Three Democrats believe they have what it takes to defeat Republican state Sen. Tim Murphy for the 18th Congressional District seat in November.Seeking the party nomination in Tuesday's primary are Washington County Sheriff Larry Maggi, steelworker Bob Domske of West Finley Township and school administrator Jack Machek of North Huntingdon Township, Westmoreland County.Murphy, of Upper St. Clair, is unopposed on the Republican ballot.Earlier this year, the Republican-controlled state Legislature approved a plan creating the new 18th District, which includes parts of Washington, Westmoreland and Allegheny counties.Democrats contend the new district lines were drawn with Murphy in mind, although there is a 75,000 registration advantage favoring Democrats. The registered voting population of the 18th District is 55 percent Democratic, 37 percent Republican and 13 percent Independent.The race for the new seat has gained national recognition for being one of the most competitive in the country and crucial to both parties in their fight for control of the U.S. House of Representatives.There has been little talk about the issues among the three candidates, leaving them to run mostly on their background, personal history and experience.Maggi, of Buffalo Township, has gotten the most recognition in his bid for the congressional seat, having received the backing of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.Maggi is a veteran of the Vietnam War, having served in the U.S. Marines Corps. For 24 years, he was employed by the state police, including 12 years as a homicide investigator.In 1997, Maggi won the county sheriff's position, defeating incumbent Sam Secreet. As sheriff, Maggi has balanced the office budget after years of fiscal disarray.However, he pointed out that he never hid his ambitions to serve the public on a greater level, and said he "always had an eye on a congressional seat.""I want to expand. I want to be a policymaker," Maggi said. "During the time as sheriff, I enjoyed working with and for the people. The next logical step is to serve in Congress."Maggi said he believes the 18th District is a very winnable seat for the Democratic party, especially if he wins the primary.Maggi said he is a "moderate Democrat," yet he opposes gun control and abortion."I'm such a moderate I try to do what I think is right and I don't always go along with party lines," he said.The sheriff said he supports President Bush's homeland security efforts, and further exploration of tapping domestic natural gas and oil supplies, with restrictions."We need to take care of ourselves," he said.If elected, he said his efforts would concentrate on Social Security, reducing the budget deficit and adding prescription drug coverage for senior citizens."Am I going to change the world's problems? No, but I will fight for this district," he said.While Maggi has received endorsements from numerous labor organizations, Machek said he's trusting the voters to choose the better person for the job."I feel I will come out strong," said Machek.An employee in the tax office of Norwin School District, Machek said he is interested in public policy and how to make people's lives better."I don't have all the answers, but I don't mind listening to problems," said Machek, a native of McKeesport and son of a retired steelworker at the Duquesne Works.A Greensburg Central Catholic High School graduate, Machek continued his education at U.S. Military Academy at West Point, but was discharged following an illness which affected his hearing. He finished his undergraduate and graduate studies in public policy and administration at the University of Pittsburgh, where he graduated with highest honors.Machek went on to serve as a federal grant manager and program coordinator for the Private Industry Council of Westmoreland/Fayette Inc., and administrative aide to former Sen. Edward Zemprelli.He also served as the city manager of Clairton, where he said he was instrumental in the breakup of a $1.2 million heroin trafficking ring. As city manager he said he also helped to cut taxes, and saved taxpayer money by running a sizeable year-end budget surplus.Although Machek prides himself on being a Democrat, he understands bipartisanship is essential to being a good congressman.If elected, Machek said he will fight for keeping Social Security and Medicare strong and viable; ensuring America's communities are kept safe and secure; and offering quality health care to all while controlling rising costs.Machek believes that the wealthy should pay more in taxes than those with moderate incomes. He doesn't support elimination of the inheritance tax but believes there should be a cut in capital gains taxes.Meanwhile, he favors Bush's actions on import tariffs, the farm bill, and homeland security efforts."I'm comfortable in supporting everything the president's done since Sept. 11," he said.Machek also supports the death penalty, and being tough on crime by hiring additional police officers to protect neighborhoods.He said he is pro-choice, but would not vote to expand abortion rights. He is also pro-hunter and bellieves there is no need to expand gun control laws.Machek said he had hoped to debate the issues with Maggi prior to the primary, but his opponent has declined."I believe that the recent controversy regarding redistricting, as well as the low-profile status of the 18th District race, has created a scenario in which voters have not had ample access to our positions on the issues," he said.Maggi said Machek's debate challenge came too late for him to fit it into his busy campaign schedule.The third candidate in the primary is Domske, who calls himself a Jeffersonian Democrat, wanting to empower the people with less central government."I'm the best guy for the job because I would definitely speak and fight for the people," said Domske, a steelworker at Allegheny Ludlum's Washington plate mill.Planning to spend less than $5,000 on his campaign, Domske said he had several key issues that he would address if elected.He is distressed by the amount of oil imports from Arabic nations, and believes the U.S. should investigate ways to use environmentally friendly fuel, such as ethanol or methanol."We need to build our own country, our own nation. We should use what we have," he said.In addition, Domske said he would add tariffs to imports, and back a prescription drug plan for senior citizens. He also would cut taxes and wasteful spending."I work hard for my money and I don't waste my money and I don't like the U.S. government wasting it," he said.A 1973 graduate of Chartiers-Houston High School, Domske began attending California University of Pennsylvania in 1985. He did not obtain his undergraduate degree.He was registered as an independent until 2001, when he switched his registration to Democrat to run for the congressional seat. He ran as a Reform Party candidate in2000 for U.S. Senate, garnering just 3 percent of the vote in his home county.Domske said he would also fight for an overhaul of the insurance industry. He is pro-life and opposes gun control."I want to take the best part of the Democratic Party and the best part of the Republican Party," he said. "We need free, independent thinkers to represent the people."Copyright, 2002, 2004Record Number: 1056168E361EE4BB |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)May 6, 2001 |  |

