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**Sen. Pileggi honored with PNA Bill Northrop Freedom of Information Award**



**Pileggi**

HARRISBURG, Pa. (Oct. 24, 2008) — Senate Majority Leader Dominic F. Pileggi has been awarded the Bill Northrop Freedom of Information Award by the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association (PNA). The award was presented to Sen. Pileggi in recognition of his sponsorship of Act 3-2008, the Right to Know Law, signed by Gov. Edward G. Rendell on Feb. 14, 2008. This law replaced Pennsylvania's much-criticized 1957 act, widely considered one of the worst in the nation.

In 2002, the Bill Northrop Freedom of Information Award was named in honor of William Northrop, retired publisher of the Washington *Observer-Reporter*, for his leadership in directing a statewide research project, "Keystone State Secrets." This project documented problems in obtaining public records from local governments.

Sen. Pileggi served as mayor of the City of Chester from 1998-2002, and has represented the 9th Senatorial District, encompassing parts of Chester and Delaware Counties, since 2002. He is a graduate of St. Joseph's University and Villanova School of Law, and is the recipient of numerous honors and public service awards. Sen. Pileggi was elected to the position of Majority Leader in November 2006.

The new Right to Know Law was the subject of intensive review and negotiations over the course of an entire year. For the first time it applies to financial records of the Pennsylvania House and Senate, as well as to agencies under the Governor's jurisdiction, and makes it clear that state-affiliated entities such as the Turnpike Commission, PHEAA and the PIAA are all covered by the law.

"I believe that transparency builds trust in government, and that a strong Open Records Law is the true foundation of government reform in Pennsylvania," said Pileggi. He called the new law a big first step, adding "There is more that we can do, such as convening a constitutional convention – an idea that I could support."

The award was conferred last night at The Omni William Penn Hotel in Pittsburgh, during PNA's Annual Dinner, held in conjunction with the association's Annual Convention. Bill Northrop and members of the Northrop family joined 2007-08 PNA Chairman John Kirkpatrick, publisher and editor of *The (Harrisburg) Patriot-News*, in presenting the award and congratulating the senator.

"We are particularly gratified that the senator recognized the obstacles created in the 1957 law, which starts with the presumption that records are not public unless they are specifically identified as such," said Kirkpatrick. "The new law very properly places on the agency the burden of proving that a document is not subject to public disclosure."

The PNA, founded in 1925, is a nonprofit trade association. Its mission is to advance the interests of Pennsylvania newspapers, promote the importance of a free and independent press and provide a forum for critical and innovative thinking about the future of journalism and the newspaper industry.

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