

## HUNGER SEMINAR

### **HUNGER at HOME: HOW DO WE STRENGTHEN the FOOD SAFETY NET?**

by Bruce Barron

**R**eports of growing demand for food assistance and severely depleted inventory at the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank brought a strong sense of urgency to the Institute of Politics forum "Hunger at Home: How Do We Strengthen the Food Safety Net?"

#### **AN OVERVIEW OF HUNGER: NATIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVES**

The forum used as its starting point a study released two weeks earlier by America's Second Harvest, the nation's largest hunger relief organization. DOUGLAS O'BRIEN of America's Second Harvest described the study, which included interviews of 32,700 recipients of assistance at 104 food banks, plus survey responses from 20,000 agencies. The study showed that 23.3 million Americans relied on emergency food assistance at some point in 2001. This was a nine percent increase over 1997 even though the nation's population increased by only three percent during that time, and despite several years of economic expansion.

The study dispelled one common myth about hunger by finding that half of the people served by food pantries live in suburban or rural areas. Nearly 40 percent are children.

O'Brien argued that although hunger in America has risen and will likely continue to rise, it is a solvable problem. He contended that federal policies should provide more benefits for working families since the working poor often experience the greatest food insecurity because they are eligible for less food assistance than those in direst poverty. O'Brien also suggested the creation of tax incentives for food donations.

BARRY SHUTT of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture described the state's efforts to supplement federal food programs. Pennsylvania's food purchase program is the nation's largest. It gives nearly \$7 million a year to counties so that they can buy food and distribute it to their needy residents. Another program helps both the hungry and Pennsylvania agriculture by enabling families on Women, Infants, and Children Assistance (WIC) and senior citizens

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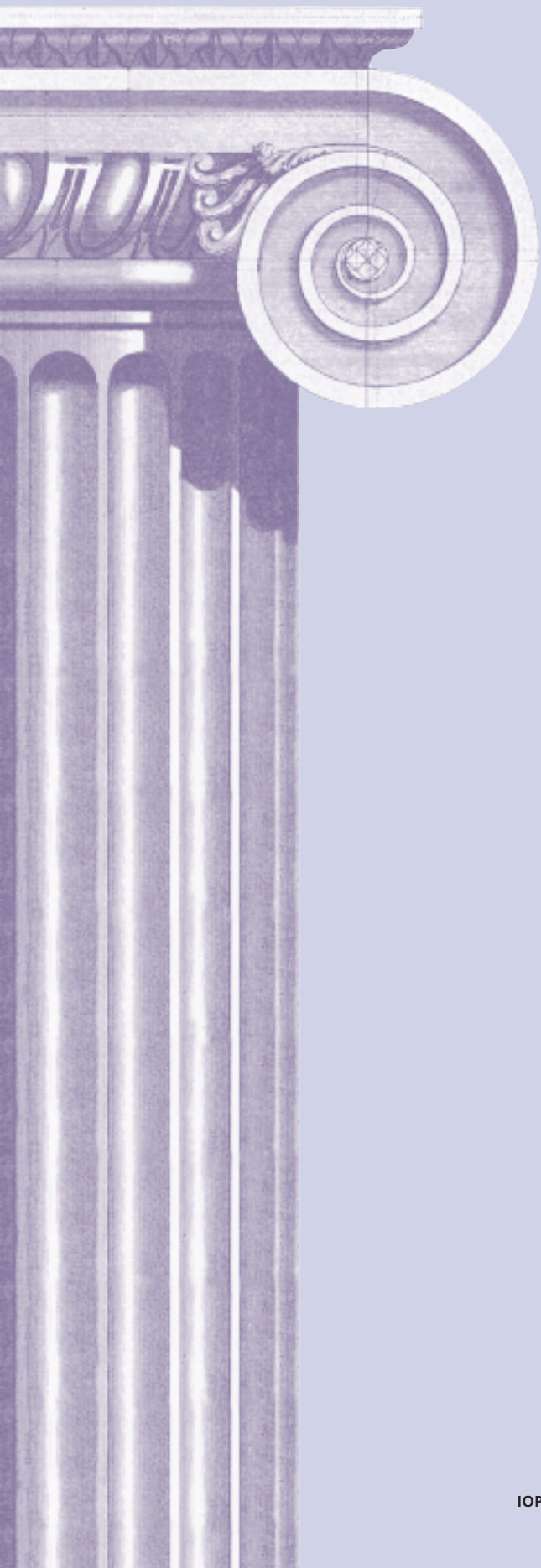
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## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

by Dennis McManus

One and a half years ago, concurrent with my appointment as Director of the Institute of Politics, came the opportunity to serve as a member of the K. Leroy Irvis Advisory Committee. Comprising university and community representatives, this group was charged with oversight of the planning, design, and development of the K. Leroy Irvis Reading Room and Archives at the Hillman Library. A part of our task that I took to with great anticipation and enthusiasm was the work of the programming subcommittee. Our job was to create appropriate activities to mark the formal dedication of this very special facility scheduled for September 14, 2001. An array of distinguished speakers and presenters were identified to participate in several events designed to place Irvis' career in historical context and highlight his contributions as a public servant, statesman, and leader. These participants had agreed to fly in from Harrisburg, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington to honor the retired Speaker and to share their insights on his life and times. For reasons we all know and will never forget, when the end of the second week of September arrived, few Americans were flying anywhere for any reason. As a consequence, the best-laid plans for the dedication and associated programming had to be shelved. Eventually, on December 6, the dedication of the room did occur together with a very moving program.

