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Your Exclusive Political News Source

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From the Editor’s Desk

It’s a New Year and change is in the air in Harrisburg as Governor Rendell and Team Philly storm into town. It’s as good a time as any to figure out where the new power elite mixes in with the old.

To make it easy, in this issue of The PA Report we’re ranking the 75 most powerful politicians in Pennsylvania, from top to bottom, along with our take on why each belongs in what slot.

Care to vent and disagree over our choices? That’s fine. Let us know what you think about our list and tell us why your favorite politician deserves a better fate in our “Power 75” poll.

*Brian O’Connell
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Political Beat

Some news and notes on the **Harrisburg** political scene as we wonder if **Pennsylvania** recently has a new “Axis of Access” in the formidable trio of **Ed Rendell**, **Rick Santorum**, and **Tom Ridge**.

... Total cost of **Governor Rendell’s** inauguration festivities: \$3 million

Cost of “elite” inauguration donors: \$50,000 each

Access to the governor’s office? Priceless.

Cynical, you say? Maybe so. But don’t tell that to the elite class of inauguration donors like **Comcast**, **Unisys** and **Verizon**. State laws forbid corporations from contributing to a politician’s political campaign. But when it comes to whipping out the old checkbook for an inauguration party, the more corporate donations the merrier.

Some companies managed to make their financial presence known in both the gubernatorial campaign and in the inauguration. **Comcast**, for example, sent \$184,000 to the Rendell campaign through employee contributions. Then

the company itself chipped in \$50,000 for the party in Harrisburg last week. Same with Pittsburgh-based **Buchanan Ingersoll**, one of the largest law firms in the state and one that's keenly interested in increased talk of a new law in Pennsylvania capping medical malpractice jury awards. BI employees dug deep and forked over \$81,000 for the Rendell campaign. Sure enough, the firm followed up with a hefty check for \$50,000 for the inauguration. It's bad enough that BI has earned \$325,000 in law work with the state since 1999. It's bad enough that the firm also gets a nice slice of the tobacco settlement pie. But if they get their way and Rendell and statehouse leaders decide not to push for a cap on medical lawsuits, well, then the terrorists have really won.

One other note on the inauguration price tag. The \$3 million Rendell spent for his Harrisburg coming out party doubles what **Tom Ridge** spent in 1999 (\$1.5 million). Pennsylvania taxpayers can only hope that's not a sign of things to come.

... But don't hold your breath. With half of Harrisburg still nursing hangovers from the inaugural bash, **Governor Rendell** was busy dropping hints the size of anvils to the **Pennsylvania Newspaper Association** later that week that a tax increase may be unavoidable.

The Governor pointed out that, since arriving in Harrisburg, his team had found even more financial holes in the budget that he was "unaware" of, in the form of a bill for two new state prisons and a contribution to the state pension funds for the first time in years. Sounds like the governor is laying the groundwork for a tax increase. We'll find out for sure by his budget address in March.

... Maybe the governor can alleviate the state prison dilemma by housing inmates at Philadelphia's brand new **Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts**. His other options appear limited as the state prison inmate population, which exceeded 40,000 for the first time ever, may have to look for other places to serve out their sentences other than the new prisons that were just built in **Forest** and **Fayette** counties. The opening of the **Fayette** prison was delayed after the **Department of Corrections** was told to slash \$15 million from its budget.

... The **House of Representatives** has wasted no time in swinging back into action after a long winter's solstice. **Rep. Camile "Bud" George**, Democratic

chairman of the **House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee**, saw his bill asking for an increase in funds to help poor families citizens with their heating bills pass unanimously. The money is expected to come from the federal government's LIHEAP heating and energy assistance program. The **U.S. House of Representatives** recently boosted LIHEAP by \$2 billion. The **U.S. Senate** is expected to okay the measure.

