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Philadelphia **FORWARD**

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Inside this issue:

Business Tax Reform: Philadelphia Moves Forward	2
BUDGETWATCH: Your Eye On City Finance	2
Moving Philadelphia Forward: Meet Other Reformers	2
Real Estate Tax Reform: Philadelphia Awaits Change	3
Citizen/City Hall Compact: A City Reform Platform	3
Ethics Wins: The City Has A New Board Of Ethics	3
More Kudos For Philadelphia Forward	4

Philly Politics: Do We Like What We See?



Philadelphia Forward Executive Director
Brett Mandel

Some define "politics" as the art of compromise — as if there is no objective good to be achieved in our society and all we can expect is to try make sure that we all get along while many suffer. Others define politics as the process we use to apportion society's scarce resources — as if those who do not fare well in the political system should be consoled by the idea that it is all just a game that can be won or lost depending on how well you play. Still others caution that politics is the art of the possible — as if we should lower our expectations to only incremental progress.

In the end, our definition of "politics" is a mirror that reflects our values as a society. We must establish a system where politics is about more than compromising the greater good for the benefit of the connected few. We must create something that is more than a winner-take-all battle for public spoils. We must raise expectations toward goals that are worth achieving. To do so, we must demand that our political system respects public involvement and reflects public priorities. Working together, we can make Philadelphia politics about finding ways to do the most good for the citizenry so we can live the ideal of the Oath of the Athenian Citizen and "transmit this City, not only not less, but greater and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us." Then, we could look in our political mirror and like what we see.

Old School * New School * Reform School Event

Philadelphia Forward gathered reformers (from gray-haired to wet-behind-the-ears and everything in between) to celebrate and cultivate the push for change in Philadelphia at our OLD SCHOOL * NEW SCHOOL * REFORM SCHOOL event held June 8, 2006. At the event, we awarded the first *FORWARD THINKER* awards to a group of significant reformers:

- **Robert J. Butera** won legislative reforms in the PA General Assembly
- **Edmund Goppelt** connected citizens to government with hallwatch.org
- **William R. Miller, IV** helped empower a generation of city leaders
- **Cecilia Yep** galvanized her community to strengthen the Chinatown area

The awardees took part in a discussion focused on the state of reform in Philadelphia and making change in a city not eager to depart from the *status quo*. For event photos, a transcript of the panel discussion, and video highlights, visit:



FORWARD THINKER awardees make points as part of the panel discussion

www.philadelphiaforward.org/content/view/168/37/

Special Thanks To All Our Sponsors

Reform School Dean: Kathy Z. Anderson
Reform School Provosts: Ross Associates, Midlantic Business Alliance, The Enterprise Center
Reform School Department Chairs: The Administrators, Inc., Christopher Patuskus and Kiernan Slater, DelCasales Court Reporters, Econsult Corporation, Friends Select School, Greenlee Partners, Jill Horn, Neighborhood Civic PAC, Phila. Young Republicans, Reckless Amateurs, Robert K. Kurtz Company, Tierney Communications, Yards Brewery, ZipCo Wine Cellar Services, Inc., Whiners Inc./My Cellar Wine Storage Company/Capital Wine & Spirits.

Business Tax Reform: Philadelphia Moves Forward

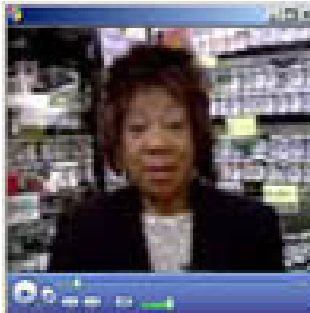
City Council and the Mayor approved additional reductions to the job-killing Business Privilege Tax this spring. This small victory is on top of the landmark Wage Tax reductions we won in 2004 that will reduce that dreaded tax dramatically over the next decade. The latest change is the first legislation to reduce the BPT's rates since the spring of 2002 when the current reduction schedule was put in place.

