

APSCUF UPDATE

News and Notes from State Headquarters

Joint Conference Committee Formed to Discuss State Budget

This week a joint conference committee has been formed to tackle the budget impasse. The conference committee consists of six members—three from each chamber equally representing both political parties.

Representing the Senate side is Majority Leader Dominic Pileggi, Senator Jay Costa, Democratic Appropriations Chairman, and Senator Jake Corman, Republican Appropriations Chairman.

Representing the House chamber is Representative Dwight Evans, Democratic Appropriations Chairman, Majority Leader Todd Eachus and Minority Leader Sam Smith.

The conference committee first convened for several hours on July 29, 2009 and will continue their discussions in both open and private meetings in attempt to compromise on the differences between the two chambers and parties.

Their goal is to generate a final “Conference Report” which would then be subject to a vote in the House and Senate without opportunity for amendments.

At the same time the joint conference committee met, Governor



Rendell had his own press conference, indicating he would be prepared as early as next week to sign a “bridge” budget to allow state employees to get paid and basic government operations to continue.

This proposed budget would cover core operations, such as prison guards and state troopers, but would leave out billions of dollars in assistance to schools, universities, hospitals and other line items.

The purpose of this bare-bones budget would be to get state employees paid, who recently had thousands rallying last Tuesday at the state Capitol. If the proposed budget is passed, only about 75 to

100 line items may be available out of the more than 700.

Overall, there has been no compromise among three potential budget plans -- a \$27.1 billion plan approved by the Senate in May, a \$29.1 billion alternative plan approved by House Democrats, which excludes funding for PHEAA, the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education and Thaddeus Stevens, and the Governor’s own budget plan, which started at nearly \$29 billion in February but which has been trimmed to \$28.2 billion. **(Note: This article was provided by the APSCUF Governmental Relations Department.)**