... **State Rep. Harry Readshaw, D-Allegheny** also made a splash last week, introducing legislation in the **House** that would require that absentee voter names and addresses only be available by written request, rather than posted at polling places or other prominent public locations. Readshaw touts the bill as a crime prevention measure, calling the public posting of names and addresses of absentee voters "an invaluable service to burglars," who get "an alphabetized list of residences where nobody is home."

... Property taxes got you down – because they might be going up? Not if state **Rep. Larry Roberts, D-Fayette**, can help it. Roberts says he will reintroduce legislation this session to eliminate the property tax. He also wants to phase in new assessment rates, allow hardship exemptions and permit quarterly installments. With the state facing a potential \$2 billion shortfall, Roberts has his work cut out for him. "I've been fighting a long time to eliminate the property tax, and I'm not about to give up any time soon," Roberts said. "And I realize I face an uphill battle to eliminate the property tax, so I will look for ways to at least reduce the tax burden."

... It's Christmas in January for state house politicians, with **Bill DeWeese** looking rather jolly passing out committee appointments with the speed of **Winona Rider** stuffing her purse at a jewelry store blackout. In at **House Appropriations** is **Rep. Tony Melio**, who will also serve on the House Insurance, Intergovernmental Affairs and Transportation committees. **State Rep. Dante Santoni Jr., D-Berks**, was appointed to four House committees this week by **House Minority Leader H. DeWeese**; Transportation, Liquor Control, Tourism and **Recreational Development, and Labor Relations**. **State Rep. Jim Wansacz, D-Lackawanna**, has been tapped for the **House Commerce and Economic Development** and **Professional Licensure** committees, and named Democratic chairman of the **Subcommittee on Parks and Forests** within the **Environmental Resources and Energy Committee**.

. . . And, one day after lobbying **Governor Rendell** to find more places for minorities in his administration, **state Rep. LeAnna Washington, D-Phila.** was appointed by DeWeese to the prestigious House Appropriations Committee. She's apparently up to the task, comparing the plum post to "being ringside for the big fight. Not only do you see and even hear every punch and counterpunch, but you can help influence the outcome by rooting for your favorites."

. . . **Rendell** is just about set with all his cabinet posts, tapping **William Schenck** to become **Secretary of Banking**. **Schenck** is a former chairman and CEO of **Fleet Mortgage**.

. . . **State Auditor General Bob Casey Jr.** is taking on the power state **Public Employee Retirement System**, asking a Pennsylvania court last to force leaders of the state's two largest public employee pension systems to cooperate with his office's attempts to audit their operations. Not happy is state **Treasurer Barbara Hafer**, the chairman of the PSERS board.

She told reporters that **Casey** is trying to exploit the pension fund's losses for political gain. "Welcome to the '04 treasurer's race," **Hafer** said. Under term limit restrictions, both pols can't run for their respective offices in 2004.

. . . Paging **U.S. Representative Tim Holden**, the **Republican Party** is gunning for you. Holden only has two short years to build some name recognition in Lebanon County, where he mustered enough votes to help him unseat former **Rep. George Gekas** in a brutal election battle. Word from **Washington** is that the Republican Party is already beating the bushes looking for a solid candidate to take on **Holden** in '04 in **Pennsylvania's 17th district**. Rumors abound that one such candidate has already polled the district and that another candidate has enlisted **John Brabender**, one of the nation's top congressional political and media consultants. The **Washington Times** reports that discussions have taken place between state GOP chairman **Alan Novak**, national committeeman **Bob Asher**, and **U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum**, among others.

The PA Report "Power 75" List

Who ranks where in Harrisburg? Here's our list of the most powerful players in Pennsylvania politics. You don't agree with some of the rankings? That's fine. Just let us know where your favorite politician belongs on our list:

1. **Ed Rendell – Governor of Pennsylvania**

Armed with an impressive mandate and unparalleled charisma and work ethic, Pennsylvania government will indeed be unlike previous eras. Success – including a possible bid on a Democratic ticket in 2006 – or failure - by being unable to produce results from a Republican dominated legislature which still views Philadelphians warily – will not only determine his fate, but that of all Pennsylvanians. Enormously popular with Democrats around the country from his days as Democrat National Chairman, he is an unequalled fundraiser.