This issue of the *Institute of Politics REPORT* includes a summary of the formal dedication event. It also reports on a number of recent programs and activities of the Institute that deal with issues that were of interest and concern to Irvis throughout his legislative career: including improving education, enhancing access to health care, addressing hunger and promoting the development of a skilled and inclusive workforce. Although Speaker Irvis "retired" from the General Assembly prior to the formal establishment of the Institute of Politics, he has contributed to the success of the Institute in a variety of ways throughout our history as a participant, panelist (most recently in a discussion of the role of religion on American politics), facilitator, and resource person. But, as Mayor Tom Murphy pointed out at the dedication ceremony, Speaker Irvis is first and foremost a "teacher." Perhaps it is in this role that he has had his greatest impact. Twice each year, Irvis visits with our Institute Internship class, as he has since the inception of the

*continued on page 12*



*Beth Osborne Daponte  
Senior Research Scientist,  
the Heinz School  
Carnegie Mellon University*

with other individuals and familiar organizations rather than with the bureaucracy. Accordingly, Roddey urged food pantries always to make sure that clients have obtained all the government assistance for which they are eligible. Roddey also called for a greater emphasis on making the public aware of the extent of our nation's hunger problem.

#### **HUNGER AT HOME: REGIONAL STUDY RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**BETH OSBORNE DAPONTE** of Carnegie Mellon's Heinz School presented regional study results, which indicated that the food pantries of 12 southwestern Pennsylvania counties serve 105,000 people each week. Of those helped, more than 30 percent are elderly; 21 percent have a family member employed; nearly 30 percent (well above the national average) are divorced; and just 2 percent (compared to 10 percent nationally) are homeless.

Reinforcing Roddey's observation about many people's reluctance to turn to government, Daponte noted that only 35 percent of all food-pantry clients in Allegheny County were receiving food stamps and 34 percent had never applied for them. Of this latter group, most said they did not believe they were eligible for food stamps, but 24 percent said it was too inconvenient for them to apply.

Daponte presented three main policy recommendations:

- Decrease fragmentation of the food safety net by creating a single point of entry into all food-assistance programs.
- Improve the food-stamp program by increasing benefit levels, expanding eligibility

to buy fresh, Pennsylvania-grown produce. Shutt highlighted the importance of getting aid to the needy with minimal bureaucracy in this time of tight budgets.

Allegheny County Chief Executive **JAMES RODDEY** pointed out that, although the private system of food banks was designed to provide emergency food aid, people are turning there first rather than applying for government help. This is most likely because people feel more comfortable dealing

#### **IOP HUNGER SEMINAR**

*Co-sponsored by The William J. Copeland Fund, the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank and the Institute of Politics  
November 30, 2001*

#### **HUNGER AT HOME: HOW DO WE STRENGTHEN THE FOOD SAFETY NET?**

##### WELCOME and INTRODUCTION

**Kevin Kearns**, President, The William J. Copeland Fund

##### AN OVERVIEW OF HUNGER: NATIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

**Douglas O'Brien**, Director, Public Policy and Research, America's Second Harvest

**Barry Shutt**, Director, Food Distribution, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

**James Roddey**, Chief Executive, Allegheny County

##### HUNGER AT HOME: REGIONAL STUDY

##### RESULTS and RECOMMENDATIONS

**Beth Osborne Daponte**, Senior Research Scientist, The Heinz School, Carnegie Mellon University

##### RESPONSE and PERSPECTIVE PANEL

**Peter Daley II**, Member, Pennsylvania House of Representatives

**Cynthia Moore**, Director of Agency Relations, Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank

**Patricia Cairns**, Executive Director, Catholic Charities

**Ralph Bangs**, Research Associate, University Center for Social and Urban Research, University of Pittsburgh

##### DISCUSSION MODERATION

**Andy Sheehan**, Reporter, KDKA TV

##### STRENGTHENING THE FOOD SAFETY NET: INTO ACTION

**Berry Friesen**, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center

**Annette Green**, Senior Program Officer, The Pittsburgh Foundation

**Joyce Rothermel**, Executive Director, Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank

##### SUMMARY

**Larry Davis**, Dean, School of Social Work, University of Pittsburgh

##### CLOSING REMARKS

**Dennis McManus**, Director, Institute of Politics, University of Pittsburgh

requirements, permitting deduction of medical and child-care expenses from family income, and adjusting benefits to reflect the age and gender of family members.

- Strengthen management capacity at local food pantries through leadership training

and improved collaboration between the public and private sectors. (In southwestern Pennsylvania, 77 percent of food pantries have no paid staff.)

#### RESPONSE AND PERSPECTIVE PANEL

As the first of seven respondents, State Representative **PETER DALEY II** described the General Assembly's tendency to pay attention to the overall issues, but forget about the gaps in service and the needy persons slipping through those cracks. He claimed that there's a general trend in Harrisburg to focus on politically "hot" areas like stadium building or attracting corporate investment to an area rather than feeding the poor. Yet, the need of a government to feed their poor is as important an issue as any. Daley said America's Second Harvest study should strengthen the case of those advocating for more assistance to the hungry.

**CYNTHIA MOORE**, who oversees the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank's relations with local food pantries, stressed the often-fragile state of those agencies. They operate on minimal or nonexistent budgets relying heavily on elderly volunteers. Moore noted, that it's a challenge to provide training for the people running the programs if they themselves are often clients of the food pantries. She also noted that it's hard to imagine that an 86-year old woman running a food pantry will have the savvy to write a grant proposal necessary to secure funding.

**PAT CAIRNS** of Catholic Charities said that her agency, which provides food to about 20,000 people a year, has seen demand for food assistance approximately double in recent months. She added that many needy people find it extremely humiliating to ask for food. The need for food aid is often discovered only by questioning people when they seek help with rent or utility bills. Cairns declared the food problem in the United States to be scandalous, especially since there is the capacity to eliminate hunger.

University of Pittsburgh social researcher **RALPH BANGS** argued that outdated federal poverty guidelines underestimate the number of people at risk. Using more realistic measures, he said, would find that 200,000 adults in Allegheny County—adults who are responsible for an additional 110,000 children—are unable to consistently provide for their basic needs. In addition to calling for increased benefits and

broader eligibility guidelines, Bangs recommended cutting taxes on low-income workers and doing more outreach to needy people who are not receiving aid to which they are entitled.

