

Opinion

Government officials need support from voting public

By HOWARD J. GROSSMAN

The pathway to public service is strewn with the injured bodies of dedicated elected public servants who are abused and mistreated, often by the very people who elected them to office. Appointed public service personnel are equally looked upon with less than awe by citizens who do not understand the role which appointed officials play in staffing governmental agencies or serving on various boards, commissions and committees. The controversial nature over the delivery of governmental services and whether or not the public or private sector should provide certain services, or share in their provision is a constant source of irritation, seemingly without answer which satisfies all parties and citizens.

Governmental service in Pennsylvania as well as other states, is a voluntary system in which a citizen chooses to serve in an elected post, most often without direct public service experience and very often without the availability of professional personnel at the local governmental level to assist in offering the service. This is due to the proliferation of local governments in a state which includes 2600 general purpose local governments, many of which are small townships in population size. They represent a necessity in the local municipal government process, which has the need but not always the capacity to provide an effective level of service.

Professionalizing public service means the growth and expansion of professionally trained administrators who can serve as municipal managers in many governments today, which claim they do not have the ability to provide the fiscal resources to support this type of professionalism. One solution to the fiscal problem, is to link municipalities together and network a Circuit Rider Program in which a professionally trained administrator can work with a number of local governments in a given geographic area, and provide not only professional services, but encourage communities to develop an area-wide approach to governmental services.

Another potential improvement would be the growth of private sector participation in governmental activities. Privatization of services works in those instances where the private sector could provide equal or better and perhaps more cost effective ways to deliver services and should be instituted in many places.

Contracting out for public services sometimes is another way to deliver, those programs and services demanded by residents and businesses and industries.

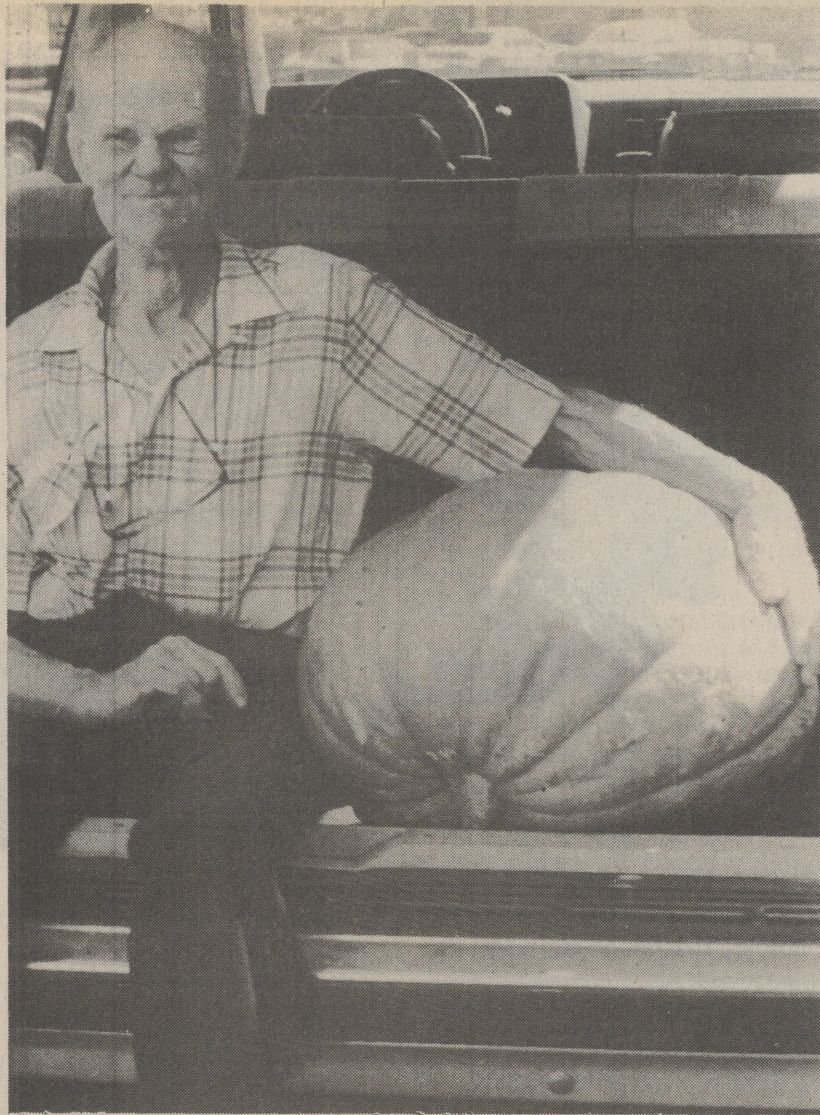
What is needed in Pennsylvania and therefore Northeastern Pennsylvania, is a clear and definitive policy as well as an action agenda for creating the mechanism by which professionalism functions for public service can be tested and utilized where they are proven to be successful. Organizations such as the Pennsylvania Economy League and others who share this vision of improved efficiency and cost effectiveness in government, should join together in a coalition to foster the best there is in public service, and advertise and market the techniques being used successfully in Pennsylvania and elsewhere.

