

## General Meeting of the Lebanon 9-12 Project

April 18, 2017

The general meeting of the Lebanon 9-12 Project was called to order by Co-Chair, Titus Hostetter on April 18, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. at All About You Catering.

Larry Patches offered the invocation, asking the Lord to guide our thoughts and our actions.

Titus led the room in the Pledge to the Flag.

Treasurer, Sue Rodkey followed with the Treasurer's Report and the Adopt a US Soldier Report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

Membership Chairman, Harry Fies, started his report by saying "America is back!" which evoked cheers from the audience. He indicated that there were a few membership cards on the back table and requested that everyone sign in.

He further reminded the group about the picnic at Memorial Lake on August 26<sup>th</sup>, stating that there is always a lot of good food and fellowship and it is a beautiful location.

As always, Harry ended his report with a humorous anecdote.

Sandy Paveglio gave her Education Committee Report. She indicated that there was a new museum opening in Philadelphia called the American Revolution Museum and commented that there may be a group trip in the future.

She further indicated that there is a Hillsdale online study course which may interest our group.

She also discussed a Tennessee lawsuit against the Federal Government over Refugee Resettlements that Catholic Charities is running. While the Federal Government originally was funding these resettlements, they stopped the funding within five years but the resettlements stayed in place, making the states fully fund them. This is a violation of the states' sovereignty. We will all be watching for the final decision in this Tennessee case.

Another critical issue with these settlement programs is that there is no allowance for any sort of Christian outreach or discussion about Jesus.

She brought attention to the Pastor's Network flyers which were printed for this meeting and on each table.

Sandy went into her Respect Life Committee report by indicating that President Trump put forth House Joint Resolution 43. Our Representatives, Dent and Costello both voted against it. It did pass, however, which is a big step in defunding Planned Parenthood.

Sandy reminded the group about the showing of the movie, Voiceless, at the Allen Theatre on April 30<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m. An offering will be taken and the funds received will go toward a mobile ultrasound unit for Undefeated Courage. It is believed that, once a pregnant mother sees her unborn child, more will choose not to terminate that life.

Chairman, Jim Rodkey offered his Chair Remarks, reminding everyone of the Open House at Frank Ryan's office from 1:30 to 5:00 p.m. at his Palmyra office. He also told the group of Representative Diamond's Concealed Carry Seminar on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, led by Joshua Prince, and Frank's "Walk & Talk" events. Jim urged everyone to stay in contact with their Legislators because they are not mind-readers and they do need our input.

Jim then spoke at length about the Register of Wills race in Lebanon County and the lies that are being spread about one of the candidates. He pressured the group to learn the truth, speak with the candidates and work hard for the candidate of their choice, including door-to-door, poll watching, etc.

The membership then took a 10 minute break for coffee, cookies and fellowship.

After the break, Jim brought up the primary election and urged the group to take along some HB/SB76 literature if they are working the polls. It is a non-partisan issue and there are a lot of people to talk to at the polls. He also indicated that Dean Klopp will be canvassing Senator McGarrigle's district, if anyone was interested in helping. He also brought up the Jonestown Block Party, at which the Lebanon 9-12 Project will set up a booth again this year.

Jim's main presentation was submitted in written form and attached to these minutes.

After the presentation, the meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Rodkey, Treasurer

## TREASURER/AAUSS REPORT

February 21, 2017

Two days ago, I celebrated Easter Sunday. I got up and took four of my granddaughters to church, all of whom were wearing new colorful dresses to mark the occasion. After church, we had a nice meal with my 91 year old mom. I'm sure many of you had a similar experience. Maybe church, probably a big meal, possibly some family members you haven't seen for a while. It made me think: I wonder what Shawn and Marcus did Sunday morning? I wonder if they got any sleep Saturday night. I wonder if they even know what day of the week it is or that Easter has come and gone. I wonder.

These guys (and thousands more like them), don't get the luxury of jumping in the car and picking up the kids, or smelling the ham baking in the oven or diving into Grandma's famous apple pie with whipped cream on the top. They can't just run across town to say Hi to their Moms - or their Grandparents. But they stay where they are - for as long as they are needed.