Maggi deserves a second term as county sheriffArticle Text:Through the administrations of the last two Washington County sheriffs, we were assured that budget overruns that routinely ran into six figures were unavoidable. The problem, we were told, was built-in overtime for deputies who had to serve court papers or escort prisoners at less than convenient hours.When Larry Maggi took office as sheriff in 1998, the overruns abruptly ended, and this year the office is operating at $24,000 under last year.This statistic is reason enough alone to recommend that Democratic voters nominate Maggi for a second term in the May 15 primary. And the importance of that record is not lost on Maggi's opponent, Robert "Rosie" Kmett, who, like Maggi, is a former Pennsylvania state trooper.Kmett promises that if he is elected he will make even more efficient use of the sheriff's office personnel to continue to keep costs down.Unfortunately, Kmett goes beyond finances in advocating the transformation of the sheriff's office into a county police force, a concept this newspaper has always opposed. It is not just that we don't need an extra police jurisdiction, but, in fact, that we have too many right now. The immediate Washington area, for example, is served by four separate police departments - not counting the state police which patrol Canton Township. Each of these departments has its own chief, its own hierarchy of personnel, its own headquarters and its own equipment.Adding yet another police agency running out of the sheriff's office would only multiply something that is already multiplied too much.Because no Republican candidate filed for sheriff, the winner of the Democratic primary is almost certainly assured of winning in November. We have no hesitation in endorsing Maggi for a second term in office. |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)May 10, 2002 |  |
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Maggi tells Machek it's too late to debateAuthor: *LINDA METZ**THE OBSERVER-REPORTER**lmetz@observer-reporter.com*Article Text:Washington County Sheriff Larry Maggi said he's too busy and it's too late to debate congressional opponent Jack Machek before the May 21 primary."I've offered to debate Larry anytime, anywhere," said Machek of North Huntingdon, Westmoreland County. "He has declined to debate."Maggi, Machek and Bob Domske of West Finley Township are seeking the Democratic nomination for the 18th District congressional seat. Machek did not say whether the offer was extended to Domske, who is running a grass-roots campaign.The winner will face off against unopposed Republican state Sen. Tim Murphy of Upper St. Clair for the newly created seat in November."I want to debate the issues," said Macheck, a tax office employee for Norwin School District. "The citizens of the 18th Congressional District deserve an opportunity to determine which candidate is armed with a more detailed and solid grasp on the issues."However, Maggi campaign manager Ben Davis said that Machek did not propose a debate until early this week."We have a full schedule. We're aggressively pursuing voters in every part of the district," Davis said. "If the offer had been made earlier, we would have accepted."He said that Machek's recent offer of a debate is a campaign ploy because Maggi is the "consensus favorite to win the nomination."Rachel Kiger, spokeswoman for the Machek campaign, said the challenge was faxed to Maggi's campaign headquarters Monday, calling for a debate every week in a different county until the election. Maggi has not responded to the challenge."To us, that's a flat-out refusal," Kiger said. "As for last-minute, everything is last-minute in this election due to redistricting."Copyright, 2002, 2004Record Number: 105616E09851E391 |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)May 17, 2007 |  |
| Page: B4 |