2. **John Perzel – House Majority Leader**

With the possible exception of the late Jim Manderino, Pennsylvania has not had, in recent years, a legislative leader with the power of this Philadelphian. From school reform to the Philadelphia Parking Authority to the Philadelphia Convention Center, the reach and strength of this titan are unsurpassed. His

relationship with fellow Philadelphian Ed Rendell will be the most watched dance in Harrisburg.

Next Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

3. **Rick Santorum – United States Senator**

One of the pioneers of the confrontational, partisan "in your face" style of politics and government, this young leader of Pennsylvania and American conservatives will continue to play an important national role as Chairman of the majority Republican Senate caucus, as well as a force in Western Pennsylvania politics. Small speed bump in being rejected in favor of Tennessee's Bill Frist does not diminish possibility of being one of two Pennsylvanians with national possibility.

4. **Arlen Specter – United States Senator**

One of a vanishing breed of Republican moderates, this wily veteran of four terms in the United States Senate has seen his "Pennsylvania first" middle-of-the-road politics pay rich political dividends. An avid Republican partisan, he has always enjoyed substantial support from normally liberal Democrat associations. Always more at risk in a Republican

primary by majority conservative voters than in a General Election, Specter is warily watching young Congressman Toomey in 2004, though the possibility of this challenge seems to be diminishing.

5. Chip Brightbill – Senate Majority Leader

Entering his sixth term in the Pennsylvania Senate, Brightbill has impressed friends and enemies alike with his ability to understand complex issues, and for his unsurpassed work ethic. This “country lawyer” is a quick study and his leadership of 29 will be a key factor in shaping government policy with Philadelphians Ed Rendell and John Perzel in the coming months.

6. Bob Jubelirer – Senate President Pro Tempore

Having served longer than anyone in Pennsylvania history in this key post, Jubelirer’s interest and ability to acclimate new members in the politics and policy of the Upper Chamber, as well as the love of the institution, has made him one of the most respected leaders in his time. Despite no longer being Lieutenant Governor, observers will watch his relationship with Lieutenant Governor Knoll as to who presides when, particularly when the inevitability of an extremely close vote occurs, with the Lieutenant Governor as “tie-breaker”.

7. David Cohen – Rendell Confidante

No one – in or out of government – is closer to Ed Rendell than Cohen. No major policy decision, personnel, political or other decision will be made without his imprimatur or veto. Combines the political and governmental roles of Ridge’s Mark Holman and David Girard-DiCarlo.

8. Leslie Miller – Rendell General Counsel

The first official appointment of Rendell was his General Counsel, whose role will be far broader than the title. A respected medical malpractice defense attorney, Miller was the Pennsylvania Bar Association’s first female president. A moderate Democrat, she fits the mold of the new administration.

9. Ralph Cappy – Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

This respected Allegheny County Democrat will lead the Commonwealth’s highest court as it decides important civil and criminal disputes.

10. John Estey – Rendell Chief of Staff

Valued highly by Rendell and others, Estey’s principle function is sounding board and chief gatekeeper.

11. John Murtha – Pennsylvania Congressman

Pennsylvania’s most powerful congressman, who will have a bigger role with a Democrat governor and Republican Washington. A master of crossing the aisle and bringing pork into his district.

12. Bob Casey – Pennsylvania Auditor General

A shoe-in for State Treasurer in 2004, his class in supporting winner Ed Rendell impressed friends and foes alike. If he’s tapped for Lieutenant Governor in 2006, he may gain entry to the Governor’s mansion if Rendell goes higher. Pennsylvania has not heard the last from him.

13. Bob Brady – Pennsylvania Congressman, Philadelphia Democrat Chairman

No one has managed wearing two important hats more so than this Philadelphia powerhouse. He has managed effectively to balance his multiracial district and city Democrat party. Will be key Washington player with Rendell as Governor.