That is the reason that I'm up here every month. Yes, I need to tell you about the donation box. I need to request that you help us with our monthly hall rental and other expenses of the 9-12 Project. I need to let you know that your contributions are needed and appreciated. But the main reason I'm up here is these two boxes on the table: boxes that we fill every month to send overseas. Silly things sometimes: games, puzzles, marshmallows, Oreos, etc. Not necessarily what we would want in our own Easter baskets but yet, to Shawn and Marcus and their fellow soldiers, it could mean the difference between loneliness and joy. Maybe opening those care packages bring long-overdue smiles on the faces of our soldiers. They don't ask for much but they don't want to be forgotten. Your contributions of money in the basket and items for the boxes make more of a difference than you could possibly imagine.....well, I believe some of you can - because you've been there. For that, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Let us always remember - let us always appreciate. May God Bless our men and women in uniform - past, present and future - and bring them home safely.

Thank you.

Sue Rodkey, Treasurer  
AAUSS Facilitator

On April 6 we received a new IFO report related to property tax elimination. This IFO report came because as we began have discussion on the funding to replace the tax earlier this year we discovered that the wrong number were applied to funding last year. Everyone here needs to understand that this was beyond our, that is the PTCC and supporting groups, control. We are reliant on the government to supply us with these numbers and then the adjustments are made to make certain the replacement numbers work.

Last year we were told that the replacement revenue needs for school property tax elimination was 13.5 billion dollars. We questioned the accuracies of those numbers but we were told repeatedly that these were the numbers we needed. That is what accounted for the jump in the PIT tax to 4.95.

As we began the discussion this year and those numbers came up again we asked for a complete breakdown because we were looking at 14.2 billion dollars and these increases didn't match what we were tracking.

Part of the replacement funding for SB 76 involves leaving current debt within the school district to be paid through a small remaining portion of school property tax that would end when that debt was paid off. The numbers we were being given included the retained debt portion of the school property tax and they shouldn't have. As we pushed back we got the actual breakdown and we showed them why they were using the wrong numbers and they agreed that we were right.

As a result, the replacement funding is about 2 billion dollars less than what they were telling us it had to be. That two billion amounts to an ability to reduce the amount of PIT needed for the replacement. We could be looking at 4.5 to 4.6. That however will be determined by the Appropriations Committee because that's the way it works.

Another aspect that I've noticed in the IFO report is that the report is based on projections that are assumed through current statistics related to PIT revenue and Sales Tax. I contend that this numbers fall way short of future potential.

The Elimination of school property tax for homestead, farmstead and business turns the entire state into a KOZ zone making it more attractive for business to come to Pennsylvania. It will also make it easier for smaller businesses to expand. Monies currently being used for the school property tax to maintain the clean and green program are no longer relevant. More jobs means more people working and more people working means more income and more PIT revenue going to the state.

More income also means more disposable income that will translate into more spending which will cause the sales tax revenue to expand as well.

None of this is factored in to the IFO report. It is based on current trends....current Jobs trends and current spending trends. HB/SB 76 changes all of that.

It should also be noted here that the IFO report dispels more of the misinformation coming out of the PSBA. The amount of retained debt varies from school districts to school district and the PSBA wants school districts to believe that the school property tax will remain indefinitely so they make the claim that HB/SB 76 doesn't actually eliminate the school property tax. The IFO report states that this is wrong by saying that all debt in existence on December 31, 2017 will be retired in 17 years. For some school districts that currently have no debt, they will see elimination immediately. Other school districts will see the school districts debt eliminated in 5 to 10 years. The 17 year mark is only for the school districts with extraordinary large amount of debt.

The mistake in how these numbers were being calculated was caught and is being corrected happened only through the vigilance of those working inside to make this bill happen. It wasn't caught by legislators or by their legislative staff.

While most of my own attention has been spent on getting 76 across the finish line there are other legislative efforts that we all need to be aware of. Many of you are on mailing lists of some of the more conservative minded statewide and national groups. So am I. Recently I received email from several of them telling us to contact our legislators and tell them to vote for this side-by-side hybrid pension plan.