Our elected officials heard the plea for more tax reform and passed legislation to reduce the gross receipts portion of the Business Privilege Tax to .1665% in 2006, .154% in 2007, and .1415% in 2008. With additional cuts written into the city's Five-Year Financial Plan and anticipated for future years, we are on pace to **ELIMINATE** the BPT's gross receipts portion by 2019!

The reductions should absolutely be more finite and fast, and they should be expanded to the net income portion of the

tax, but the fact that our elected officials took this action is a testament to the fact that the push for tax reform could not be ignored.

You did it! Your faxes to City Hall, your letters to elected officials, your calls to your representatives, your txt messages to Council cell phones, and your emails to the Mayor's BlackBerry let them know that they **COULD NOT DO NOTHING**.



Small-business owner Jesse Frisby appears in *Community Voices Speak Out: Real People For Real Tax Reform* — view the film at www.philadelphiaforward.org

Looking ahead, at the Chamber of Commerce's Mayoral Luncheon, Mayor Street pledged that he would do more comprehensive and significant tax reform next year. So we will have to hold him to his word. More important, all prospective mayoral candidates are on record supporting tax reform efforts to reduce and/or eliminate the job-killing Business Privilege Tax. **We have won the argument and are only debating the timing for this crucial reform. Your voice is being heard!**

BUDGETWATCH: Your Eye On City Finance

Philadelphia Forward established BUDGETWATCH to increase citizen participation and raise the level of public debate surrounding the city budget process.

Currently, the process to decide how that money should be raised and spent is inaccessible to the citizenry and confusing for those who attempt to become informed. More information, more discussion, and more engagement in public debate

BUDGETWATCH pulls back the curtain of the city's budget process to take a look inside the city budget machinery.

over how we generate and spend public dollars will result in measures that reflect the citizenry's priorities and benefit the public welfare, and not just the connected few.

BUDGETWATCH pulls back the curtain of the city's budget process to take a look inside the city budget

machinery with entries like...

- It's The Size Of The Pie, Not The Prices Of The Slices, That Makes A Budget
- City Budget Moves: The Rules Of The Game; The Power Of The Players
- What Do You Do With A Budget Surplus?

For BUDGETWATCH, visit:

www.philadelphiaforward.org/content/view/157/89/

Moving Philadelphia Forward: Meet Other Reformers



Philadelphia Forward Board Member David Thornburgh

Philadelphia Forward Board member David B. Thornburgh is moving Philadelphia forward. Thornburgh is the President and CEO of the Alliance for Regional Stewardship, a national organization for regional collaboration among businesses, government and non-profit organizations.

Prior to joining the Alliance, Thornburgh was the Executive Director of the Pennsyl-

vania Economy League, Eastern Division, a nonprofit public policy organization working to promote better government and a more competitive Pennsylvania. Thornburgh was previously the Director of the Wharton Small Business Development Center and a founder of the Enterprise Center, a small-business incubator program in West Philadelphia.

Thornburgh lives with his wife, Rebecca, and their daughters Blair and Alice in Chestnut Hill.

Real Estate Tax Reform: Philadelphia Awaits Change

Neighbors across Philadelphia are worried about the pending citywide reassessment and how the move to accurately revalue all city properties will affect tax bills. Today, Real Estate Taxation in Philadelphia is unfair, uncertain, and confusing. A citywide reassessment can be part of the solution, but additional policies are required to make the transition to a fair system in the most effective and painless manner possible.

To improve the debate on issues surrounding city Real Estate Taxation, we created an interactive internet resource so visitors can review this information in an accessible manner:

www.philadelphiaforward.org/content/view/143

This tool uses example homes in each council district to illustrate unfairness in city Real Estate Taxation and show how full-value reassessment and other proposed policies — reducing the Real Estate Tax rate, using a “buffering” system to prevent dramatic increases in tax bills, and taxing land more



Philadelphia Forward's interactive web-based resource uses example city homes to illustrate Real Estate Taxation issues

and buildings less to reduce tax burdens for homeowners — can create an equitable and transparent system.

Philadelphia Forward also presents information about how we can help vulnerable homeowners and ensure that Philadelphians are never forced to sell their homes to pay their Real Estate Tax bills.

