



SANTA'S NAUGHTY AND NICE LIST

Thursday, December 13, 2007

Dear Boys and Girls,

*'Twas the day after recess and all through the House and Senate
The Capitol was quiet – there's no Legislature in it!*

Really really really sincere apologies to Clement C. Moore

Yesterday was "Mr. Toad's Wild Ride" as the Pennsylvania General Assembly rushed to recess ahead of a winter storm. And as with any rush job, there were a ton of mistakes made along the way. But there also were some gains.

In the House on Wednesday, the **good boys and girls** in the Environmental Resources and Energy Committee passed the smart meter bill (Special Session HB 38), sponsored by Representatives **Robert Freeman** (D-Northampton) and **Chris Ross** (R-Chester). The bill will now move to the Appropriations Committee, where Santa expects quick action. The nice girls and boys who voted for it are now on Santa's permanent list – they are going to have a very green New Year. They are: **Camille "Bud" George** (D-Clearfield), Chair of the Committee; **H. Scott Conklin** (D-Centre); **Michael Gerber** (D-Montgomery); **James Wansacz** (D-Lackawanna, Luzerne, Susquehanna, Wyoming); **John T. Yudichak** (D-Luzerne); **Lisa Bennington** (D-Allegheny); **Mike Carroll** (D-Luzerne, Monroe); **Robert Freeman** (D-Northampton); **John Hornaman** (D-Erie); **Daylin Leach** (D-Montgomery); **David K. Levdansky** (D-Allegheny, Washington); **Jennifer Mann** (D-Lehigh); **Michael P. McGeehan** (D-Philadelphia); **Tim Seip** (D-Berks, Schuylkill); **Greg Vitali** (D-Delaware); **Kate Harper** (R-Montgomery); **Jay R. Moyer** (R-Montgomery); **Chris Ross** (R-Chester); and **Carole A.**



Rubley (R-Chester, Montgomery). One nice boy, **Eugene DePasquale** (D-York) would have voted for it, but he was at his grandmother's funeral. Santa sends his sympathies and support to the entire family, especially to Eugene's grandfather, former president of Pittsburgh City Council, Eugene P. "Jeep" DePasquale.

On Tuesday, the committee also passed Rep. DePasquale's Special Session HB 1, which creates the \$850 million in program authority for the Energy Independence Fund. That bill has also been sent to Appropriations. And **the very same nice boys and girls, plus Rep. DePasquale**, voted yes.

But the best Santa can come up with for the Senate action on Wednesday is – well, at least something passed. Special Session SB1, the energy program funding bill, was amended and passed by the Senate. There is too little money invested in solar and wind power, and it rolls out way too slowly. Other states, including Vermont, California, New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, already have larger and more robust renewable energy programs. The House must improve this bill to move the funding into the marketplace faster, and to provide more dedicated funding to solar and wind power. Otherwise, the jobs and investments will go elsewhere.

And then there's the provision to pay the incredibly profitable coal-fired power plants \$25 million to meet their required pollution standards. Whatever happened to corporate responsibility? They caused the problem and they already have plenty of money to fix it.



Then there's biofuels. The House had long passed HB 1202, sponsored by **nice boy Representative Mike Gerber** (D-Montgomery), but the Senate Environmental Resources & Energy Committee bottled it up, which made the American Petroleum Institute very, very happy. Instead, the Senate passed Special Session SB 36, which raises the bar really high before the biodiesel mandate kicks in, kills any inclusion of ethanol in that mandate, and gives oil giant Conoco-Phillips the ability to peddle their faux biodiesel in Pennsylvania to meet the mandate.

Ethanol is a key transitional fuel to wean us off gasoline, a lousy fuel. Gasoline takes more energy to produce a gallon of it than the gallon provides. Corn ethanol is not perfect but burns cleaner than gasoline. Also, no wars have been waged to control ethanol. It is produced domestically. And cellulosic ethanol – a burgeoning technology that avoids using food stocks, but instead uses plant waste and plants like switchgrass – would be one of the key benefits of a strong ethanol mandate. Is Santa the only one who remembers that the original purpose of the legislation was to grow Pennsylvania's economy – particularly agriculture, – and to free us from the rapacious oil market, especially imports. Santa really hopes the House puts this bill out of its misery early next year, and insists on Rep. Gerber's smart bill.

Santa was happy that the Senate passed SB 22, which creates a 75 cent per gallon production credit for three years for in-state biodiesel producers. That's a great way to help Pennsylvania's renewable energy market grow.

Santa is very disappointed that he didn't get his wish for an Energy Independent New Year, but he knows the legislature will return in January rested and ready to tackle the hard work of building Pennsylvania's energy future. Families and businesses across the Commonwealth are already struggling with high energy bills and they lack the tools and technology to protect themselves. Pennsylvania cannot afford to wait to start up these programs. Every year that we don't have this funding, our state loses at least \$1 billion in private investment.

So here's Santa's final message to both chambers – when you come back in 2008, get moving to put a robust renewable energy plan on Governor Rendell's desk by February. And as I ride out of sight, Happy Green New Year to all and to all a good night.

Love, Santa (R&D-North Pole)