Frankly, I'm opposed to this legislation because it doesn't address the actual debt and will do darned little to slow down the bleeding to this state because of the pension problem. Because moving from a defined benefit to a defined contribution plan is optional for existing public sector employees we will continue to see that debt maintained and growing. It's unsustainable.

I was curious if legislators were being contacted and spoke to one legislator who told me that he received about 200 emails but only one was from a constituent. He wrote back and explained why he disagreed with this hybrid plan/ The constituent called

their office and was furious because he felt as though the organization who told him to support the plan was misrepresenting the bill to the people. He was right. They were. That constituent contacted the organization who sent him the original email and that organization then contacted the legislator because they were upset because the response to the constituent was to focus on what's wrong with the bill. Isn't that the point? We can't fix what's wrong if we ignore it.

Another dupe being pushed on the more conservative voters is the Paycheck Protection Bill that currently came out of the Senate. First of all, it's not a paycheck protection Bill. The bill says that the local tax collecting agency does not have to collect the portion of the dues or union members that are used for political purposes but there's no way to determine what portion of the dues are actually used for politics.

The unions aren't required to keep separate records under the current law and the new so-called paycheck protection bill doesn't make that happen. Local taxing authorities would have to go through lengthy right to know requests or just take the unions word that no dues money is being spent on political purposes. The bill has no bite and it can't be enforced. It ignores the fact that the private sector shouldn't be taxed at all for the collection of any union dues regardless of what it's being spent for. Let the public sector unions collect those dues and incur the costs involved in maintaining the collection of those dues. End of Story.

So why is the legislative body pushing bills like this? I've asked that question and I get the usual roundabout answers that simply do not answer the question. I get excuses and not reasons. I do have an opinion however. Next year is an election year and we'll have legislators who can go out to their constituents and tell them they got us pension reform and Paycheck Protection when the truth is they've really given us nothing. The majority of the uniformed won't realize that until well after next year's election cycle.

I would apologize for my cynicism but an apology would mean that I actually felt bad for saying so. I don't.

I get that the conservative position is to build majorities. I get that our perception is that this sort of thing is more likely to happen under Republicans but passing bad bills to assure that majority isn't the solution to the problems.

I want to know why we can't build those majorities by doing what we voted these people into office to do. Why must the Freedom Caucus types always be the ones expected to compromise. When does the leadership start to realize that we didn't elect these legislators to move to Paul Ryan's will or that Pennsylvania State legislators aren't elected to move towards Jake Corman or Mike Turzai. These people in leadership need to move our way.

Let's connect some dots here. I started out by talking about how it was us, not the legislators who found the miscalculation that resulted in increasing the PIT to 4.95 last year. We didn't have all the numbers because we couldn't get them. We didn't give up and earlier this year and once we did, it was easy to see where they had messed up. Now while we didn't have those numbers those working legislatively on this bill did and yet they didn't catch it.

I believe that the majority of those who will legislatively vote for the Paycheck Protection bill and the Pension Reform Bill will do so because they will accept what they are being told at face value without questioning it. It's not always a matter of corruption but more of a matter of political apathy. And believe me this sort of political apathy is rampant in Harrisburg. There's far too many legislators who may support concepts and will buy into notions that a particular bill will actually work because they've been told it will by lobbyists or leadership. In too many cases they can't actually defend the working parts of the bills because, frankly, they do know what those working mechanisms are. If they did know, I doubt that some of them would vote for it.

There are those who actually do know better but don't care. Those who will tell us anything to get elected and then do as they damned well please once they are in office. Legislators like Kim Ward and Tom McGarrigle, both of whom ran on their support of SB 76, McGarrigle going so far as taking advantage of the photo op and actually asking that a picture be retaken showing co-sponsors of the bill because he wasn't in the original and then, when the bill came up for a vote, voted against it. Those are the political opportunist types. McGarrigle wasn't just saying he supports elimination of the property tax, he was telling people he supported SB 76 specifically. The photo-op was for cosponsors of SB 76 and he wanted to make sure he could be a part of that photo-op. And then, when it was time for him to become accountable to his promise he welched.

