

NEWS RELEASE

for immediate release

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ISSUESPA.ORG RE-LAUNCHED FOR FALL ELECTION CYCLE

Pennsylvania Economy League's Award-Winning Site Updated with Focus on Local Government

(September 30, 2010 – Philadelphia) Today the Pennsylvania Economy League, Inc. (PEL), the state's leading regionally-based economic policy organization, re-launched IssuesPA.org, its Webby-nominated issues website originated for the Commonwealth's 2002 elections.

In the new IssuesPA.org iteration, PEL chose to narrow its focus to the matrix of issues of local government and services reform that will affect all candidates elected to office this fall – irrespective of party affiliation. "The recession has worsened the fiscal condition of Pennsylvania's municipalities, but the pressures from static or declining tax revenues, underfunded pensions, and rising costs have been building for decades," said Steve Wray, PEL's managing director. "The 2010 election year provides an excellent opportunity for PEL to highlight the challenges facing Pennsylvania's local governments and the impact of our local governance systems on regional and state competitiveness."

Demographic shifts and the economic crisis have put pressure on Pennsylvania's entire system of local governments. Counties, cities, boroughs, and townships all have seen their fiscal assumptions overturned, resulting in reductions to service provision and calls for revenue increases -- all at a time when needs are growing due to the economic condition of the Commonwealth. Other factors threatening the future of our local governments include underfunded municipal and school district pension plans, retiree health costs, underinvestment in basic infrastructure, and an increasingly constrained state budget.

PEL's history of nonpartisan issues study and analysis uniquely qualifies it to shine light on the flaws in Pennsylvania's local government structures and also on potential changes or solutions that could be adopted. Moreover, remodeling and repairing the governance of Pennsylvania's local communities has been central to the organization's mission for almost 75 years.

In addition to original articles, issues scorecards, and dissemination of pertinent studies and reports, IssuesPA.org will identify the key issues and frame questions necessary for those elected in this cycle to address.

"The re-launch of IssuesPA provides PEL with a rare opportunity to bring to the fore issues of efficiency, effectiveness, and equity in Pennsylvania local government," said Brian K. Jensen, PhD, executive director of the Economy League's operations in southwestern Pennsylvania. "Working with our sister PEL offices, the Allegheny Conference on Community Development and its affiliate, the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, and with other organizations across the Commonwealth, PELSW is eager to help advance the cause of better local government in Pennsylvania."

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By engaging citizens, opinion-leaders, and like-minded good government organizations through IssuesPA.org, PEL believes that momentum can be developed to move the idea of changing Pennsylvania's local government structure into reality.

Gerry Cross, executive director of PEL's office in Wilkes Barre which covers the middle of the state said, "IssuesPA's strength is that it provides a common area for those issues that might seem important only in a regional context, but on further examination, affect all the Commonwealth's citizens."

Visit www.IssuesPA.org for more information, and follow IssuesPA.org on Twitter: @IssuesPA.

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About the Pennsylvania Economy League

Established in 1936, PEL is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit, public policy research and development organization. Our mission is to provide critical information, perspective and support to the business, civic, and governmental leadership of our communities and our state in their efforts to make Pennsylvania a better place to live, work, and do business. For more information, visit issuespa.org/content/about-issuespa.

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