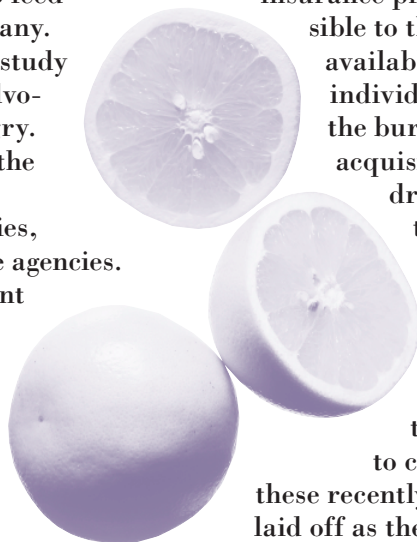
#### STRENGTHENING THE FOOD SAFETY NET: INTO ACTION

A discussion among the last three respondents—moderated by KDKA-TV reporter Andy Sheehan—focused on how hunger policy has suffered from its connection with welfare. Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center's **BERRY FRIESEN** cited that this association was a deterrent for legislators in Harrisburg. He pointed to the experience of home heating-aid and children's health insurance programs, both of which are readily accessible to those in need. In contrast, food stamps are available only at welfare departments, and many individuals have had unpleasant experiences in the bureaucratic offices. However, if food stamp acquisition were treated the same as the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), there could be a major change in usage.

**JOYCE ROTHERMEL**, executive director of the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, said that many who have moved from welfare-to-work have remained dependent on food pantries because they earn insufficient wages to cover living expenses. Moreover, she said, these recently hired persons will likely be the first ones laid off as the economy sputters. Rothermel suggested changing the term "food stamps" to "food security" as one way to give federal food assistance a more positive image.

**ANNETTE GREEN** of the Pittsburgh Foundation said advocates must explain to legislators how the working poor still struggle to provide for their families despite having jobs. While noting the inadequacy of current food stamp benefit levels, which generally feed a family for only two-to-three weeks out of each month, she said the number of eligible families not applying for assistance posed a particular problem to public policy and philanthropy. Green also lamented the perverse incentives that encourage people to lie about their work or family status in order to receive benefits.

The forum highlighted a variety of hunger-related policy issues but returned repeatedly to a handful of underlying themes: government's basic responsibility to ensure food security for all, the inadequacy of current benefit levels, and the need to remove the enduring stigma attached to federal food assistance.●



## IRVIS DEDICATION and RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY

### K. LEROY IRVIS ARCHIVES and READING ROOM: DEDICATION and RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY

Overview by Julia Indovina

The Hillman Library, at the University of Pittsburgh's Oakland campus, has a new reading room. Dedicated to the former Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives K. LEROY IRVIS, this room is a tribute to a man whose career and legacy has covered a spectrum of areas including teacher, orator, public servant, poet, sculptor, and artist. The room also houses the archives of the first African American to serve as the Speaker of a House of Representatives in the United States. Yet as a living memorial, visitors and students have the added opportunity to talk to the man whose life work is captured in the room as he sits at his desk among artifacts of his endeavors, like House Bills, hand-carved wooden sculptures, speeches, and a model airplane.

Originally scheduled for September 14, 2001, the dedication ceremony was postponed until December 6 due to the events of September 11. It is fitting that the quote that adorns the far wall of the room, attributed to Speaker Irvis nearly 22 years ago to the day of the opening ceremonies, ties together both recent national affairs and the Speaker's legacy: "...if this country ever falls, it will not fall because of external attacks; it will fall because we have been too stupid in the pursuit of our biases and prejudice to understand the need for unification." The dedication and ribbon cutting ceremony celebrated the legacy of a man whose life has been wholly devoted to encouraging this need for unification and communication both in politics and beyond.

RUSH MILLER, the director of the University Library System and Hillman Library Librarian, welcomed the audience to what he referred to as a "special day for the library," the unveiling of a room of such tasteful elegance that it "depicts the very life and soul of the man to whom it is dedicated." Mistress of Ceremonies ELSIE HILLMAN, who has worked with Speaker Irvis on both personal and political levels, felt the day was important in both the political and the ecumenical sense. Audience members included current and former members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and the Senate and former Pittsburgh Mayor Sophie Masloff.

### K. LEROY IRVIS ARCHIVES and READING ROOM: DEDICATION and RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY

December 6, 2001

University of Pittsburgh Chancellor MARK NORDENBERG noted that, while at Pitt Law School, Speaker Irvis was the first African American to earn election to the Law Review at the University. After graduation, Speaker Irvis went on to become a driving political force in Pennsylvania leading fights for equality in housing and schooling, battles for consumer protection, health and mental health issues, government control, and environmental protection. His connection with the University continued in 1966 when, as a state representative of the Oakland district, he led the action to sponsor House Bill 2, which eventually designated the University of Pittsburgh as a state-related university. He continued his series of breakthroughs by becoming the first African American Speaker of the House of Representatives in 1977; a post he held longer than any other person in the Commonwealth's history. Chancellor Nordenberg acknowledged that the University not only received a gift in the acquisition of the archives, but also in the fact that students will be able to access both the Speaker's papers and learn firsthand from the Speaker himself. He cited Irvis's wisdom as advice for students who use the reading room: "I will talk and I will listen and I will learn."

Speaking as a historian, BRENT GLASS, the executive director from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC), expressed gratitude to the University of Pittsburgh for housing the archives and thus preserving the history of a great leader. But he also acknowledged Speaker Irvis's own experiences with preserving history as an instrumental influence in the acquisition of the architect Louis Kahn's papers and architectural models housed in the Capital Museum. Also, it was through Speaker Irvis' urging that the PHMC established a Black History Advisory Committee, which celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Recently, the PHMC acknowledged Irvis for his work through the awarding of the first Pennsylvania Founder's Award, an honor given to an individual who embodies the values of William Penn through toleration, dedication, education, and a commitment to a democratic government.

