



The Onorato Plan to Reform Pennsylvania's Government *Delivering the Honest, Accountable Government Pennsylvanians Deserve*

As Harrisburg has been wracked by controversies, petty fights and general dysfunction, Pennsylvanians have lost confidence that state government is looking out for the well-being of our residents and taxpayers. Especially during these tough economic times, citizens need to know that *their* government is operating with one goal in mind: to advance the public interest, not the power of special interests.

Dan Onorato will bring real reform to Harrisburg. By making government work better and ensuring that it operates on behalf of Pennsylvanians, Onorato will not only restore public confidence but also eliminate the entrenched political barriers to ambitious policies that will create jobs, protect working families, improve our schools and preserve our environment. Enacting these reforms will make our government more accountable, and it will also make our political system more accessible and increase the diversity of those who represent us.

A Proven Track Record as a Reformer

As County Executive, Onorato enacted bold reforms that took on more than 200 years of patronage-laden inefficiency in county government. With strong leadership from Onorato, voters overwhelmingly approved the elimination of six unnecessary elected positions. The result of this and other smart government reforms like merging five 9-1-1 call centers into a single system is that taxpayers have saved over \$21 million, public services are better, and residents can count on far more transparency and accountability in government operations.

And Onorato has kept up the momentum for reform in Allegheny County. He has fought to take money out of politics by proposing first-ever campaign contribution limits for individuals and political action committees seeking to influence elections in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. While urging County Council to enact his comprehensive campaign finance reform, Onorato used his executive authority to order that all county, municipal and school district candidate and political committee finance reports be posted on the Internet within 72 hours of the filing deadline.

Throughout the campaign, Dan Onorato will describe his plans to make government work better on behalf of the citizens it is designed to serve – from local government reforms like municipal consolidation to increasing efficiency and fiscal responsibility at the state level. But the fundamental building block for these and all other policy changes is a simple one: Pennsylvanians must have faith in their government.

A Commitment to Effective, Accountable Government

Skeptics are likely to question whether these policies can ever become law, since many have been in the public arena for years and have failed to win passage. The answer is simple: Governors set priorities and they build their agenda around the issues they believe are most important. Government reform is a priority for Dan Onorato – and he has the track record to prove it.

Onorato will bring his proven commitment to reform to Harrisburg, and he will fight for reform so that the people of Pennsylvania have confidence that their government is working on behalf of their interests in improving the economy and creating new jobs, ensuring access to affordable health care, guaranteeing access to quality schools from pre-kindergarten to higher education, and promoting sustainable environmental and advanced energy policies.

Curbing the Power of Special Interests

Dan Onorato will shift the balance of power in Harrisburg back to where it belongs: in the hands of the working families and job creators across the Commonwealth that he is running to represent. As Governor, Dan Onorato will:

- **Enact tough campaign finance limits – and enforce them.** This is the single most important reform in Pennsylvania government. In the last five years alone, Pennsylvania candidates and political parties collected nearly four hundred million dollars in campaign contributions. Only three states had more money influencing politics than Pennsylvania in 2008. It is a national embarrassment that Pennsylvania is one of just 12 states that fail to limit campaign contributions, and it creates a perception of impropriety that makes government seem even more unaccountable to the state’s residents. Onorato believes that Pennsylvania should:
 - Enact contribution limits consistent with federal rules for individuals giving to a candidate, political party committee or other political action committee (PAC);
 - Enact contribution limits consistent with federal rules for political party committees and other PACs making donations to candidates and to other committees;
 - Enact aggregate limits on total contributions by an individual in any election cycle consistent with federal limits, and subject political party committees and other PACs to aggregate limits;
 - Enact limits on contributions to so-called “527” organizations that play a role in state elections consistent with limits on contributions to PACs;
 - Include a “millionaire’s provision” so that contribution limits for all candidates are automatically raised by a reasonable amount in the event that any candidate uses his or her personal wealth to seek to influence the outcome of an election;
 - Require contributors to list their occupation and employer for all donations over \$100 – compared to \$250 under current law – and make contribution reports available to the public as quickly as possible; and
 - Improve enforcement by increasing the late filing fee on campaign finance reports from \$10 per day to \$100 per day; eliminate all current limits on total late filing fees; and provide adequate funding to initiate investigations and ensure compliance with the state’s campaign finance law.

