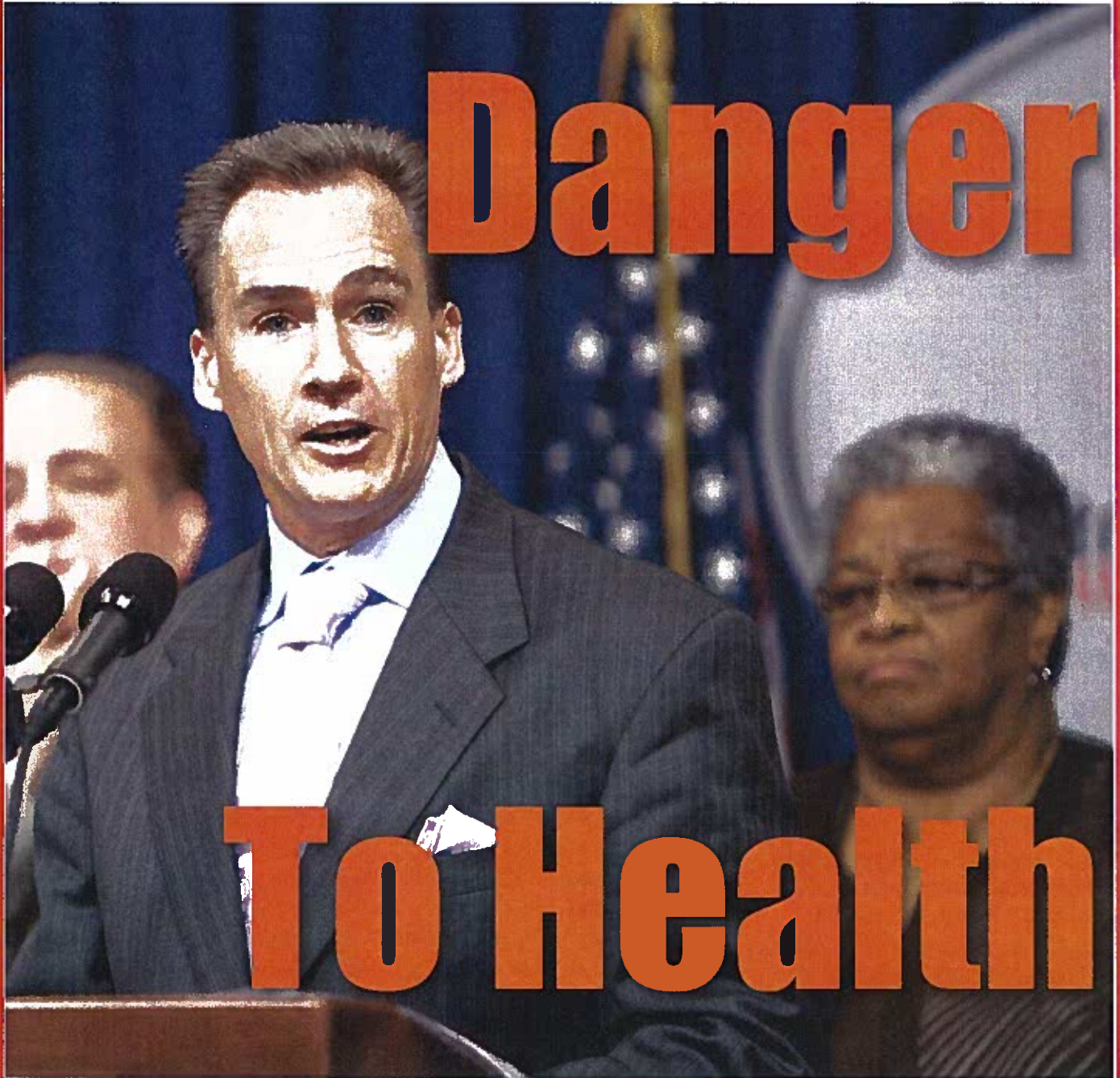


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STATE SENS. Mike Stack and Shirley Kitchen were among Philadelphians who came to Harrisburg to warn of calamitous consequences to hospitals and to low-income working citizens if House Republican budget passes as is. See story page 4.



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Senators, Hospital Advocates Warn Budget Plan Will Hurt Health Care



REPUBLICAN HOUSE budget will be “devastating to hospitals,” State Sen. Mike Stack warned at Harrisburg press conference.

State Sen. Mike Stack (D-Northeast) warned of the disastrous impact of state budget cuts to health programs and services as the Senate tackles the House Republican version of the 2011-12 State budget.