Representative BRETT FEESE spoke on behalf of current Speaker of the House Matthew Ryan, who was unable to travel due to medical reasons. Speaker Ryan called Irvis a "statesman, scholar, orator and gentle-

man,” a man who both achieved an eminence of power and also retained a vision of hard work. He was not only the first Speaker of the House who was African American, but he was also the first Speaker of the House who was a painter and sculptor. Speaker Ryan cited the single defining quality of Speaker Irvis as “his unwillingness to look down on anyone,” a trait he both consistently expresses in himself and also actively encourages in others. Ryan quoted the ancient Greek poet Sophocles, “One must wait until the evening to see how splendid the day was.” At 84-years old, it is now an opportune time for others to look at all Speaker Irvis has accomplished and to celebrate his life.

Representative **JOE PRESTON** referred to Irvis as both a mentor and the “Mohammed Ali of Politics” for his inspiration and eloquence. As a member of the House of Representatives, Preston has had to deal with the business of people, which comes with inevitable philosophical differences. However, Representative Preston continues to look to Irvis as an inspiration for a sense of calmness and acceptance. His teachings of tolerance have allowed Preston to leave philosophical and political differences on the House Floor.

Representative **WILLIAM ROBINSON** quipped that he was the audience’s connection to the Speaker. His district is the Speaker’s old district and Robinson has the responsibility of following in his footsteps, or as he called it “walking in his shadow.” Like Representative Preston, Irvis has taught Representative Robinson lessons about the challenges he faces as a legislator. He offered that perhaps the Speaker Irvis’ creative endeavors might be of more importance than his groundbreaking status of the first African American Speaker of the House. His reasoning was that other African American Speakers have followed, but none have matched the individual attributes of Speaker Irvis. Representative Robinson also presented Speaker Irvis with a House Resolution that he said captured the essence of the Speaker, but he did not share it directly with the audience. Instead, he asked that Speaker read it privately and share it with others by displaying it somewhere in the reading room.

Speaking from his history as a legislator, Pittsburgh Mayor **TOM MURPHY** praised Speaker Irvis as being first and foremost in all his areas of endeavor, a teacher. As a new legislator with fresh ideas, Mayor Murphy learned directly from the Speaker that not only were his ideas valuable, but so were those of the representatives from small rural districts. This lesson of unification and toleration has risen many times since then for the mayor, and has always proven to be of fundamental importance.



*Speaker Irvis and his grandchildren cut the ribbon to the K. Leroy Irvis Reading Room in Hillman Library*

Rush Miller initiated the ribbon cutting ceremony and introduced K. Leroy Irvis to speak. Miller honored Irvis as a wage earner, World War II Veteran, teacher, family man, poet, artist, orator and civil servant, and as a man “able to disagree without disrespecting and a believer in the American Dream of the love of liberty.”

A member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives from 1959 to 1988 and the 130th Speaker of the House of Representatives from 1977 to 1978, and again from 1983 to 1988, **K. LEROY IRVIS** reflected on his humility throughout the day’s ceremonies and speeches. He remembered the advice his mother gave him in high school when he was awarded a number of senior prizes. She said, “There’s nothing wrong with hearing nice things, unless you believe them.” Still, he couldn’t help but be deeply moved by the words spoken and the attendance turnout.

Irvis closed the official dedication with an anecdote from 1942, shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, when he decided to enlist in United States Army Air Force. After waiting in line, he was brushed off by the sergeant who said, “We’re not recruiting any colored boys.” Infuriated by this, Irvis remembered the tolerance his parents instilled in him early in life, and their insistence that people were not to be judged by their color. The simple words of the sergeant angered him, and inspired him to act upon that anger through a career dedicated to tolerance and unification; it proved to be an honorable and successful life choice.

The K. Leroy Irvis Reading Room is located on the second floor of Hillman Library and is open to the public during regular library operating hours.●

## PENNSYLVANIA EDUCATION POLICY FORUM

### PENNSYLVANIA EDUCATION POLICY FORUM: WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA BREAKFAST SERIES

By Julia Indovina

**J**OANN MANNING, the executive director of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Educational Laboratory for Student Success (LSS) spoke at the second forum of the Western Pennsylvania Breakfast Series on January 24, 2002. Her morning speech outlined the importance of education providers and researchers moving beyond school reform and focusing, rather, on school improvement. She spoke of experiences with the LSS, an interdisciplinary organization based in Temple University that works with teachers, parents, schools, state departments of education, community agencies, professional groups, and policymakers, as well as from her experiences as superintendent in the Chester-Upland School District in Delaware County.

Over the past fifty years, educational reform has taken different initiatives in successive decades; for example the first Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in the 1960s embraced the first Head-Start initiative, the ESEA for the 1990s took the form of the Educate America Act, and the No Child Left Behind Act is the ESEA for the new millennium. One piece of legislation within the newest ESEA is the Comprehensive School Reform Design that includes strategies for improvement like increased professional development, parental and community involvement, and a coordina-



#### PENNSYLVANIA EDUCATION POLICY FORUM: WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA BREAKFAST SERIES

*Sponsored by The Education Policy and Leadership Center, with cooperation of The Education Policy and Issues Center and the University of Pittsburgh Institute of Politics  
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tion of resources. However, Manning pointed out that administrators could implement these strategies in a way that simply reiterates efforts towards reforming a strained system rather than taking steps to improve the fundamental structure of the educational system.

Manning pointed out that achieving school improvement relies on the collective vision of the entire district, and not specific efforts for a single low performing school within an area. She explained that this vision is not simply a result of higher testing standards, but is also a result of improving school conditions:

- Schools can improve themselves if conditions are right.
- Conditions needing improvement include school culture, the quality of interpersonal relationships, and the nature and quality of learning experiences.
- Those outside the schools must ensure that conditions are right.
- When conditions are right, both from without and within, adults and students alike learn, contribute to the learning of others, and ultimately sustain learning themselves.
- Creating communities of learners is a shared responsibility.●



## CHARTER SCHOOLS SEMINAR

### CHARTER SCHOOLS: WHAT ARE THE LESSONS LEARNED?

By Bessie C. Economou, AICP

Spring 2002 is the fifth anniversary of the enactment of Act 22—*Pennsylvania's Charter School Law*. This anniversary brings with it the charge for an independent evaluation of the charter school program and recommendations for continuation, modification, expansion, or termination. In anticipation of the involvement of the regional community in this legislatively mandated evaluation, IOP and The Education Policy and Leadership Center co-sponsored this seminar.