Visitors can use *Philadelphia Forward's Real Estate Tax Calculator* (www.philadelphiaforward.org/content/view/126/77/) to see how the coming full-value reassessment and other policies could affect their own Real Estate Tax bills.

Philadelphia Forward produced a powerpoint presentation (available on www.philadelphiaforward.org or on a CD) titled “*Moving Philadelphia Forward With Fair and Understandable Real Estate Taxation.*” Please contact *Philadelphia Forward* to schedule a presentation of the information for your neighbors or community organization to best explain the material.

Citizen/City Hall Compact: A City Reform Platform

Too often, the viability of candidates for elected office in Philadelphia is determined by support from ward heelers, major donors, or special interests, with little attention paid to policy matters.

But we can help change the process we use to select our leaders by creating a Citizen/City Hall Compact comprising policy prescriptions endorsed by a diverse array of individuals and organizations. By doing

so, we can increase the likelihood that policies endorsed by the citizenry can define the courses of action we take as a city and establish a template against which to measure the progress of change in city government after the 2007 election.

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A Citizen/City Hall Compact can provide Philadelphia’s expanding constituency for change with a barometer against which potential leaders can be measured so that individuals embracing the elements of the Compact will gain instant electoral viability. For more information about the Citizen/City Hall Compact and how you or your organization can help shape it, contact Brett Mandel at 215.563.3881.

Ethics Wins: The City Has A New Board Of Ethics

On Election Day, voters overwhelmingly approved a measure to create a new Board of Ethics, which will have true power to help encourage and enforce ethics standards in Philadelphia government.

This most-recent change is a direct result of the incredible “Vote Yes On Ethics” effort that *Philadelphia Forward* and other reform-minded organizations led to create a historic “yes” vote to November’s Charter change to help end pay-to-play in the awarding of no-bid city

contracts. November’s election showed that Philadelphia cares about ethics reform, which broke the log jam in City Council and placed the creation of a Board of Ethics on the May ballot. Voters did their part by overwhelmingly approving the new Board.

Moving forward, we will work to keep the pressure on our elected officials to make sure that the membership of the new Board of Ethics has integrity, displays energy, and remains crony-free.

The **FORWARD** Thinker

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Philadelphia Forward is a citizens' organization formed to build a diverse constituency for change to promote the policies that can make Philadelphia a vibrant city that is a preferred place to live, work, and visit.

For more information about getting involved with the push for reform, visit: www.philadelphiaforward.org

More Kudos For *Philadelphia Forward*...

Philadelphia Forward continues to earn praise from Philadelphians and awards from local and national organizations for its work building a diverse constituency for change and promoting the policies that can move Philadelphia forward.



In April, the American Association of Political Consultants recognized *Philadelphia Forward's* robocall (automatic phone-message outreach) effort — "Pushbutton Activism: Tax Reform in Philadelphia" — with a *Pollie Award* in the area of Local Grassroots/Issue Advocacy/Public Affairs.



In February, Young Involved Philadelphia, a grassroots organization increasing civic engagement among young Philadelphians, presented *Philadelphia Forward* with its *Civic Bulldog Award* "for fighting for tax reform in Philadelphia."



In May, *Philadelphia Forward* Executive Director Brett Mandel was recognized by the *Philadelphia Business Journal* as part of its Annual *40 Under 40 Awards* Program recognizing 40 individuals under the age of 40 who are proven performers in their respective industries and communities.



Brett Mandel accepts the PICPA Outstanding Achievement in Tax Reform Award From Local Tax Committee Chair Bob Hornick (left) and Greater Philadelphia chapter President Jim Newhard (right)



In May, the Greater Philadelphia Chapter of the PA Institute For Certified Public Accountants selected *Philadelphia Forward* Executive Director Brett Mandel as its first-ever recipient of the *Outstanding Achievement in Tax Reform Award* for demonstrating "a commitment to advancing local tax policies that are both simple and fair and that encourage economic growth and efficiency."

Philadelphia Forward is winning national awards and local attention, and — much more important — making change. We *ARE* providing positive direction to move Philadelphia forward.