McGarrigle made the claim that he had some issues with the bill that he didn't realize when he signed on as a co-sponsor. Let that sink in. He became a co-sponsor of a bill he didn't read, used his support of the bill to get elected, but didn't bother to read the bill until right before the vote. And I can tell you he still hadn't read the bill because his opposition was based on misinformation handed to him by paid lobbyists that didn't actually represent the facts about the bill.

Kim Ward had been a supporter of 76 since it came out. She used it in her 2012 re-election bid. She held a press conference where she openly declared her support of 76. Then came the time to vote for it. When she heard they were actually going to run the bill she become one of the most vocal opponents to the bill in Republican Caucuses. Suddenly, this bill, which she had claimed to support for years was coming up for a vote and now she had issues with it. Her criticisms, once again, were based on talking points given to her that did not reflect the actual content of the bill. IT becomes obvious to me that we have another legislator who didn't read the bill and then, when faced with lobbyist pressure caved, not because their talking points were real, but just because she didn't read the bill.

We have some legislators who voted for the bill in the last Senate vote who are now suddenly complaining because of some of things that the expansion of the sales tax includes. Now bear in mind we didn't add anything to the expansion since that Senate vote and they didn't have a problem with it back then. Why then, are we not supposed to think that they are caving to the recent hostility against this bill by the PSEA and the PSBA?

Then you have Senators like Senator Wayne Langerholc who took campaign money from CAP after signing a pledge to not take the pension who got elected using that as part of his platform and then once in office took the pension.

In political reality there is no law to hold a legislator accountable who lies about supporting an issue to get elected but once there betrays their promise to the people who put them there. It simply doesn't matter legally if this sort of thing is ethical or not. In the private sector we face a different reality. If you lie on your application for a job and your boss discovers the truth you can be terminated. You can even be sued by your employer if it's felt that your damaged the reputation of the firm.

Now I want this to be very clear, while it upsets me that some legislators don't actual read the bills they claim to support, I accept that this is a political realty. That reality can't be changed overnight and it won't be changed by an apathetic people who won't hold their legislators accountable.

I also want this to be clear, it's not all legislators. It may be the rule but there are exceptions to that rule.

There are, quite literally, thousands of piece of legislation and resolutions that get pushed in every legislative session. Some issues are going to be more important to a legislator than others so a legislator needs to be looked at through a larger lens, or what we sometimes call the big picture.

It's easy to get overwhelmed. As chair of this organization I've seen it happen. We have members coming in and they are very passionate. They want to see reform and change but it doesn't happen immediately. They get frustrated and throw up their hands in disgust and then walk away. Dozens of tea party groups that formed in the early days of the movement have become extinct

If there is a thousand bills out there, we can't possibly, as a citizen advocacy group, know every one of those issues or the intricacies involved in those issues. We have to carefully choose our fights and then commit to staying focused on finishing that fight.

I know that's frustrating. I hear it all the time. People tell me it's been seven years on HB/SB 76 and you still haven't seen the bill passed. Why are you wasting your time?

One of the greatest failings of the Tea Party has been it's reluctance to get behind specific fights and staying focused long enough to see that fight through to the end. Right now, one of the greatest strengths that the PTCC has is the fact that we have focused on property tax elimination and we have clearly demonstrated that we aren't going to go away.

We've become a force to be reckoned with and that's something opportunistic politicians actually do understand. When we started this fight the most common excuse we heard was that it wasn't going to happen...then during the 2015 budget debates we actually heard legislators saying that there would be no increase in taxes through the PIT and Sales Tax without the elimination of the school property tax.

You didn't hear that about the pension issue, you didn't hear that about the paycheck protection issue. You did hear it about school property tax elimination.

This year we've been inundated with countless hit pieces in the media carrying the state school boards misrepresentations of SB 76. Their spending money to fight back against us. Their putting time and resources to try and stop us. In other words we've gone from "This will Never Happen" to "Oh My...this is going to happen and we better do something to stop it"

And now we're seeing people, because of the negative hits based on misinformation about the bill, walking away from this fight.

