



## The economic viewpoint

### Adopt-a-highway program growing fast

By HOWARD J. GROSSMAN

The relatively new Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Adopt-A-Highway Program provides ample opportunity for non-profit and profit organizations throughout the region to undertake an anti-litter effort in cooperation with state government.

The program serves as an educational tool to make people aware of the litter program and services to provide clean, well-cared-for highways for Pennsylvania's citizens, highway users and the millions of tourists who visit the state each year. Already, close to 20 highways have been adopted by non-profit organizations throughout the region.

For example in Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties, organizations such as Allied Services for the Handicapped, Caring People from Happy Acres, Rotary Club of the Abingtons, the Inn at Nichols Village, the Laurel Garden Club, CAN-DO, Inc., Eagle Rock Resort, Golden Care of Northeast Pennsylvania, Inc., and St. Paul's Lutheran Church have adopted various stretches of highways and others are considering accomplishing the same task.

The two Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Engineering Districts serving Northeastern Pennsylvania can be contacted relative to the Adopt-A-Highway Program. The PennDOT

Engineering District which serves Lackawanna, Luzerne and other counties can be reached at PO Box 111, Scranton, PA 18501 (717-963-4010) and the District serving portions of the Pocono Mountains as well as the Lehigh Valley is based at 1713 Lehigh Street, Allentown, PA 18103 (215-821-4192).

The Adopt-A-Highway Program, along with the massive recycling program underway in Northeastern Pennsylvania and other aspects of litter clean-up and conservation make it likely that the 1990s will prove to be a banner decade in Northeastern Pennsylvania relative to quality of life and other factors which are important needs concerning livability and helping the region to be competitive with the other regions of the nation.

Some of the criteria by which the Adopt-A-Highway Program is implemented include the following:

- Adopting groups must sign an agreement with PennDOT.
- Groups must agree to adopt at least two mile portions of state highway. PennDOT must agree that the highway is suitable for adoption.
- Groups must agree to pick up litter at least four times a year. The agreement runs for two years. It will renew automatically unless either party chooses to terminate it.
- Group leaders must use safety materials provided by PennDOT, and must conduct safety meetings with group members before each pick up.

—PennDOT will post two signs (one in each direction) naming the adopting group or individual on the adopted portion of highway.

—Participants must be at least 10 years old. Participants under 18 must be accompanied by adults.

An Adopt-A-Highway agreement is signed between the Department of Transportation and the organization undertaking the program. While the majority of cases are represented by non-profit organizations who participate, profit making organizations may also become part of the Adopt-A-Highway Program.

A series of safety recommendations are outlined in the package of material which PennDOT provides to organizations considering the process.

As a result of recent conversations with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and with the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania Board of Directors, the Council has agreed to help promote and publicize this important effort. To those who would like information pertaining to the program, contact can be made with EDCNP, 1151 Oak Street, Pittston, PA 18640 (717-655-5581) in addition to the PennDOT District offices.

Howard Grossman is Executive Director of the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania. He lives in Dallas.

J.W.J.

## Has our legal system become simply a way for people to get rich quickly?

By J.W. JOHNSON

It used to be said that even if there were only two lawyers in the entire United States, there would be a minimum of four lawsuits filed on any given day.

In sum, we now have greedy citizens, aided and abetted by too many talented lawyers, chasing too few legitimate clients, with both viewing the legal system as simply another way to make money.

However, this can now be said of not just the United States, but Japan as well. There, a lawyer representing Japan's largest organized crime group, has filed suit against the government alleging infringement of his clients' civil rights with the passage of a new anti-gangster bill. The lawyer further alleges in the suit that his clients are being denied the right of free association and freedom of expression.

Can you believe this! Or how about the accountant who, along with his two children, were flying to a Bahamas vacation. As the plane neared Nassau, it began to buck violently, and a pilot announced that an engine failure would force a return to Miami.