14. Brian Roberts – Comcast Cable CEO

Pennsylvania’s most powerful businessman gained additional influence and stature when he corralled Rendell guru David Cohen to help him do business.

15. John Street – Mayor of Philadelphia

It wouldn’t be pretty and it wouldn’t be by a landslide, but everyone would be surprised if he is defeated for reelection in November. Governor Rendell’s squeezing business not to support Republican nominee, Sam Katz, will help, as will racial blunders ala’ Trent Lott and University of Michigan admission policies.

16. Bob Asher – Republican Powerhouse

Still Pennsylvania’s biggest Republican powerhouse and fundraiser, he cuts a big swath and a big bankroll behind his favorite candidates.

17. Catherine Baker Knoll – Lieutenant Governor

Sure, she puts you to sleep when she speaks and is a throwback to the old glory days of the Pennsylvania Democrat Party, but she will play a key role on controversial bills as presiding officer of the Senate. Ended up being a “non-issue” in last year’s race, she’s only one Spot Dog away from being Pennsylvania’s first female governor.

18. Jeff Piccola – Senate Republican Whip

Leader of the impatient hard right wing of the Pennsylvania Republican Senate, he will be heard on

issues such as civil justice, education, and labor issues. Briefly a candidate for governor last year, his eyes remain on the prize, which is still likely beyond his grip in 2006.

19. David Sweet – Harrisburg Lawyer, Rendell Advisor

No Central Pennsylvanian rose as much as this well-regarded former legislator and candidate for State Treasurer. Credited with much of Rendell's western Pennsylvania success, he opted to stay at his law firm rather than becoming Rendell's Chief of Staff.

20. Steve MacNett – Senate Republican General Counsel

Pennsylvania's most influential legislative staffer for the past 20 years, the "51st Senator" is the man to see on what bills will be running, when and the amendatory process. At no time is this titan more important than the "Lame Duck session" as lobbyists and legislators of all stripes wait for his advice and insight.

21. Mark Singel – Harrisburg Lobbyist, Rendell Confidante

Former Lieutenant Governor and Acting Governor, Singel was the face of Ed Rendell in countless debates across the state. Additionally, he had a big hand in filling positions with the new administration. A possible future candidate for the Senate or other statewide office.

22. Tom Ridge – Director of Homeland Security, Former Governor

While he is no longer in office and his hopes of being on a national ticket dashed by ultra-right-wingers in his party, his is still the Pennsylvania face more Americans see than any other. While no longer likely to be a candidate for public office, his sterling reputation will make him a power player if and when he heads back to Pennsylvania.

23. Brian Preski – Chief of Staff, House Majority Leader

As Majority Leader John Perzel's top assistant, Preski works the floor as Whip, makes decisions on legislation, amendments and coaxing pliable Democrats to help support Perzel's program. Given enormous authority and respect by House Republicans. The must-see staffer in the House on all-important matters.

24/25. Bob Mellow – Senate Democrat Leader

With a new sheriff in town, Senate Democrat Leader Bob Mellow's fortunes and input into enacting policy should increase significantly, just as it was when the late Governor Bob Casey was in office. Mellow has been able to deliver a virtually unanimous caucus on controversial votes, and is looking forward to having his phone calls returned from the Front Office.

24/25. Vince Fumo – Senate Democrat Appropriations Chairman

It is difficult to catalog and characterize all of his tie-ins and tentacles at all levels of government, but having him on your side in a pitched battle rattles opponents. Having recent setbacks on Casey/Rendell and Street/Weinberg, he has licked his wounds and is on the way back.

26. Bill DeWeese – House Democrat Leader

With the prospect of being Minority Leader forever staring him in the face, DeWeese, nonetheless, can take comfort in the new, more influential role he will play with Democrat Governor Rendell. After all, he will be expected to put up 80 or so votes on controversial bills, and will benefit from this relationship.

