

Sept/Oct, 2008

The NewsPAGR

Pennsylvania Association for Government Relations

**Post Office Box 116 Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17108
(717) 540-4391 Fax (717) 657-9708 www.pagr.org**



PA Legislative
Correspondents'
Assn

78th Annual GRIDIRON DINNER

Tuesday, October 7, 2008

Hilton Harrisburg

6:00 PM Cash bar

7:00 PM Dinner and Program

\$80.00 per plate \$800 per table

FOR TICKETS:

Call 717.540.0296

or email pagridiron@christinecorrigan.com

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Andy Hill



This has been a hard message to sit down and write.

Part of it is that it is summer and I have been having a great time with my family. I thought about taking my laptop on vacation; but I decided to stay married and I left it at home. Frankly, even if I had taken it I would not have worked on this message. I was having too much fun swimming, sightseeing and kayaking. I'd show you pictures, but I lost the camera kayaking.

I was trying to figure out what to write about and then *The Harrisburg Patriot-News* handed me a gift. The weekend after the indoor smoking bar went into effect they ran a piece I can only assume they felt was journalism. The premise of the story was they sent reporters out to mid-state establishments and had them light up and see how the staff and patrons reacted.

The story said most places instructed the reporter to put out the cigarette out.

As I read the story my blood boiled. Not because I oppose the indoor smoking ban; I don't. (If I am going out to eat I don't want to smell cigarette). The problem for me was that the Patriot and their reporters were breaking the law.

Questions began to swirl in my mind. "Who do they think that they are?" "Where do they draw the line?" "Would they let me get away with this?"

Okay, let me put my cards on the table, I'm not a fan of the press. For the most part I think the press has an inflated view of themselves. There was a time that my wife hated when I read certain reporters. For instance, back in early 2001 an reporter for the Patriot, we will call him "Pete",

Save the Date



Election Results Party

Tuesday, November 4, 2008
Firehouse Restaurant

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wrote a story about the Legislative Reapportionment Commission. "Pete" said that the commission would be meeting to redraw the Congressional Districts in Pennsylvania. Anyone familiar with the process knows that the Commission draws the Legislative Districts; the General Assembly draws Congressional Districts. Ok, "Pete" wasn't lying to lie- he was just lazy and sloppy, but if you or I, as lobbyists said something publicly that was that inaccurate "Pete" would have skewered us. And I can only imagine what he would do to an elected official who made a statement that was that wrong.

The editorial page of the Patriot used to claim the press is "...the armor of a free state." Sure the press can and should play an important role in our society but what they seem to forget or ignore is that the First Amendment, which "creates" their job, "creates" our job. The first amendment protects the freedom of the press and it also protects the right of assembly and the right to petition the government for the redress of grievances. But somehow the press views what they do as an important public service and what we do as somehow suspect.

So back to my question. Where do they draw the line? Clearly it is not at breaking the law. I am going to assume that they would not condone murder for the sake of a story. But would they assault some one to see what the police response time is? Maybe not, but would it be ok to call 911 an make a (false) report to check the response time? Now the press might tell us that lighting up for the story serves the public good and therefore a minor infraction of the law is ok. Which begs the question, if the legislation is in the public interest can its advocates break the law too?

Positions Available

WANTED: Individuals interested in being a part of the 2009 PAGR Board of Directors.

If you like to meet with your colleagues and work to promote the purpose and effectiveness of the lobbying profession, please contact Christine at info@pagr.org.

Meeting Notice

Monday October 6, 2008

11:30 am—12:30 pm

Firehouse Restaurant

Third Floor

606 N. 2nd Street • Harrisburg



Our Guest will be:

SECRETARY of REVENUE

Tom Wolf

ALL 2008 MEMBERS WILL RECEIVE A FREE LUNCH. ALL GUESTS OF MEMBERS WILL BE CHARGED \$20.

PLEASE RSVP BY October 3 TO
717-540-4391 OR INFO@PAGR.ORG.

THANK YOU.

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