Home rule, driven by the 1972 Legislation, which permitted municipal governments to adopt Home Rule Charter, has died down and little is currently heard about Home Rule as a technique for improving the delivery of governmental services. Annexation and mergers and consolidations of municipal governments are words hardly utilized in the rarified atmosphere of Pennsylvania politics. They are used in some other states where laws are quite different as well as the use of techniques which have not been tested in the Commonwealth. For example, tax sharing is utilized in the Twin Cities Area of Minneapolis and St. Paul, and the Hackensack Meadows in New Jersey, where 16 municipalities share in commercial and industrial taxation, no matter the location of the development property. Techniques such as these need to be examined and tested in Pennsylvania, but are slowed down by the rigidity and involved nature of Commonwealth legislative and governmental structure. A new governmental image and professionalism program needs to be launched in Northeastern Pennsylvania as much as the Regional Image Program was initiated in 1978 by the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania. There is an equal need to have elected and appointed officials treated as people who have legitimate and fundamental roles to play in the way government is viewed and services carried out.

One idea would be to create an assembly of governments in Northeastern Pennsylvania, in which representatives of all local governments would meet periodically to not only exchange the best means of delivering governmental services, but advocate with state and federal officials what they would like to achieve in the way of new legislation and/or new federal and/or state support.

Ahead lies a unique challenge to address and remedy the perception and negative realities of public service. It is one which requires a national state, regional, county, municipal, and private citizen perspective through a cooperative arrangement in which the public and private sectors sit at the same table, discuss the same issues, reach a consensus on what the issues are, and direct their energies and resources to professionalizing government and the public service. This can be done in such a way as to add the weight of positive public administration to the greatness which is bursting upon the Northeastern Pennsylvania scene as this and the next generation reach toward the year 2000 and the 21st Century.

Howard Grossman is executive director of the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania.



A bit over 100 lbs.

John Henninger, Jr. of Shavertown displays his 74th birthday present to the Post camera. It was a present grown by John Gosart. (Photo by Charlotte Bartizek)

Local high school graduates now playing on Wilkes teams

Four Dallas area athletes are members of fall sports teams at Wilkes College. Rich James is a member of the football team, Dale Morris the soccer team and Lindsey Krivenko and Dawn Smith the field hockey team.

James a 5'8", 175 pound freshman wingback, has seen action in one game so far for the Colonels gaining four yards.

At Lake-Lehman High School, James was a football and baseball standout, earning a total of seven letters.

A biology major at Wilkes, James is the son of Richard and Polly Ann James of Dallas.

Morris, is a freshman midfielder for the Wilkes booters. A graduate of Dallas High School, Morris was

a three year starter for coach John McCafferty.

An electrical engineering major at Wilkes, he is the son of David and Carole Morris of Trucksville.

Krivenko is a sophomore midfielder for the Wilkes field hockey team. Also a graduate of Dallas, she earned letters in both field hockey and tennis for the Lady Mountaineers.

Undecided upon a major, she is the daughter of Charles and Joyce Krivenko of Dallas.

Smith, now a resident of Mountaintop, is a junior halfback for the Lady Colonels. She is a two time letter winner for Wilkes after earning three letters at Lake-Lehman.

Majoring in accounting at Wilkes, she is the daughter of Sandra Russell and Betram Smith.

Michael Gurnari is baptized

Michael Paul Gurnari, son of Michael and Robin of Dallas, was baptized at the Idetown UMC on September 17 by Rev. Michael Shambora.

Michael was born on April 11, 1989 in the Nesbitt Memorial Hospital. Paul Benedetti and Jodi Casterline served as godparents

for the infant. A special anthem was presented by the Idetown UMC Choir under direction of Mrs. Shirley Mahle.

Paternal grandparents are Francis and Marie Gurnari. Maternal grandparents are William and Mabel Casterline.

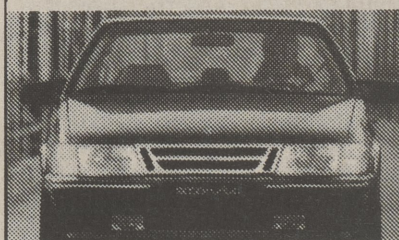
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