

Politics and Economics

Struggling college grads default on loans

by Sean Flynn and
Nasanin Mahmudy

Penn State graduate student Emma Bedor is watching the clock tick toward graduation.

Bedor is working toward her goal of becoming a college professor. She finished her bachelor's degree in communications at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Geneseo with less than \$10,000 in student loans—far better the national average—with the help of financial aid and in-state tuition rates at SUNY Geneseo.

“[Loans] didn't used to scare me,” Bedor said. “Whatever I had to do to go to school, my mom did it for me, and I signed my name.”

Now earning a her master's degree in media studies at Penn State, she is considered an out-of-state student and pays the corresponding out-of-state tuition rate. Like four out of five undergraduate Penn Staters, Bedor receives no scholarship or financial aid from the university. To finish her master's degree, she is taking out student loans to the tune of \$20,000 per semester. By the time she finishes her graduate degree, she will be nearly \$90,000 in debt—debt which she will have to start paying six months after finishing school.

“Now that I'm an out-of-state student with no financial aid whatsoever, it's important that I go straight into a Ph.D program so that I don't have to pay until I have a solid job,” Bedor said.

She isn't alone.

Putting loan debt at Penn State in context

According to a November 2011 report, “Student Debt and the Class of 2010” by the Project on Student Debt, college students have been taking on increasing amounts of loan debt in to recent years.

Coleen Killinger is a senior at Penn State, majoring in English. Right now the 22-year-old works at Access, a boutique in State College, to offset the costs of college.

“I take out small loans to pay for tuition costs,” said Killinger, who estimates she will graduate with \$40,000 of debt after her time at Penn State.



PSU grad student Emma Bedor.

Killinger worries about paying off her loans, but says she is still “hopeful” about finding a professional career that will let her use her English degree. For now, she will keep working at Access. She plans to accept what she says will be a temporary manager's position there after graduation.

Penn State graduates like Killinger find themselves at the forefront of the student loan debate. Tuition at Penn State has increased approximately 11 percent since 2007 according to a 2010 Centre Daily Times article. Penn State's total costs place it on the Project on Student Debt's list of “high-debt colleges.”

The College Cost Calculator on Penn State's website shows that the average total cost of tuition, room, meals, books and fees for an in-state undergraduate at University Park is more than \$28,000 per year.

According to data published by Penn State's Office of Student Aid, more than three-quarters of Penn State University Park students take out some form of student loans. The average University Park graduate from the Class of 2010 owes \$31,135 in student loan debt after graduation, according to a U.S. News and World Report review.

This is about 23percent more than the national average of \$25,250, and it means

that Penn State students graduating from University Park finance, on average, roughly one-quarter of their education.

At for-profit colleges and universities, 97 percent of students also take on loans, and according a study written by the Pew Research Center. Low-income females from minority groups are disproportionately represented in their numbers. More than one-quarter of graduates with bachelor's degrees from for-profit institutions borrowed more than \$40,000, compared with five percent of graduates at public institutions and 14 percent at not-for-profit institutions.

A bleak employment landscape for graduates

The Class of 2010 graduated into a recession with an average unemployment rate of 9.1 percent, up from 8.7 percent in 2009. But high unemployment, according to the report “Student debt and the class of 2010,” hits those without college degrees hardest.

Of 20- to 24-year-olds with only a high school diploma, 20 percent are unemployed, making a college degree more vital than ever. But the ever-increasing cost of college drives more and more students to take out loans, according to the report.

Moreover, sharp cuts in state funding have caused many institutions to raise their tuition rates, and while federal student aid programs increased to help meet rising costs, the Project on Student Debt reports that student debt loads have only increased.

With student debt rising, unemployment at a decades-long high, and job prospects looking gloomy, an increasing number of graduates are taking whatever jobs they can find.

Adreanna Early graduated in 2008 from Florida State University with bachelor's degrees in political science and international affairs, a combination she hoped would land her a job in either nonprofit or diplomatic work. She took out nearly \$15,000 in student loans to help pay for her education, a prospect that didn't worry her until her senior year.

“I really thought I'd get a job after college and just start paying,” Early said..



Florida State University grad Adreanna Early.

But as graduation came and went and her job applications went unanswered, Early found herself unemployed in the first months of a bitter recession. That's when “things got scary, because I had to very quickly figure out what my next step was.”

Early moved back to her hometown of Fort Walton Beach, Fla., and back in with her parents. She took the only work she could find: a part-time job at Edible Arrangements, a “fruit boutique franchise,” at \$9 per hour. It barely paid her student loans, on which she owed \$174 every month.

“Luckily, my parents were willing to help out—we did a 50/50 sort of thing while I was working,” Early said. “The only reason I was able to afford 50 percent of my student loan payments was because of my parents. If I'd been on my own, I probably wouldn't have been able to afford my student loans with cell phone, car insurance, that sort of thing.”

Early spent a year and a half at Edible Arrangements, looking for work. She finally found it in Americorps. The national service organization offered her loan deferment for the length of each 11-month term,

see **Default**, pg. 6

State College area sliced up by Harrisburg

by Christopher Lee

Author's note: This story follows up the article about gerrymandering in the February 2011 issue of Voices.