27/28. Dave Argall – House Republican Appropriations Chairman

With the state staring down an anticipated \$2 billion dollar hole, wise lobbyists, elected officials and other will be paying him a lot of visits.

27/28 Bob Thompson – Senate Republican Appropriations Chairman

See Argall above.

29. Tom Murphy – Mayor of Pittsburgh

With huge financial problems and few friends in the legislature, his task is daunting. But he is Mayor of the second biggest city in the Commonwealth.

30. Allen Kukovich – Democrat Senator, Democrat Party Chairman

Well-regarded liberal senator from the Pittsburgh-area, Kukovich has a big IOU to collect from Rendell for assuming the party chairmanship, a position he'll hold until Rendell finds a suitable replacement. Big future ahead.

31, 32, 33 Alan Kessler , Ken Jarin, Herb Vederman
Leading Rendell fundraisers and confidantes from Philadelphia.

34. Jim Greenwood – Pennsylvania Congressman
Attractive Pennsylvania Congressman with such high-profile publicity on civil justice and securities fraud. Likely Republican candidate for United States Senate in 2010.

35. Chaka Fattah – Pennsylvania Congressman
A leader in the energized Black caucus and early supporter of Rendell, this telegenic and articulate leader has an unlimited future.

36. Bill George – President – AFL-CIO
The name most people still associate with organized labor. With Democrat Governor and the state's best "get out the vote" operative in Rick Bloomingdale, still a major force in state politics.

37, 38, 39. Bill Caroselli, Jerry McHugh, Jim Mundy – Trial Lawyer Leaders
Caroselli was an early and influential supporter of Rendell, and has long been a big Democrat contributor and player in Pittsburgh. McHugh has been a leader in medical malpractice and civic issues in Philadelphia. Mundy, a past PBA and PATLA President, is still the name most associated with the Pennsylvania Trial Lawyers and victim and legal issues.

40. Floyd Warner – President, Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry
Titular head of Pennsylvania business faces tough year ahead on taxes and regulations.

41. Mike Long – Senate Republican Caucus Administrator
Pennsylvania's best "in-house" political operative by a mile. Has incredible batting average.

42. Steve Reed – Mayor of Harrisburg
Pennsylvania's most popular and successful mayor. Had extremely good year with Rendell and Tim Holden. Has rejected previous requests to seek higher office and can hold his present position as long as he wants.

43. Mark Schweiker – President, Philadelphia Chamber of Business and Industry
"9 for 9" used this drama to increase desirability and salary in taking this private sector job. Still packs

wallop despite not having perks and power as Pennsylvania Executive.

44. Nick DeBenedictis – Corporate Leader and Spokesman
As head of the Business Roundtable, this personable CEO of Suburban Water brought discipline and order to political affairs of the business community.

45. Mike Veon – House Democratic Whip
Will have considerable impact on rounding up the votes to move Governor Rendell's agenda.

46/47 Phil English – Pennsylvania Congressman
As senior member of the House Ways and Means Committee, has impact on tax and spending items. His large campaign bank account makes him important Pennsylvania player.

46/47 Melissa Hart – Pennsylvania Congresswoman
Dynamic conservative, well liked by leadership in Washington. Ready to climb ladder either in House leadership or statewide in Pennsylvania.

48. Mike Fisher – Attorney General of Pennsylvania
It won't be the same in two years when Mike Fisher is no longer holding an important office. He ran a good race for governor and will be in great demand by big Pittsburgh law firms.

49. Barbara Hafer – State Treasurer of Pennsylvania
People are wondering where she'll turn up next. She has never marched to a regular drummer, but that is part of her long-running appeal. Psychologically helped break nemesis Mike Fisher's back with her endorsement of Rendell. May face rough appropriations hearing in both chambers, particularly the Senate.

50/51 Jim Roddey – Incumbent Republican Allegheny County Executive
Has a big plus (war chest) and a big negative (county assessment). His early polling wasn't good, but he stands a 50-50 percent chance of winning in the fall. Kent Gates is back in Pittsburgh.

