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MAYORS: Smithgall lists his achievements; Gray remains silent

Both current Lancaster City mayor Rick Gray and his predecessor Charlie Smithgall have spent two terms in office and are competing for the opportunity for a third term.

Last week, *NewsLanc* posed two questions to both of the candidates. Smithgall responded within a day.

When no response was forthcoming from Gray, a second request was sent and followed up with a phone call to his office. His aide, Bernice Buckholder, promised to pass along our request to the mayor and remind him of our Wednesday evening deadline for publishing our weekly newsletter.

The questions are:

1) *What were your six most important achievements during your terms as mayor?* (Answers to be published this week.)

2) *What achievements do you seek to accomplish if elected to another term?* (Answers to be published next week.)

Smithgall volunteered eight major achievements:

1. *Clipper Stadium*
2. *First Friday & Artist District*
3. *Binn's Park*
4. *Convention Center*
5. *Neighborhood Policing*
6. *Bus Terminal*
7. *Police Station*
8. *Increased acreage of parks.*

If Mayor Gray responds before next week's deadline, we will publish his answers to both questions.

Tilting the Scales of Justice?

Philadelphia Trial Lawyers Association donates total of \$195,000 to two state Supreme Court justices, prominent lawmakers and judicial candidate

by Bill Keisling

The Philadelphia Trial Lawyers Association calls its political action committee "*The Committee for a Better Tomorrow.*"

But the trial lawyers don't seem to need a better tomorrow. The group seems quite pleased with the status quo today.

In the last four months, state campaign records show, the trial lawyers' PAC donated as total of \$195,000 to powerful insiders and candidates, including donations to two incumbent state Supreme Court justices, and several influential lawmakers.

Some of these political donations are large, even by Pennsylvania standards.

As I wrote last week, the trial lawyers' PAC donated \$50,000 to the November retention election of state Supreme Court Chief Justice Ronald Castille.

A search of state records also shows the trial lawyers recently gave another \$50,000 to Castille's brother on the high court, Justice Max Baer, on July 19.

The trial lawyers gave another \$60,000 to state senator Stewart Greenleaf (R – Montgomery / Bucks) on July 19, 2013.

Sen. Greenleaf is chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and is influential in matters of court rules and discipline. Greenleaf's committee oversees the courts and writes many rules affecting trial lawyers and judges.

All told, state records show, the trial lawyers' PAC in recent months gave \$195,000 in political contributions to the following candidates:

Supreme Court Chief Justice Ronald Castille, \$50,000, July 19, 2013
Supreme Court Justice Max Baer, \$50,000, July 19, 2013
State Senator Stewart Greenleaf, \$60,000, July 19, 2013
State Rep. Kate Harper, \$15,000, September 12, 2013
State Rep. Tim Hennessey, \$10,000, September 12, 2013
Victor Stabile, candidate for Superior Court judge, \$10,000, June 11, 2013

...The largest recent contribution from the trial lawyers PAC, \$60,000, went to state Sen. Stewart Greenleaf, chair of the senate judicial committee.

Patients Pay before Seeing Doctor as Deductibles Spread

BLOOMBERG: ...The practice of upfront payment for non-emergency care has been spreading in the U.S. as deductibles rise. Now, the advent of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act is likely to accelerate that trend.

Many of the plans offered through the law's insurance exchanges have low initial premiums to attract customers, while carrying significant deductibles and other out-of-pocket cost sharing. The second-lowest tier of Obamacare plans in California, for example, carries a \$2,000 annual deductible.

Hospitals say they need to charge patients prior to treatment because Americans are increasingly on the hook for more of their own medical costs. And once care is provided, it's often difficult for hospitals to collect...

EDITOR: *Seeking health care these days isn't that much different than buying a used car*

Here is an example of how medical ethics have altered. When our original physician here in Lancaster retired two decades ago, he refused to sell his practice but rather referred his patients to new physicians in town. He explained that was how he was treated when he arrived.

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