Is the right to actually own your home suddenly less important? Did the government stop seizing people's homes suddenly when they can't keep up with the tax collectors? Is the issue less important now than it was 4 years ago....6 years ago.

Thank God that our founders didn't think like that. Thank God that the Abolitionists didn't think like that. Thank God that those who defended a woman's right to vote didn't think like that. Thank God that the right to life crowd isn't thinking like that.

In 1897 Auberon Herbert, a political theorist largely ignored today, was a staunch support of the rights of property. During his lifetime he shook up the political landscape in ways that can be compared to a Ron Paul. Herbert wrote *"If you surround property with state restrictions, interfere with free trade and any part of the open market, interfere with free contract, make compulsory arrangements for tenant and landowner, allow the present burdens of rate and tax to discourage ownership and penalize improvements, you will weaken the motives for acquiring property, and blunt the edge of the most powerful material instrument that exists for your own advancement. Only remember—as we have said—that great as is your material interest in safeguarding the rights of individual property, yet higher and greater are and ever will be the moral reasons that forbid our sanctioning any attack upon it, or our suffering state burdens and restrictions and impediments to grow round it. True liberty—as we said—cannot exist apart from the full rights of property; for property is—so to speak—only the crystallized form of free faculties."*

Herbert was right *"True liberty cannot exist apart from the full rights of property"*. That's really what this fight is about...restoring true liberty.

I've spoken a bit about political reality. There is another political reality. As large as the PTCC effort is, regardless of the work that groups like ours and PA Liberty Alliance have done, we do not have the resources available to us to do what our opposition has done. For one thing, we can't use tax-payer money to send out fliers through school districts even though those fliers contain misinformation. We also don't have the press on our side. We don't have paid lobbyists camping out in Harrisburg every day our legislators are in session. If that becomes our focus though, we will lose because we will be overwhelmed. We face that reality and counterattack strategically making the best uses of the resources available to us. There are things out of our control and we waste time trying to control those things. Those things we can control however, we should do so and do so strategically.

You know, compared to the size and scope of our opposition it's like comparing a Boulder to a Pebble.

This is nothing new....it's always been that way. Our success has been how we have used that pebble.

Sure, we can throw that pebble at the legislative body in the hopes of getting their attention for a moment but it's far more advantageous to us to take that pebble and put it in their shoe so that no matter where they go, no matter what they do, they feel our presence. We have to let them know that we aren't going to go away and we have to make them uncomfortable in their opposition.

We can look at the contrast and we can ask ourselves, what see things differently. It's not what chance we have, it's what's choice do we have. Can we ask our legislators to do the right thing because it's the right thing to do when we, ourselves, are unwilling to do the same.

We can run and hide. We can ignore the thousands who are worrying how they are going to keep their homes because we are still comfortable in ours. We can pretend the power of the opposition isn't something we can't stand up to. We can do all of these things and in doing so we condemn this state to continue down this path of rental servitude to the oppression of the taxing government land thieves.

The time to stand is now. You see we aren't just one pebble, we are thousands of pebbles but keeping that pebble in our pocket isn't going to help us. It's not going to help you.

Yes, I want to win this battle. I have profound hope that we will win.

At the same time, I ask you "Is winning all there is? Isn't standing up because it's the right thing to do enough?"

Much of this has been focused on property tax but look at the important issues we face. I commend the Respect Life group within our organization for their tireless efforts in promoting the sanctity of all human life. Although we've been fighting Roe vs Wade since 1973 do we stop because we haven't won...Pension Reform, that's been another long fight...do we stop because we haven't won. The full repeal of Obamacare...do we stop. I look at what Sue has done with the Adopt a Soldier program. No we can't send care packages to them all but we do what we can and her persistence not to allow this support to waver is to be

commended. The attention that has been draw to Islamic radicalism and illegal immigration is another fight we haven't won...do we surrender?

I don't know about you but I can't. I cannot give up. I cannot stand down. I must live with myself and I know that if I give up now I won't be able to face myself nor will I be able to stand in front of you in these meetings. The responsibility and accountability must begin with me. Where I am able, I must stand.