#### INTRODUCTIONS and MODERATION

RONALD COWELL

There are seventy-plus charter schools in Pennsylvania. A national organization ranked the state as eighth best in the “charter-school-friendly” category. Act 22 is among the strongest pro-charter laws in the country. Most Pennsylvania charter schools are in the Philadelphia School District (51 percent of charter schools, 69 percent of charter school students) and other urban areas, and currently serve just over one percent of all public school students in Pennsylvania.

The impact of the growing number of cyber charter schools on the charter school program is of increasing concern in Harrisburg. This and other issues point to the need to examine the performance of both the charter schools program and the law under which these schools are operating as part of the legislatively mandated five-year evaluation. Successes, as well as lessons learned, must be examined within the context of the goals of the legislation and the distinctions between the programs adopted by the variety of charter schools.

The legislative intent spelled out in Act 22 is to accomplish all of the following:

- Improve pupil learning
- Increase learning opportunities for all pupils
- Encourage innovative teaching methods
- Create new professional opportunities for teachers
- Provide expanded choices within the public school system
- Enhance school accountability

While the overall intent is to enhance the entire public school system, an adversarial relationship has developed between charter schools and traditional

### IOP CHARTER SCHOOLS SEMINAR

Co-sponsored by The Education Policy and Leadership Center and the Institute of Politics Advisory Committee on Education

December 7, 2001

### CHARTER SCHOOLS: WHAT ARE THE LESSONS LEARNED?

#### WELCOME

**Joseph Dominic**, Director of Education Programs, The Heinz Endowments; and Co-Chair, Advisory Committee on Education, Institute of Politics

#### INTRODUCTIONS and MODERATION

**Ronald Cowell**, President, The Education Policy and Leadership Center; and Co-Chair, Advisory Committee on Education, Institute of Politics

#### A NATIONAL REPORT CARD

**Alex Medler**, Consultant and former Acting Director of Public Charter Schools Programs, U.S. Department of Education

#### THE STATE OF THE STATE: OVERVIEW OF CHARTER SCHOOLS IN PENNSYLVANIA

**Thomas Carey**, Deputy Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, Pennsylvania Department of Education

#### MODERATED Q&A

#### ELECTED OFFICIALS' REPORTS AND REACTIONS

**Dick Rose**, School Board President, Bethel Park School District

**The Honorable William Russell Robinson**, Member, Pennsylvania House of Representatives

**The Honorable Thomas L. Stevenson**, Member, Pennsylvania House of Representatives

#### OPEN DISCUSSION

#### REMARKS

**Timothy Allwein**, Assistant Executive Director, Government and Member Relations, Pennsylvania School Boards Association

**Chenzie Grignano**, Executive Director, Duquesne University Charter School Project

**Jeremy Resnick**, School Development Project, Community and Loan Fund

#### SUMMARY

**Alan Lesgold**, Dean, School of Education, University of Pittsburgh

#### CLOSING REMARKS

**Dennis McManus**, Director, Institute of Politics, University of Pittsburgh



public schools. Much of this is rooted in financial issues. The public school system is not compensated for the loss of students who opt to move over to charter schools. Therefore, rather than being perceived as a supplement to the educational experience, the charter school is often seen as a financial drain. Clearly, there is a need to examine the entire financial system.

Initially there was no discernible effort to monitor charter schools. There was no benchmarking of student achievement at the time of entrance and no predetermined system to measure the effects and lessons learned. Therefore, it is hard to calculate the value added by the charter school.

### A NATIONAL REPORT CARD

ALEX MEDLER

#### Cautions/Excuses for Researchers and Evaluators

Charter schools have many different goals. Often those running the new schools did not carry out the intent of policy makers. Competition is not written into the law, yet it is a factor that drives many charter schools and the programs they establish. Then there is the issue of comparisons: What are you comparing and why? Finally, the movement is very new. With some 2,300 schools in 29 states, it is still too early to make a definitive judgment as to the value of the concept.

#### Findings

There is a growing body of research, but it is still relatively new. On the policy level, the first challenge was to examine the law and what it meant. Initially there were 12 states with laws but no schools. The laws basically allow schools to build from scratch. It is difficult to define the purpose and goals of the variety of schools operating under different state laws.

The charter school population consists of more than a half million students in 2,300 schools. There is an urban concentration of schools in some states, but they are also found in rural school districts.

School populations vary with schools and states in terms of race, economic level, and academic achievement. Counter to criticism, charter schools attract just about everybody; mostly, they attract people dissatisfied with current public schools.

In terms of innovation there is none anywhere. The questions should be: “Is it innovative in the local region? And is it being thoughtful and introspective?” Basically, charter schools are implementing research-proven innovative practice. They are trying things. So it’s not just new things that should be examined, but how coherently and well they are being done.



It is hard to make comparisons in performance. There are some reforms: schools are small—about 140 students. Small class sizes allow more time for staff to meet with each other and with each student. Some focus on groups such as children with disabilities or children from homes lacking parents.

Generally school systems are large and have complex issues that have more than one solution. Charter schools can be vehicles for finding different solutions to problems, such as desegregation, children with disabilities, and homelessness.

State evaluations are mixed. A federal study of performance shows that accountability is harder to assess than people thought. Districts may grant charters that are disregarded by the schools that are subsequently established. Most districts make changes to improve, indicating that competition works. Parents, students, and staff want accountability, but it is difficult to assess among so much diversity in both programs and goals.

## Questions

Issues that emerge that were not anticipated in the law include: home schooling; cyber-schools; privatization (15 percent are run by management companies); and charter districts. All these mean different things in different states.

### THE STATE OF THE STATE: OVERVIEW OF CHARTER SCHOOLS IN PENNSYLVANIA

#### THOMAS CAREY

Charter schools simply add to the variety of choice in education. Cities and towns that adopt charter schools as an option are looking to safeguard the quality of public education.

