



TRANSPARENT TIMES

A Publication of the Pennsylvania House
State Government Committee
Representative Daryl D. Metcalfe, Chairman

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LEADING BY EXAMPLE:

Reducing the Size of the State House

As one of its first orders of business for the New Year, the House State Government Committee approved House Bill 153 on January 24. House Bill 153, sponsored by Speaker of the House Sam Smith, would amend the Pennsylvania Constitution to reduce the number of legislators in the House of Representatives from 203 members to 153 members.

Historically, the argument for a sizeable legislature is rooted in the belief that smaller legislative districts and more legislators allow the public to have a closer relationship with their elected representatives. While this was a valid argument in the previous century, the invention of modern communication technology including the internet, e-mail, cell phones and social media has allowed concerned constituents to have almost immediate access to their representatives. We are living in an age where technology has made it possible for individuals living all across the Commonwealth to be in constant communication with each other, which was not a reality when Pennsylvania's Constitution increased the size of the General Assembly in 1967.

Addressing concerns raised at the hearing re-

garding the impact on constituent services, Representative Jerry Knowles commented, "I spoke with my colleagues who represent areas that have had an increase in population since the last census and they have indicated the increase has no effect on constituent service." Representative Tim Krieger added, "Our constituents realize reform is essential and the reporting of this bill is the beginning of the discussion." Representative Seth Grove commented that House Bill 153 "is historic and sends a message that we are serious about right-sizing government."

After the vote, Chairman Metcalfe concluded the meeting by commenting that the House of Representatives is serving as a role model for the Executive and Judicial branches of government to also live within their means. "We are leading by example," Chairman Metcalfe said. "The taxpayers deserve that."

House Bill 153 is now awaiting consideration by the full House of Representatives. This legislation must pass the General Assembly during two consecutive sessions and then approved by the voters through voter referendum.

Looking Ahead

The State Government Committee will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, February 15, to discuss legislation aimed at reforming state spending by improving government efficiency and reducing cost.

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