March 26, 2012

This letter introduces The Temple Papers on the Pennsylvania General Assembly, which are being published on the website of Temple’s Institute for Public Affairs (IPA). The research for this series was requested and funded in large part by the Heinz Endowments and the William Penn Foundation to assist the General Assembly in representing citizens, making laws, and balancing the other branches.

Volume I, “The Pennsylvania General Assembly Before and After the 1968 Legislative Modernization Commission: The Evolution of an Institution,” is an institutional history that focuses on the legislature’s momentous bipartisan and bicameral decision to move from a part-time to a full-time body. This paper expands on presentations during a February 28, 2011 symposium attended by 167 members and dozens of legislative staffs. (Available at www.temple.edu/ipa)

Volume II, “The Pennsylvania General Assembly’s Greatest Achievements and the Parties’ Roles in Enacting Important Laws: 1968-2008,” complements the institutional history by providing a policy history. Funded by Temple, this paper was undertaken by Van Huynh and Shelly Forrester while they were legislative interns in Temple’s Pennsylvania Capital Semester. (Available at www.temple.edu/ipa)

Volume III, “The Rules of the Game: How the Constitution Affects Lawmaking in Pennsylvania,” includes a new extended essay on this subject and papers prepared for an October 25, 2011, symposium attended by more than 100 members and an estimated 60 legislative staff. (Forthcoming)

Volume IV, “A Discussion of Topics Related to the Continuing Evolution of the Pennsylvania General Assembly,” presents data and summarizes opinions on institutional changes that have been advocated in Pennsylvania and/or tried in other states. (Forthcoming)

Volume V, “Findings from Academic Research on State Government Institutions and Reforms,” reviews more than 180 scholarly books and articles about how all 50 state legislatures conduct their business, with an eye toward possible lessons for Pennsylvania. (Forthcoming)

Rick Stafford, Distinguished Service Professor of Public Policy at the Heinz College, Carnegie Mellon University, was my co-principal investigator on the project, which also was supported by Temple funds. Also on the team were Temple’s Michelle J. Atherton, assistant IPA director; Megan Mullin, associate professor of political science; and Nathan Shrader, doctoral student in political science.

We hope these volumes will deepen understanding of how the legislature has been shaped by its history and will contribute to discussions of its continuing evolution. We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the two foundations for both the research and the two symposiums and emphasize that the views expressed in these volumes -- and any errors of fact or omission -- are the authors' alone.

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