In 1997, the year Act 22 was enacted there were six charter schools in Pennsylvania that served a student population of 982. In 2001, there were 77 charter schools with a student population of 29,000. Approximately 63 percent of the student population is African American. Most charter schools cover grades K-9, although there are some high schools.

Opportunities and innovative teaching methods are found in the variety of charter schools that exist. Their focus may include career emphasis, performing arts, science and technology, linguistics, etc. On student achievement, the results are tenuous since the charter school initiative is still very young. However, it appears that most students and their parents feel that charter schools are serving needs not served by other schools, that the quality of instruction in their charter school is high, and that their child receives adequate attention.

Lessons learned include the need for training and support to make this a viable option. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (DOE) provides extensive assistance. Other lessons and needed improvements will emerge from research for which the DOE has contracted with the Evaluation Center of Western Michigan University. Their Initial Study was dated October 2000, and the Interim Study Report, October 2001. Their final five-year, legislatively mandated report is due October 30, 2002.

Whatever the outcome children are the only future, and as such, must be taught well.

### MODERATED QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

The program included a moderated Question and Answer session with Alex Medler and Thomas Carey. Within this session, Secretary Carey fielded questions from the audience on topics such as the differences between charter schools started through community-based actions and those started by professional manag-

ers, and the original purpose of the mandated five-year review. According to Carey, schools that have the involvement and support of parents usually last and succeed if they have both the necessary resources and a working relationship with the local school district. He also clarified that the aim of the five-year review was to establish a method of evaluation with an emphasis on improvement not on school termination. Since he was speaking as a representative of the commonwealth, the audience was curious about the official position on cyber-schools. Carey responded that although there are questions of accountability and funding, the Pennsylvania DOE will likely support cyber-schools as another option for education. Alex Medler added that most states don't provide funding for cyber-schools. The issue is not to stop the cyber-school movement but to find out how it can be constructively integrated into the public education system.

Medler also answered specific questions about the 2,300 schools outlined in the national report card. He cited anecdotal examples of success, such as the reading scores achieved in Boulder, CO; school facilities in Los Angeles that are used by parents after-hours to learn English as a second language; and a marked increase in college applicants among an initially low-achiever school population in Washington, D.C. However, the newness and diversity of experiences make statistically valid conclusions difficult. He also addressed the adversarial relationship between traditional public schools and charter schools. In areas where great growth is taking place, there is generally cooperation. The school board will often rely on the charter school to provide what is lacking, including new schools and facilities. Strategic planning and cooperation can help a community provide for populations heretofore underserved or poorly served.

### ELECTED OFFICIALS' REPORTS AND REACTIONS

#### DICK ROSE

In anticipation of the Charter School bill, the Bethel Park School District Board began planning for a charter school for teachers, and another charter school to attract students who were not attending school. The board felt that these innovations would have greatly enhanced public education in the community. As finally approved, the law excluded public schools from creating charter schools. The board was placed in the passive position of waiting for someone to come with a proposal.

The atmosphere became adversarial once it was realized that a partnership must be formed to receive the benefits of charter schools in the same district.



The feeling was that there is something missing if a school district pays money with no direct benefits or involvement. They felt the law should be amended to allow public school districts to create charter schools. As it stands, there is no charter school in Bethel Park.

**The Honorable WILLIAM ROBINSON**

In an effort to improve public education, the legislature came up with a law in 1997 that gave opportunity to some and denied it to others. This law had limited resources however, attempts were made by the legislature to change things. Now with the mandated review and evaluation, there is an opportunity to revisit the law and try to reshape it. Foremost will be the consideration of what charter schools are trying to do. Ultimately the focus must be to benefit the children.

Struggles between administrators make it difficult to define intent. Legislators try to give their collective best efforts, but finding resources and allocating them is a very difficult process.

Most people say that private and parochial schools have proven that given the resources they can educate kids. But public schools can educate too. There is a tendency to see the charter school movement as an opportunity to enhance the education in the public school system.

**The Honorable THOMAS L. STEVENSON**

The House Education Committee has held many hearings on charter schools and cyber-schools in the past two-and-a-half years. Some of the ideas that emerged that are being considered are to:

- Change the funding structure to actual cost per pupil
- Assure accountability within the public school system
- Encourage the use of grants since there is little money in the budget to make available for charter schools

- Encourage more regional charter schools, and allow schools to create charter schools
- Charter schools are here to stay; make them better

**OPEN DISCUSSION—REMARKS**

**TIMOTHY ALLWEIN**

Some of the frustrations that school board members experience with charter schools stem from the debate on the subject five years ago.

**Funding:** Early thinking was that charter schools would be less costly than traditional public schools. However, now it is known that they are very costly to operate. The funding formula needs to be fixed accordingly. New students from home schools and special education needs are not covered and can drain the district budget.

**Accountability:** More charter schools and cyber-schools are enrolling students outside the district that approved them. Thus, a school district may not get accountability from a school it chartered. The school district pays money for students but is not allowed to look at kids nor the results from kids in other districts

**Appeals Board:** An appeal should have a strong legal basis, but there are no legal standards. A charter school can go to an appeal board for any reason and force the school district to pay for a school it may not want.

**Relief to Teachers:** It was hoped that lessons from charter schools would be applied to traditional public schools, but so far there has not been any state mandated relief, such as “cluster certification,” as a result of the charter school experience.

The Pennsylvania School Boards Association is not opposed to cyber-schools and charter schools, but adversarial positions still create problems. All parties must sit down with each other and air issues and present them to legislators so that they can work to solve them.

**CHENZIE GRIGNANO**

An article in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* on the Rand Corporation study of school-choice programs states, “Neither the hopes of supporters nor the fears of opponents have been realized to any great extent.” In the article, researchers cautioned that there are still too few students and the programs are too recent to draw sweeping conclusions.

A list of “Lessons Learned” compiled by the Charter Schools Project over its first four years includes:

- Starting a charter school is difficult.
- Working with a lead agency is an advantage.
- Carrying the banner for school reform—

innovation, flexibility, high standards, parental choice, and accountability—is part of the charter school process.

