

## Candidate asks government help for state's rural areas

DOYLESTOWN — Arlen Specter, Republican candidate for U.S. Senate, Friday called for more efficient government assistance to "the rural areas of Pennsylvania and the nation that have long been shortchanged by the federal government."

Specter said, "The serious economic and social problems faced by rural America have been largely

ignored by the federal government. Rural areas are the home of one-third of the nation's population, but have nearly one-half of our nation's poor.

"The problems of rural unemployment, inadequate housing and poor health care are increasing. For every single substandard housing unit in the metropolitan areas of this country, two

can be found in rural areas," he said.

Rural America has a higher infant mortality rate and a higher incidence of chronic disease than urban areas, and yet is served by only 12 percent of the doctors and 18 percent of the nurses. The problem is particularly acute for minorities in rural areas whose infant mortality rates are double the national average, he said.

These statistics are merely symptomatic of the problems faced in the rural areas of Pennsylvania and throughout the nation, he continued. It is an especially critical problem in Pennsylvania, where over 3.5 million people live in rural areas, the largest rural population in the United States, he said.

"Federal assistance to meet these problems has

been woefully inadequate. Rural America receives only about 18 percent of the federal dollars spent to provide or improve housing, and only 23 percent of the Department of Health and Human Services Social Service funds.

"A principal reason why rural areas in small towns have not received their fair share of federal funds has been the complex federal

grant procedures, inflexible grant programs, and burdensome paperwork requirements.

"Small towns in rural communities are simply not getting their fair share of federal funds because they lack the expensive staff and resources needed to respond to government regulations, requests, rules and audit procedures," he said.

"Senator John Heinz has worked hard to remedy this problem by his sponsorship of the Small Communities Act. Regrettably this legislation has not been passed.

"It is essential that we continue to work for legislation designed to eliminate the oppressive regulatory burden on rural communities that effectively denies them crucial assistance, and increase the autonomy of these communities in grant-related decision making. I will propose legislation that includes the following measures:

**Greater flexibility in grant formula -** Procedures should be established to ensure consultation and coordination with small rural communities concerning their needs and resources when determining the allocation of funds under federal grants formula.

**Increase regulatory flexibility -** The director of the Office of Management and Budget should be granted the authority to waive any federal rule, regulation or order as it applies to small communities. Wherever possible, a second tier of less stringent regulations should be designed for rural communities.

**One-step certification of the requirements for qualifying for federal grants -** Specified agencies should establish across-the-board federal grant eligibility standards for small communities. The community would thereafter not be required to give any further proof of compliance when applying for federal grants, loans or other federal assistance.

**Accelerate appropriations -** In order to allow increased flexibility for planning and administration of multi-year grant programs, procedures should be established for budgeting advanced appropriations to small rural communities one year before the funds are to be spent.

**Small community set-aside payments -** Congress should establish a procedure for allocating a single cash grant to small communities, at their option, as a substitute for the yearly grants that are to be received.

### LFA meeting

#### Tuesday

LANCASTER — The Lancaster County Farmers' Association will hold its annual meeting and banquet at 7 p.m. Tuesday at the Harvest Drive Restaurant.

Tickets can be obtained by contacting LFA directors or calling 426-1303, 426-1501 or 687-7353.



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