

NEWS RELEASE

FOR RELEASE: Immediately

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**Survey: 27 candidates, including 7 of 14 City Council-persons,
support legislation to bring inclusion to the Philadelphia
skilled trades unions**

Respondents included Governor Rendell, Lynn Swann, three mayoral hopefuls.

Philadelphia PA, October 12, 2006 – When asked in a recent survey whether they would be willing to help create new jobs for Philadelphia residents, and for the city’s black, minority, disabled and female residents, by supporting legislation to make the local construction industry’s skilled trades unions more inclusive, incumbent Governor Ed Rendell and challenger Lynn Swann both responded affirmatively.

But while 22 incumbents and 5 challengers who are, either, running in the November 7 General Election or planning to run in the May Primary Elections, responded to the survey questionnaire none of the three incumbents running to represent Philadelphia, again, in the U.S. Congress- Bob Brady, Chaka Fattah or Allyson Schwartz- and neither of the state’s U.S. Senatorial candidates – Rick Santorum or Bob Casey - bothered to complete and return the eight-question survey form.

The survey was issued on September 14 by the Philadelphia- based TAC, or Technical Assistance Center for Emerging Contractors (emergingcontractor.com), whose mission is to increase the city’s overall construction workforce capacity and to expand the number of African-American and other minority members of the Philadelphia skilled trades unions.

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By current estimates, about 80 percent of the skilled trades union members working on construction projects in Philadelphia do not live in the city and people of color, females and the disabled constitute a low-single digit percentage of the membership. In addition to the gubernatorial candidates, nine incumbents running to retain their seats as Philadelphia representatives were supportive of the job-creation initiative, including State Representatives Dwight Evans, James Roebuck, Cherelle Parker, Curtis Thomas, Frank Oliver, Mark Cohen, Babette Josephs, Harold James, and Ron Waters. Two of the three incumbents hoping to retain their state senate seats in Philadelphia districts, Anthony Hardy Williams and LeAnna Washington, also responded positively to the survey. Of the Philadelphia state senators on the November 7 ballot, only Tina Tartaglione failed to participate.

Eight of the 14 Philadelphia City Councilpersons responded to the jobs-creation survey, including Marian Tasco, Blondell Reynolds-Brown, W. Wilson Goode, Jr., Darrell Clarke, Frank DiCicco, Frank Rizzo, Juan Ramos and Donna Reed Miller.

Three of the seven persons who have been identified as potential Philadelphia mayoral candidates in 2007 also responded favorably. In addition to Evans, Jonathan Saidel and Michael Nutter also said they would support the initiative to create jobs for minorities and Philadelphians through expanding skilled trades union membership. Mayoral hopefuls who refused to respond were John Dougherty, Chaka Fattah, Tom Knox, and Bob Brady.

Other notable non-respondents were Philadelphia Mayor John F. Street and State Representative John Perzel, Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

The survey respondents expressed overwhelming unanimity, on the subject matter. In fact:

- 100 percent of the respondents agreed that “African Americans and other minorities” are currently underrepresented in the Philadelphia skilled trade unions.
- In addition, 92.6 percent of the respondents – every candidate other than Lynn Swann, and state representative candidate Traci Confer - agreed that it was inappropriate that an estimated 80% of the members of the skilled trades who work on Philadelphia construction projects do not live in the City.

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- 96.4 percent of the respondents- all except candidate Confer- believe it is inappropriate for the skilled trades unions to continue to serve as the sole source of labor for local, publicly-funded construction projects while they refuse to divulge their Philadelphia and minority membership data.
- 92.6 percent of the respondents- all except the Green Party candidates Confer and Councilman Ramos-said that they would support legislation that would require, by yearend 2006, that skilled trades unions that work in Philadelphia issue semi-annual reports on the number and percentage of their membership that is comprised of Philadelphia residents and the number and percentage of their membership that is comprised of African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, females and the disabled.
In his positive response to that question, Governor Rendell said he thought it “would be best if such a law could be passed or enabled at the local level.”
- 100% of the respondents said they believed there should be specific plans in place to increase the capacity and the level of inclusion in the local skilled trades unions before the two new casinos, the convention center expansion and the new public school construction projects are begun.
- Given the potential for new Philadelphia job creation related to the issue, 100% of the respondents said they would be willing to play a “leadership role” in helping to ensure that the city’s construction workforce fairly includes, more Philadelphians and minorities.

Surprisingly, given the special importance of this issue to African-American and Hispanic job-seekers, seven high-profile, Philadelphia black and Hispanic elected officials failed to respond to the survey, including Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell, State Representatives Thomas Blackwell, Louise Williams Bishop, Rosita Youngblood, Angel Cruz; and Congressman Chaka Fattah and Mayor Street.

In addition, in an open-ended section of the questionnaire, the candidates offered a broad number of recommendations, including the following:

“I have a number of ideas and proposals in this area and I would like to discuss them with TAC.”

- Michael Nutter
Candidate for Mayor

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“I believe there should be ... a qualified oversight committee to establish compliance.”

- State Rep. Ronald G. Waters

“We need to create something that will get us the desired results.”

- State Rep. Harold James

“We need to make sure that Philadelphians become part of the skilled trades unions through residency requirements, job training grants, and other incentives to grow a diverse workforce.”

- Mike Rosenberg, Green Party Candidate 188th State Leg. District

“The... reporting plans could be made a condition in appropriation of monies in support of city-funded projects. Also, presumably, you’ll have candidates forums on these issues.”

- City Councilman Frank Rizzo

“More emphasis on providing strong, quality education to individuals gets the foundation to pursue careers.”

- State Rep. James Roebuck

“Until numbers in the union memberships rise, real progress is not yet made. I am willing to work with anyone and everyone to improve the current level of inclusion in the construction industry.”

- Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown

“There should be city tax credit for ex-offender employment.”

- State Rep. Cherrelle Parker

“Pennsylvania Department of General Services has an executive obligation to make sure the Convention Center expansion project complies with the Governor’s Executive Order on participation by people of color in all publicly - funded contracts.”

“Legal and Direct Action.”

- State Rep. Curtis Thomas

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“I introduced a proposal in the Committee of the Whole yesterday that would have given more state funds for training of ex-offenders and people in high – unemployment neighborhoods.”

- State Rep. Mark Cohen

“New Unions”

- W. Wilson Goode, Jr.

“Given the long history of union involvement in the political process – locally, statewide and nationally – it takes great courage, political will and commitment to constituent service for candidates to speak out so progressively on this issue” said TAC spokesman and board member A. Bruce Crawley. “We’re pleased that so many have chosen to do so. As we’ve said repeatedly, this is not an anti-union initiative, it is however a very serious effort to ensure long overdue inclusion in the local construction industry.”

“At the same time”, added Crawley, “we are deeply disappointed that the survey revealed that there are people who claim an interest in representing Philadelphia voters who don’t have the wisdom and plain, economic good sense to fight for jobs for people in this city. We hope the voters pay careful attention to these findings as we go out to share this information between now and Election Day.

“We are encouraged that there seems to be an exceptionally strong commitment, by those elected officials who did respond, to take 'the next step' – through a legislative process – to allow the people they represent to finally benefit from the City’s “construction boom.”

“Every one of them expressed an interest in playing a 'leadership role' in this process. We hope to announce next week the structure of the leadership group that will take responsibility for guiding this issue in Harrisburg and in the City Council.”

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