- Maintaining a large table—including other educational organizations, school superintendents, school board members, and organized labor—is necessary to stem adversarial relationships and generate support.
- Frustration with new charter schools is expected since few are perfect.
- Insulated and isolated autonomy of charter schools makes them difficult to deal with.
- University affiliation has its advantages and disadvantages.

The charter school concept is as much a frame of mind to do things differently as it is a law. Let us not kill the movement by undermining the system.

#### JEREMY RESNICK

Forty percent of Pennsylvania children may be below basic education level. This is a crisis. The situation may be worse for people in deprived families and neighborhoods. This is basically an urban problem. Suburban children have the option of home schooling and private schools to alleviate the problem. The real need is in poor areas. There is a need to do better quickly, and it should be done within the public education arena.

#### SUMMARY

##### ALAN LESGOLD

Charter schools are an expression of the free-enterprise approach to dealing with certain problems in education. Free enterprise is by nature evolutionary, and therefore a complete summary of the day's program is not possible.

The lesson learned is that there are many different ways to approach the stated goals. Systems and

theories can be very simple, but the environments within which they operate are complicated and difficult. Every child and every community is different, so different ways/models should evolve to meet the different needs. Some will be successful. Some will not. It is not likely that one model can serve as the absolute. If any one kind of charter school prevails, the variety and the concept of special education are lost. Therefore, efforts must be made to keep trying to do the best job possible.

#### SUMMARY OF CHARTER SCHOOL ISSUES

- Adjust to the idea that it takes time and money to change, i.e., transition money may be needed for years.
- The cost of adaptation must be in the system. The system pretends that somebody else will cover costs. There will never be enough money to handle transitions, but that won't prevent the need to recognize them and deal with them as best possible
- Sometimes success produces costs. For instance, cyber-schools suddenly encourage people not interested in education to enter the system. This is a new cost.
- As in any free-enterprise system, there is a need for fair accounting standards. How is success reported? From year to year, the definition will change.
- Charter schools are like high tech stocks. Some will be winners, others will not. They need venture capital, but the legislature does not have excess money to invest in education, especially without some assurance that it is investing in a "winner." New initiatives of "venture capital" for education should be realized.●

#### DIRECTOR'S NOTE. . . *continued from page 2*

program nearly a decade ago. Speaker Irvis, initially teamed with the late Thomas Foerster and now in the company of the Institute's founding director, Moe Coleman, has shared his knowledge, insights and opinions on government and politics with a select group of undergraduate students. Year after year the interns have rated his interaction with them as among the most

worthwhile and inspiring parts of their Institute Internship experience. Clearly, the Speaker's long and storied career has given him the distance from which to educate future leaders on the issues and challenges of the day. From our perspective, however, it is also good to know that he is never far away.●

## HEALTH DISPARITIES VIDEOCONFERENCE

### A NATIONAL VIDEOCONFERENCE: COMMUNITIES IN ACTION TO ELIMINATE HEALTH DISPARITIES

by Elizabeth Blumenthal

**O**n October 30, 2001, the Bureau of Primary Health Care of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, sponsored a national videoconference on improving universal access to health care and eliminating health care disparities. UPMC Health System and the University of Pittsburgh Institute of Politics co-hosted the videoconference at the Pittsburgh site. KENNETH S. THOMPSON from the Department of Psychiatry moderated the open discussion.

The videoconference was based on the Health Centers Initiative Proposal by President George Bush and Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson. The legislation would allocate an additional \$124 million annually to eliminate health disparities, plus an additional \$65 million to be distributed in rural areas, and the development of 4,400 new access sites that would double the health system's capacity to serve.

#### THE MISSION

MARILYN H. GASTON, MD, associate administrator for Primary Care, HRSA, emphasized the importance of transforming the national health care system from the ground up—shifting the focus of national health care from tertiary care to primary/preventative care. She requested a renewed commitment to eliminating health disparities and introduced the key question for the videoconference, “What is already there for me to do that will reduce/eliminate health disparities?” Gaston emphasized identifying resources and strengths within the community in order to reach positive equal health outcomes throughout the population.

#### SUCCESS STORIES

Contra Costa County, CA, succeeded in eliminating disparity in breast cancer-treatment results between African American and Caucasian patients. Strategies included: community educators—“Woman to Woman, Saving Lives”; Women Health Days—breast and cervical cancer screenings and mammograms; community advocates who encouraged women with abnormal test results to seek treatment; the African American Task Group calendar which highlights women who have suc-

cessfully fought cancer and the importance of proactive screening and detection measures.

In King County, WA, collaboration was key in eliminating disparities in diabetes. Eight separate King County organizations that had their own programs and initiatives joined together to create a coalition with a common vision. They looked for the “sweet spot” that would draw various organizations together.

#### DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE QUESTIONS

DOUG KRUG, author of *Enlightened Leadership: Getting to the Heart of Change*, presented, “Developing Effective Questions.” Krug said that answers are available; it is simply a matter of asking the right questions. Don't ask “Where is something not working?” ask “Where is something working?” Krug posed “four effective” questions to participants whose summarized answers appear below.

**Q: What did you hear in the Contra Costa example that you can apply in your community?**

A: Coordinate resources and community involvement; “soul-to-soul” community educators in the community, including grassroots education; involve the community-at-risk in planning efforts; reach a larger audience through a diverse message; the importance of networking among religious, social, and medical organizations within a community.

**Q: What improvements in health care have been made in your community?**

A: Disease prevention protocols—how to detect different symptoms, broad education about disease; planned Health Days—multiple services provided in one day; “one-stop care shop”—wrap-around services to address disease and provide health care; identifying an organization that can be a “point” organization for others.

**Q: What did you learn from the King County example that can help you overcome your biggest obstacles?**

A: Emphasize data collection: make it accessible, accurate, and comparable; begin with a few key collaborators; improve “self-management”; utilize cultural groups in delivery of health care; share databases, tracking systems.