50/51 Dan Onorato- Democrat Candidate for Allegheny County Executive
A rejuvenated Democrat Party after the 2002 gubernatorial election, Onorato will need big financial and political help from Governor Rendell to win this one. If he gets it, he is the favorite.

52. Johnny Dougherty- Philadelphia Labor Leader

Key labor leader in Philadelphia whose endorsement and support are always sought after. Picked the "Daily Double" last year with Rendell and Perzel. Interested in being Philly Mayor in future.

53-58. Steve Wodjak, Stan Rapp, Roy Wells, Rocco Pugliese, Dan Beren, Sam Marshall- Lobbyists

On any given issue, you will see representatives of five big lobbying firms locking horns on Capitol Hill. Each has "special friends" who are key players. With Democrat Rendell in office, Democrat-oriented Wodjak and Wells should do well in office, but Rapp's Senate connections and Pugliese's lock with House Republican Leader Perzel, make the dance interesting. With Republican dominance in the Legislature, Marshall is at the top of his game.

59. Patsy Tallarico- President, PSEA

Tallarico and PSEA bet and campaigned heavily for Bob Casey in the primary, and then threw their considerable financial and grassroots resources behind Rendell. The success-or failure- of their efforts to block referendums by local taxpayers will determine their fate in the current Session.

**60/61. Donna Malpezzi- Counsel, Senator Brightbill
Drew Crompton- Counsel, Senator Jubelirer**

Good legislative folks know it's not what the bill title is, but the actual wording is whether you've won or lost. Malpezzi and Crompton are the best on the Hill.

62. Alan Novak- Republican State Chairman

Friend and foe alike believe Novak has been an outstanding Chairman, particularly in statewide judicial elections. Task will be more difficult with Rendell and his money on the other side.

63. Jane Earll- Republican State Senator

Earll distinguished herself as an outstanding candidate for Lieutenant Governor in 2002. Well-liked and respected on both sides of the aisle, this independent-minded Republican's future is unlimited.

64. Michael Smerconish- Radio Personality

Already Pennsylvania's leading voice, he's just getting started. On a fast track to a regular national audience.

65. Fred Anton- PMA Head, Conservative Leader

PMA's contributions fund a network of conservative groups. Anton remains an important financial

player for GOP.

66. Jack Wagner- Democrat State Senator

The popular and moderate Democrat is likely to be leading candidate for Auditor General in 2004. Ran good but underfunded race for Lieutenant Governor in 2002.

67. Sam Katz- Philadelphia Financier

Katz will be Republican candidate for Mayor again in 2003. Having lost for Governor in 1994 and Mayor in 1999, this may be his last elective hurrah.

68. Jim Eisenhower- Philadelphia Attorney

Democrat candidate for Attorney General in 2000, and likely to be candidate in 2004, Eisenhower is close to Rendell, and will get appointment soon to prove he is "tough on crime."

69. Fred DiBona- Leader, Independence Blue Cross

Quietly behind the scene, DiBona's views are heard and usually listened to.

70. Sam Smith- House Republican Whip

This conservative from Jefferson County likely to become House Majority Leader in future.

71. Ed Keller- AFSCME Leader

Keller had a bad year in 2002 with Fisher, and faces an uncertain contract negotiation with a sizeable budget shortfall.

72. Curt Weldon- U.S. Congressman

Still a possible candidate for Senate in future. A key player on security issues in U.S. House.

73. Tim Holden- U.S. Congressman

Held on to a Republican-drawn seat, Holden was the only Democrat to beat Republican in two incumbent elections in U.S.

74. Christine Toretti- Republican National Committeewoman

Huge Republican contributor in Indiana County. Named National Committeewoman by Ridge and Holman.

75. Roy Zimmerman- Former Attorney General

Still Central Pennsylvania's best Republican rainmaker.

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