Within minutes, the plane's other two engines had stopped, and the passengers were informed that the plane would have to 'ditch.' However, the pilot managed to get one engine restarted and the plane landed safely. All's well that ends well, right?

Not if you're the alleged victim of alleged "psychological injuries," as the accountant claimed in a subsequent lawsuit. Not that he and the other two dozen passengers are ungrateful for the pilots having saved their lives; rather, the accountant wants to be compensated for being frightened.

Perhaps more frightening is that he's not the first, and that there are some court cases on the books where plaintiffs have received favorable treatment by the courts

when seeking to be paid for psychic damage and phobia claims. Other cases have included:

—A federal appeals court upholding a \$207,000 verdict to five persons who claimed a fear of becoming ill after a chemical firm contaminated ground water.

—The famous case of Rock Hudson's lover, Marc Christian, who was awarded \$5 million for Christian's alleged mental anguish over learning that Hudson had AIDS.

Put another way: is it now reasonable for us to sue another driver because he or she almost hit us?

Will major league pitchers eventually be the subject of litigation for keeping batters off the plate?

You laugh...but where there's greed seeking a lawyer, there's a potential and probable lawsuit...witness the New York City case where a woman brought suit alleging she feared getting ill because she had visited a hotel where asbestos was being removed. Thankfully, the suit was dismissed and the lawyer fined \$10,000 for his frivolity.

All of these cases speak to our society becoming "victim" oriented, and the legal system becoming a meal ticket for too many lawyers chasing too few clients.

While editor of this newspaper, I saw a similar episode...with appropriate results. It was the day when a twelve year old boy had a day in the principal's office.

And then principle won. It seems that following the lad's day with the principal, his parents decided to litigate the matter.

The parents filed suit asking that a Philadelphia area school district be forced to take their son along on a three-day trip. We have been excluded by the school principal as punishment for being disrespectful.

The judge—bless his heart—

denied the parent's request without comment. But he noted that the cases "shows the growing tendency to go to court."

"We didn't receive any justice," the boy's mother said afterward. She admitted that the boy was "no angel," but said he didn't deserve to be denied the chance to go on the field trip with his 61 classmates.

The school principal had said that students "absolutely" have the right to question authority, "but in a respectful way and that's the central issue."

Indeed, it was the issue. The tendency to bring litigation today has all but brought the legal system to its knees, and true respect for the law to the brink of becoming a laughing matter.

To quote English jurist Lord Moulton: "The measure of a civilization is the degree of its obedience to the unenforceable."

In the student's case, the unenforceable was a reasonable expectation of respect for authority, ignored by a student, and that principle later debased by the student's parents through litigation.

In the accountant's case, the unenforceable was a reasonable expectation that equipment does, indeed, malfunction, and that, indeed, life is not fair nor a respecter of circumstance.

And in the Japanese case...well, that's not even worth discussing.

And if you agree with Lord Moulton—that whether or not we are civilized is measured by our self-imposed obedience to the unenforceable—then the truly frightening reality is that this nation, indeed the world, is rapidly becoming bands of three-piece suit savages, roaming the world's courtrooms in search of legal firewood with which to burn the bonds of honor, integrity and mutual respect, the very fibers of which, free nations, intending to remain so, depend.

### Sen. Lemmond speaks to class

Recently the sixth grade social studies classes at the Dallas Middle School completed a unit on state and local government. The concluding activity was an assembly program with State Senator Charles Lemmond as guest speaker. The program was organized by the sixth grade social studies teacher Mrs. Kathy Wega. Pictured first row, from left: Alycia Roberts, Lacey Popson, Barbara Lispi, Bryan Bachman and John Saba. Second row: Senator Charles Lemmond, Bruce Kunke, Mrs. Kathy Wega and Anthony Martinelli, principal.



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PUBLICATION DATE: JANUARY 27  
AD DEADLINE: WED., JAN. 20  
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