**Q: What did you learn that can help your community get involved and come up with solutions?**

A: Disseminate accurate information; create community-based, age-specific focus groups, encourage open dialogue between providers and patients; use coalitions to expand outreach and education; create culturally competent programming that includes cultural traditions; engage “tele-medicine” in order to disseminate knowledge; empower people to become “their own best advocate.”●

## STUDENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

by Julia Indovina

*A key component of the Institute of Politics' mission is to "offer students the opportunity to explore public service within a challenging educational setting." The Institute of Politics Internship Program is one of the main vehicles in place to fulfill this commitment. Now in its tenth year, the program has placed over 250 University of Pittsburgh undergraduate students with elected officials in the Pittsburgh area. To celebrate this anniversary, the REPORT will present an in-depth review of the last decade of the Internship Program. We'll catch up with former students to see how their love of politics was nurtured through the program and see where they are now, learn the history of the origins of the internship and talk at length with the co-directors to gain their perspectives on the future of this valuable program. This first installment outlines the course mission and many participants.*

**T**he IOP Internship Program is a credit-earning opportunity for students; they are eligible to earn two credits for working nine hours per week in their assigned office, as well as an additional two credits for attending a required weekly seminar led by Nello O. Giorgetti, Esquire, of Malady and Wooten Public Affairs, and assisted by the Institute's own Dennis McManus and Anne McCafferty. Students have been placed in elected officials offices at the local, state and federal levels. Currently, students in this year's internship class are positioned in the offices of State Representatives John Pippy, Paul Costa, Mike Diven and Dan Frankel, Congressmen Bill Coyne and Mike Doyle, State Senators Jay Costa and Sean Logan (himself a graduate of the IOP Internship Program), City of Pittsburgh Councilmen Bill Peduto and Sala Udin, United States Senator Arlen Specter, and in Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy's offices with Craig Kwiecinski (another graduate of the program). While placed in these offices, students have the opportunity to perform a number of duties for the officials, including assisting with constituent problems, research, and shadowing the elected official. Giorgetti explains that although direct campaigning is not a part of the program, students are permitted to engage in political activity associated with campaigns as long as they complete their required nine hours in the assigned offices, and during election years students may be placed directly in a campaign office.



The weekly seminar portion of the IOP Internship Program is meant to supplement the office placement, and each of the four major sections of the seminar throughout the course of the semester deal with some aspect of learning about their offices' constituents and functions. First, students learn the local and regional districts in-depth, including physical layout, economy, and political culture. This enables the students to better understand both how and why districts are chosen. During the second section of the semester, students are required to do an organizational analysis of the offices in which they are working to learn the exact functions of the office and position held by the elected official. Third, the students learn what influences their offices have and how political power is relayed on different levels. The final portion of the seminar is a role-playing event that relies on the cumulative knowledge the students have learned through the course of the semester. Early in the course, students are given a piece of legislation and a state senator role, and by the end of the semester they are to vote on this legislation acting as their assigned senator and taking into consideration all of the variables that would influence his or her decision.

In order to effectively teach these four components, outside lecturers are invited to lead seminar sections. This semester, guest lecturers include Director Ted Muller and Coordinator Carolyn Carson of the University of Pittsburgh's Urban Studies Program; former Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives K. Leroy Irvis; lobbyist Lou Tronzo; political campaign lawyer Ron Brown; and Craig Kwiecinski, an Internship graduate working as the Press Secretary for Pittsburgh Mayor Murphy.●

## HUMAN CAPITAL POLICY INITIATIVE UPDATE

### HUMAN CAPITAL POLICY INITIATIVE UPDATE: FOCUS ON EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

by Anne McCafferty

**A**s the second year of activity unfolds the statement—providing information on the status of the region’s human capital relative to workforce and economic development that can nurture thoughtful community and policy actions—continues to describe the core mission of the Human Capital Policy Initiative.

Education stakeholders, including parents, faculty, administrators, school board members, and community leaders have emerged as a key constituency for the Human Capital Policy Initiative because of the increasingly strong focus on the relationship between education and careers. As labor market forces transform traditional patterns of work readiness into a quilt work of new paradigms, we know we have to do things differently although what these “things” are tend to be works in progress. The signs of economic transformation flaunt themselves everywhere. From employment ads in newspapers to newly developed strategic plans of school districts, new learning approaches, new language, and new behaviors are described. The proliferation of job descriptions that did not exist 10 years ago, the recognition that mathematical proficiency is at the heart of many of the fastest growing and well paying jobs; the understanding that the quality of career and job information that students receive in school can jumpstart or obstruct a promising future, and unprecedented employer demand for two year post secondary trained employees, all underscore the daunting challenges that face all of us, but have an ongoing echo with the education community.

To assist in addressing these needs, the Human Capital Policy Initiative has joined forces with the Mon Valley Education Consortium and the Alliance for Career Education. Human Capital Policy Initiative presentations have been woven into the information base that school district planning teams are using to strategically position their schools to meet these challenges. Having up-to-date data on population trends, growth industries, and the type of educational outcomes that match regional demand increase the probability of developing a sound educational process that leads to meaningful positive outcomes for all stakeholders in the community.



At the student and counselor levels, the Human Capital Policy Initiative has entered into a joint partnership with Key2Work to connect the occupational assessment information that 10th grade students and their parents receive with the labor market realities of Southwestern Pennsylvania. The goal is to assist parents and students in understanding the larger macroeconomic environment that values and needs their skills, and to help pinpoint the specific courses and post high school options that will make them highly competitive in these changing markets.

The most recent linkage has been an alliance with Junior Achievement of Southwest Pennsylvania that involves providing the Human Capital Policy Initiative information to 12th grade students as a part of Junior Achievement Economics classes. The regional application of introductory labor market concepts brings economic theory to life for students who are at the gateways of labor force participation.

Providing all of these information sessions and presentations is a Speakers Bureau roster that has grown to include 80 exemplary volunteers from all walks of life, who have been trained to deliver to Human Capital Policy Initiative modules throughout the southwestern Pennsylvania region.●

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