He, along with State Sens. Shirley Kitchen (D-N. Phila.), Andy Dinniman (D-Chester), Larry Farnese (D-S. Phila.) and Jim Brewster (D-Allegheny); Ken Braithwaite, regional executive for the Delaware Valley Healthcare Council and Senior VP for The Hospital & Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania; and Cheri Rinehart, executive director of the Pennsylvania Association of Community Health Centers, discussed the impact of the state budget proposal (HB 1485) on the State's health programs during a Capitol news conference yesterday.

They implored the Senate to consider restoring Tobacco Settlement Fund dollars to the adultBasic health coverage plan and uncompensated care, as well as restoring funding in to hospitals, which have been decimated by the House Republican budget plan.

“We can do better and we need to do better. Our health-care programs need a lifeline and prescription for sanity under the House Republican budget,” Stack said. “In this economy, when budgets are already tight and people are out of work, these cuts are appalling. They will be devastating to hospitals at a time when more and more funding is needed to help our state’s most-vulnerable individuals.”

More than 41,000 individuals from across the state lost their adultBa-

sic health plan in February because funding ran out. Another half million were on the waiting list. There is no mention of reinstating this program in HB 1485 and the Governor did not mention it in his budget plan.

As of May 5, only 32% of those adultBasic recipients signed up for the Blues’ Special Care program.

The House Republican plan also cuts over \$400 million to medical assistance programs. The vast majority of Medical Assistance recipients are the elderly, the disabled and children, Kitchen said.

“The House Republican budget places a heavy burden on the programs and the people whose backs are already breaking,” Kitchen said. “They made the Dept. of Public Welfare the sacrificial lamb.”

The budget bill also eliminates \$31.5 million in State dollars in uncompensated care, thereby jeopardizing \$38.6 million in federal matching dollars. Hospitals use uncompensated-care funds to make up costs when patients have no insurance and can't afford to pay their medical bills.

The Hospital & Health Association of Pennsylvania says uncompensated care provided by Pennsylvania hospitals has increased an astounding 48% over the last five years. Last year alone, hospitals provided \$891 million dollars in uncompensated care.

"In my home District, Temple University Health System would lose \$36 million dollars in crucial state and federal funding, and North Philadelphia Health System would lose \$7.5 million dollars in state

and federal funding," Kitchen said. "These are extremely busy hospitals that help some of the city's most disadvantaged citizens. They offer world-class care but they can't do it on a shoestring budget."

Stack suggested several solutions to restore funding into health-care line items, including restricting the use of the Tobacco Settlement Fund to health care programs, as it was intended to be used. That's \$350 million dollars to help ease the budget pain.

The Senator also introduced legislation that would sustain adultBasic for another year by tapping the General Assembly's budget surplus. SB 420 would allocate the \$189-million surplus to fund operating expenses for adultBasic through April 2012, assuming that expenses remain at \$14 million a

month.

He also introduced SB 836, which would require individuals to pay all outstanding court fees and fines before they can have their car registration renewed. There are \$1.6 billion in unpaid fines, costs, fees and restitution owed to Courts of Common Pleas throughout Pennsylvania.

The budget deadline is just three weeks away, but we can still explore real options to restore funding to these critical line items," Stack said. "People will continue to get sick, whether they have health coverage or not. The elderly, the disabled and children will continue to need Medical Assistance. They will all need care. We must lift this budget burden off the backs of patients, hospitals and the taxpayers."

Lowery Brown Announces Scholarship Opportunity

State Rep. Vanessa Lowery Brown (D-W. Phila.) today urged female high-school juniors and seniors with plans for college to consider entering the National Foundation for Women Legislators scholarship essay competition.

Brown said female high-school juniors or seniors in the classes of 2011 or 2012 still have time to compete in a scholarship contest sponsored by the NFWL and the National Rifle Association, and that they should move quickly to enter.

Seven contest winners in the nation will each receive a \$3,000 scholarship to use towards tuition at any US college or university and an all-expense-paid trip to NFWL's 2011 Annual Conference, Aug. 11-15 at the Marriott in Downtown Des Moines, Iowa.

The topic of the 400 to 600-word composition is "The Impact of the First Amendment on Women Leaders and Social Media."

"As we see in instantaneous communications today, an issue can go from totally unknown to a national or even international topic in a matter of hours," said Brown. "We are all learning to adapt to the meteoric rise of social media and explore what it could mean to the future of democracy and how it can be adapted to increase communications between citizens and women candidates and office-holders."

Brown said the writer should consider such media as YouTube; Facebook; Twitter; blogging; mass political text messaging and how they create a direct intercon-