- **Implement a total ban on free gifts, meals, tickets, travel, entertainment and other perks.** On his first day as Governor, Onorato will sign an Executive Order prohibiting any appointed official from accepting a free meal, gift, entertainment, travel or other hospitality from registered lobbyists and groups or individuals with business before the Administration. Onorato will also call for the Legislature to immediately turn this gift ban into law, and to ensure that it covers Executive Branch appointees and members and staff of the General Assembly.
- **Strengthen the lobbying law to increase confidence in how public officials are making key decisions.** In 2006, Pennsylvania became the last state in the nation to enact a lobbyist disclosure law. But even that overdue legislation is insufficient at protecting the public interest. Every lobbyist should be required to disclose which Executive Branch offices or agencies and members of the Legislature they lobby, detailed by individual legislation or regulation and client they lobby on behalf of and released in a timely manner to provide full transparency. In addition:
 - Lobbying expenditure reports should be itemized issue by issue; and
 - The trigger for being subject to the law should be dramatically lowered from the equivalent of \$10,000 per year to \$4,000 per year – or \$1,000 each quarter – which will ensure the public has access to critical information while still protecting charities and non-profits that may engage in very minimal lobbying.
- **End the “revolving door” of state government employment.** Current law prohibits legislators and Executive Branch appointees from lobbying the office in which they served for one year after leaving government. Onorato wants to close the revolving door loopholes that enable former officials to maintain their influence in ways that fall just short of lobbying or that include lobbying agencies or branches other than the specific one in which they served. Onorato’s plan calls for a two year “cooling off period” where former public officials cannot engage on behalf of an industry in matters that they regulated while serving in state government.
- **Improve access to voting so that more citizens can participate in the political process.** The ultimate expression of political power is made at the ballot box. Pennsylvanians should have every opportunity to vote while rigorously maintaining the integrity and security of the electoral process. The majority of states allow voters to cast “no excuse” absentee ballots – such as California, New Jersey, Florida and Ohio – while in Pennsylvania a resident can only vote by absentee ballot if they meet specific criteria set out in the law. Onorato supports expanding Pennsylvania law to allow “no excuse” absentee ballots to increase voter participation while protecting the security of the voting process.

Cleaning Up the Legislature

Dan Onorato will fight for the tough reforms needed to restore public trust in the General Assembly. The simple truth is that an array of scandals and allegations of back-room dealing have created the perception that the Legislature is out of touch from the average Pennsylvanian. Onorato will fix the system to bring back faith in the Commonwealth’s law-making body.

As Governor, Dan Onorato will:

- **Prohibit legislators from raising their own pay ever again.** Pennsylvania legislators have the fourth-highest salaries in the nation, totaling nearly \$25 million last year. Pennsylvania needs an independent Citizens Compensation Commission – appointed to fixed terms, with broad public representation – to be given the sole authority to set legislative pay as well as salaries for other elected officials.
- **End Harrisburg’s culture of perks.** The Pennsylvania Constitution says clearly that: “The members of the General Assembly shall receive such salary and mileage for regular and special sessions as shall be fixed by law, *and no other compensation whatever...*” Onorato supports legislation eliminating per diems – which is money given to legislators in addition to their salary for each day they show up for work, with no need for receipts or other documented expenses – as well as all other perks beyond the two types of compensation specified in the Constitution: salary and mileage reimbursement, which should be calculated using the IRS’s standard rules. Legislators should only be able to use a state-owned vehicle if it is less expensive for taxpayers than paying for mileage reimbursements. In addition, legislators should pay a reasonable share of the cost of their health care benefits, and perks including free cell phones should be eliminated.
- **Enact term limits for Senators and members of the House of Representatives.** The power of incumbency is seen as one of the biggest impediments to a more accountable and responsive government. Onorato supports a Constitutional amendment to institute a 12-year limit on the amount of time a legislator can serve in each chamber. Fifteen other states have pursued this approach, and it is time for Pennsylvania to do the same.
- **Cut the size of the Legislature.** In a year of national recession where the state faced billions of dollars of budget cuts, the General Assembly still decided to spend just under \$300 million on its own operations – which is more state funding than it appropriated for the entire Pennsylvania Department of Health. In order to save money for the Commonwealth’s taxpayers and to increase the efficiency of state government, Onorato is calling for a Constitutional amendment to shrink the State Senate and House of Representatives in a manner that still preserves adequate representation for citizens, particularly in rural areas. Several legislators have taken the lead on this issue, and their bills should serve as the starting point for defining appropriately sized legislative districts. Any plan to reduce the size of the Legislature should cut the cost of running the General Assembly by no less than 20% and should go into effect following the Census subsequent to enactment so that it can be implemented to complement mandatory redistricting and without added costs to taxpayers.
- **Eliminate the General Assembly’s slush fund.** The Legislature is holding onto a surplus fund that stood at over \$200 million the last time they provided information to the public, and probably remains at well over \$100 million today. Onorato supports using the surplus for the public interest through the transparent appropriation process.
- **Increase competition in legislative races.** True competition is the heart of representative democracy. Yet Pennsylvania has the reputation as “one of the most gerrymandered states in the nation,” where the process for drawing legislative districts protects incumbents and stifles the kind of tough races that give voters real

choice. Despite the best efforts of a few reformers, Pennsylvania's elected officials refused to make redistricting reform a priority and it is now too late to impact the way districts are drawn after the 2010 Census. But that is no excuse to delay reform – especially because the process for amending the Constitution takes at least two terms of the Legislature to complete. Onorato supports a Constitutional amendment that establishes an independent commission tasked with drawing compact and contiguous districts for State House and State Senate races, with no political consideration and operating fully in public.

Improving Accountability and Transparency in State Government

Dan Onorato believes that sunlight is the best disinfectant for government. His record as Allegheny County Executive is one of effectiveness, transparency and accountability.

As Governor, Dan Onorato will:

- **Fix the state budget process – and withhold elected officials' pay if they can't pass the budget on time.** In each of the last seven years, Pennsylvania has failed to fully enact a state budget before the July 1 deadline. In fact, even on the day that this policy paper was released, the Commonwealth had not yet completed the budget process for 2009-10 – a fiscal year that is already four-and-a-half months underway. While there are real policy differences at the heart of every budget debate, there is no need for the process to continue into a new fiscal year. Future policy papers will describe how Onorato will propose budgets that ensure the effective use of every taxpayer dollar. And to promote a more efficient and transparent budget process, Onorato will call for a state law establishing the following timeline following the Governor's release of the Executive Budget:
 - By May 15, each chamber must pass its own version of the budget;
 - By June 15, the budget for the fiscal year that is just over two weeks away must be on the Governor's desk; and
 - Starting on July 1, for every day that a full budget has not been signed into law, the Governor and every member of the Legislature will have a day's worth of pay permanently withheld. In addition, beginning July 1, all members of the General Assembly will be required to appear in Harrisburg for legislative session seven days a week until a budget has been enacted into law.
- **Eliminate WAMs.** Walking Around Money – or WAMs – are a symbol of public disgust with Harrisburg. While these funds are often used for libraries, non-profit organizations, schools and similar purposes, Onorato will ban WAMs because they have no transparency and are seen as a way of rewarding legislators for voting a certain way. Through the regular and capital budget process, the General Assembly already has the authority to appropriate funds in a manner that legislators believe is best for Pennsylvania and meets local needs – and those appropriations are subject to full public view. There is no excuse for WAMs.
- **Give the public full access to how taxpayer dollars are spent.** In Texas, Missouri and other states across the country, constituents can use the Internet to see every detail in how the state spends their money. Pennsylvanians deserve no less. Onorato will create a fully searchable, publicly accessible Internet database on all state