Topics:Index Terms: Loc CITYCounty readying for $6 million bond issueArticle Text:By Barbara S. MillerStaff writerbmiller@observer-reporter.comFacing several major projects, the Washington County commissioners are preparing for a bond issue that is expected to generate about $6 million.The money will be used to pay for improvements in the 911 call center and public safety department not covered by a $9.3 million grant given last year by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency; repair of the courthouse roof; development of the north side of the county airport and the building of three new hangars; replacement of the Hanlin Station railroad bridge on the Panhandle Trail; and improvements at both Mingo Creek and Cross Creek county parks.Lisa Cessna, county planning director, said the Hanlin Station bridge project will be expensive because a fiber optic cable must be moved.At the county parks, the projects include extending the Mingo Creek bike path to the Henry covered bridge and expanding one playground while adding a new one. At Cross Creek, the projects include putting in a new boat launch, shelter and playground on the Route 844 side. Another playground will be enlarged."We'll submit applications to the state," Cessna said. "I'm only waiting for our match to be available. It's a significant amount of money to do all at one time."County finance director Roger Metcalfe said the proposal also includes restructuring of county debt, terminating a small portion of the "swaption" executed in June 2005 because of favorable market rates and collapsing part of the Washington County loan pool.Commission Co-Chairman Larry Maggi said after Wednesday's agenda meeting, "We're in the beginning stages of refinancing. There's still a lot of preliminary work that needs to be done."He estimated the commissioners will vote on the matter in about a month.Copyright, 2007, Observer Publishing Company of Washington, Pa.Record Number: 11930BD52C231280 |

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| Observer-Reporter (Washington, PA)January 16, 2004 |  |
| Page: A1 |

Topics:

Index Terms:

Loc CITY

County makes tax increase official

Article Text:

By Linda Metz, Staff writer

lmetz@observer-reporter.com

The inevitable happened Thursday: Washington County commissioners voted to raise taxes.

As anticipated, votes cast by Commissioners Bracken Burns and Larry Maggi made way for the passage of the county's 2004 budget, which includes a $57.7 million spending plan. The new tax rate is 21.4 mills.

The budget, which called for a 3.9-mill increase, needed to be approved Thursday or the county would have been unable to meet the first payroll of the new year.

"I'm not happy about this, but something had to be done because the last board failed to do it," said Maggi, who marked his first official public meeting as county commissioner. "It was very hard for me to raise taxes."

Maggi claims the budget was unfairly dumped on him because the previous board failed to approve a spending plan by Dec. 31.

Meanwhile, Burns said he has to hope that taxpayers understand he was merely doing the job that he was elected to do.

"We have labored over this for months. We were able to cut $1 million out of the original budget, switch health care policies, but still the budget was short by about $4 million," Burns said. "Ideally, the previous board should have done it, but its upwards and onwards."

The two commissioners voted for increasing taxes to cover the deficit, which has been mostly attributed to rising health care costs and to the $2 million contribution the county is being required to make to Continued from Page One

its employee pension fund. One mill generates about $1.2 million.

The average county property owner with a home having a market value of $39,500 pays $172 annually in county taxes. With the tax increase, that same property owner will now pay more than $207 a year.

Commissioner Diana L. Irey, who voted against the budget, said the tax increase was far too high of a burden for the taxpayers, especially as many of her cost-cutting proposals were ignored by her colleagues.

Irey continues to maintain that through her proposals, the county could have lessened the blow on the taxpayers by more than 2 mills. However, Burns and Maggi contend that Irey's proposals were unrealistic.

"They were not only unrealistic, they were silly," Burns said. "All three of us probably know that what happened today had to happen."

Burns said instead of Irey stepping up to the plate and supporting the tax increase, she "decided to walk in the sunshine and leave the heavy lifting" to him and Maggi.

Still, the reasoning provided little solace to the few people who attended the meeting and opposed the tax increase.

"If I don't have the money for a Cadillac, I buy a Chevy," said Harry Sabatasse of Burgettstown, who regularly attends the commissioners' meetings. "Let's start looking at things the way people with no money look at things."

Sabatasse has long been pleading with the commissioners not to increase taxes and further burden property owners.

Meanwhile, Dr. Al Sorensen of McMurray said he couldn't put all the blame on the commissioners for the tax increase.

"I put part of the blame on the people who are apathetic" about what's going on, he said. "Apathy and ignorance fuel poor government."

Sorensen said he was surprised that more people did not attend Thursday's meeting to express their dissatisfaction over the proposed tax increase.

"We've got to take government back; it's not going to come from this table," he said.

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