

# New Governor has much work ahead

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## In My Opinion

After being sworn in on January 21, Governor Rendell has a tough road ahead.

Pennsylvania's economy is 48<sup>th</sup> out of 50 states and 80,000 jobs have been lost over the past two years. The Keystone State harbors the second oldest population in the country. And to top it off,

property taxes are soaring higher while state funding for schools has dropped 15% since 1970.

But Rendell's plans show promise. He plans to revitalize the state economy by allowing revenue from slot machines, making an unprecedented level of investment into an economic stimulus program, and finding five percent of the state budget that qualifies as "unnecessary spending." The economic stimulus plan involves granted money for upstart businesses, some which may include graduates fresh out of college.

The downside to Rendell's plan could be job losses in the state government. However, he hopes that his economic stimulus program will provide jobs for laid-off state employees in the private sector.

In addition, he hopes to reduce property taxes by increasing the amount of state funding to public schools. This, he says, will allow schools to improve the quality of preschool education, adopting full-day kindergarten, decreasing class size, and implementing more after-school and summer school tutoring. "Alongside that investment must come strict standards, accountability, and teacher training, but let's be honest. We cannot do the things we know will increase student achievement...without additional money to pay for them." Rendell believes that investing in public schools will also help to retain the young workers.

Rendell should be able to pump up PA's economy just as he did Philadelphia's when he was mayor. Though he was notorious for cutting city jobs, Rendell brought Philly out of a \$250 million hole with many of the same tactics he intends to implement as governor. Rendell was able to balance Philadelphia's budget and generated five consecutive budget surpluses on top off six consecutive years of job gains. His success for Pennsylvania may not come as fast, but it will probably come eventually.

The only promise Rendell has made that will not hold up is his quest to eliminate squabbling between regions and political parties. Squabbling between regions and political parties will exist as long as American democracy remains intact. If a mistake is made, a Democrat will never hold back from blaming the Republicans.



**Above:** Rendell waves to the crowd after being sworn in just moments before

photos by Douglas Coolbaugh / The Fourth Estate

**Right:** U.S. Senator Arlen Specter waves to the crowd  
**Below:** Some of PA's finest, Governors Tom Ridge and Mark Schweiker