spending, including all vendors and the salaries of public officials. PennPIRG has called this reform “a powerful tool for the media and independent watchdogs to identify sweetheart contracts, influence peddling, favoritism, and waste.”

- **Remove the perception of “pay-to-play” from public contracting by ending “sole source” contracts.** Contracts issued by the Commonwealth should always be awarded through a competitive process to the firm that can provide quality goods or services at the lowest price to taxpayers except in the instance of a disaster. For professional services like financial and legal expertise and information technology, Onorato will ensure complete transparency in how vendors are selected when simple lowest-dollar bidding is not appropriate due to the complexity of the services involved. Onorato will also follow the spirit as well as the letter of the law by avoiding the piggy-backing of new tasks onto existing contracts – which reduces competition and leaves the public without full and timely access to information.
- **Prevent fraud and abuse.** To ensure that taxpayer dollars are being spent appropriately and that publicly funded programs are operating as required by law, Onorato supports a stronger Office of the Inspector General with specific program audit responsibilities to ensure that taxpayer dollars are getting the desired results. Onorato will call for a reform plan modeled on Florida, where in addition to a Chief Inspector General there is an Inspector General inside each agency whose responsibility is to provide independent assessments to the head of the department and to prevent and detect waste, fraud and abuse in that agency’s operations. Under Onorato’s plan, annual performance audits will provide policy-makers and the public with detailed information about which programs are working and which are not in order to make informed budget decisions.
- **Expand the pipeline to encourage more diverse, representative leadership.** Onorato wants to ensure that the views and experiences of all Pennsylvanians are represented in the decision-making process. For example, only four states have a smaller proportion of women legislators. And while African-American and Latino Pennsylvanians make up nearly 16% of the state population, they constitute less than 8% of the members of the General Assembly. As Allegheny County Executive, Onorato signed the Fair Representation Executive Order, increasing transparency in appointments to boards, commissions and authorities by taking the application process out from behind closed doors. If elected Governor, Onorato will expand the pipeline for political leadership by reaching beyond the normal pathways to power in the appointments that he makes to agency management positions, boards and commissions – which are often a stepping stone to future elected office and other leadership opportunities – and by consulting with stakeholder groups on strategies to increase participation.
- **Strengthen the Sunshine Act.** Pennsylvania’s Sunshine law is designed to give taxpayers access to where and how decisions are made at all levels of government. But the penalties for violating this essential law are woefully inadequate. As Governor, Onorato will call for increasing the top fine for violating the law from \$100 to \$500, increasing each year by the rate of inflation, and will create a state-level office to review potential violations and hear appeals.

DAN ONORATO: A COMMITMENT TO EFFECTIVE, ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENT

With Onorato as Governor, reform starts on Day 1. On his first day in office, Onorato will issue Executive Orders to implement the parts of his reform agenda that can be started without legislative action:

- Implementing the ban on free gifts, meals, tickets, travel, entertainment and other perks for Executive Branch officials
- Strengthening lobbyist disclosure requirements for Executive Branch officials
- Ending the “revolving door” for Executive Branch officials who leave office
- Giving the public full access to how taxpayer dollars are spent
- Removing any perception of “pay-to-play” from public contracts
- Preventing fraud and abuse by strengthening the Office of Inspector General
- Expanding the pipeline to ensure more diverse, representative leadership

Dan Onorato will immediately get to work crafting laws that enshrine these elements of reform and build on their momentum to implement the rest of his reform agenda through the legislative process.