Something is tearing up the Centre Region of State College Borough and Ferguson, Patton, Halfmoon, College and Harris Townships. Redrawing electoral district boundaries of the State House of Representatives will slice up the State College community into four pieces.

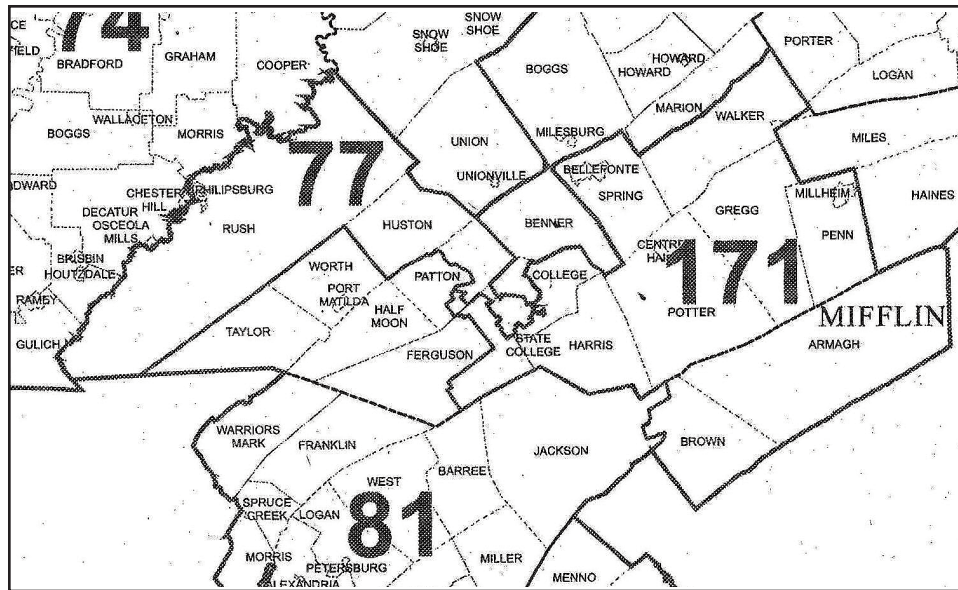
"You can take a particular population and you can split them up so they have no strength," Pennsylvania League of Women Voters Redistricting Specialist Lora Lavin told Voices earlier this year. "It's called cracking."

Each of the four pieces of the State College area will be given to a different State Representative: Mike Hanna (D-76th, Lock Haven), Michael Fleck (R-81st, Three Springs), Scott Conklin (D-77th, Phillipsburg) and Kerry Benninghoff (R-171st, Bellefonte). None of them lives anywhere in the State College area

Redistricting as Incumbent Protection

"Redistricting has been degraded into an incumbent protection tool," Barry Kauffman, Executive Director of Common Cause PA told Voices earlier this year. "The system is broken."

"The only time you'll have an opportunity for a contested election would be in the primary," remarked Lavin, "and in primaries usually the people who vote are the extreme



Map courtesy of the Pennsylvania Legislative Reapportionment Commission

This map displays the state representative district as reshaped by the recent caucus.

partisans, the dedicated Democrats and the dedicated Republicans."

Republicans Fleck and Benninghoff live in districts heavily dominated by Republican voters and both have had no Democratic competition in two of the three last general elections. In his first run for State Representative in 2006, Fleck, a graduate of Jerry Falwell's Liberty University in Virginia, defeated his Democratic opponent 65 percent to 35 percent. In 2010, he ran without any opposition at all, as did Benninghoff.

Unaccountable Legislators Are Free To Serve Special Interests

"If legislators don't believe that their actions can draw competition, they are more likely to heed the desires of special interests than their constituents," said Timothy Potts, Executive Director of the reform advocacy group Democracy Rising.

"Major donations have a strong correlation with things in Harrisburg," said Kauffman. "For example, the gambling industry hired every lobbyist in town and dominated the legislative process for a very long time. Despite the other interests of Pennsylvanians, the gambling issue moved to the front and passed quickly."

Pennsylvania has the dubious distinction of being the only shale gas state in the nation

that doesn't have a severance tax on gas, at a time when the state is struggling to balance its budget.

Recent legislation by the Republican-dominated legislature on taxing gas companies has been decried by state environmental groups.

But Benninghoff doesn't see a problem. "If people feel their district has been gerrymandered and they're disenfranchised, they'll express it at the polls," Benninghoff has told Voices.

Gerrymandering as a Refined Art

The director of the Center for Politics and Public Affairs at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster Terry Madonna has disagreed strongly. "Redistricting is a partisan and political activity," Madonna said.

In the proposed redistricting, Democrat Conklin will get the entire borough of State College, full of what Conklin describes as "moderate to progressive" voters and Democrat Mike Hanna will get the student housing in College Township.

Cutting these moderate-voting areas from Benninghoff's district makes his district even more dominated by Republican voters and less likely that he will have an opponent, given the futile nature of a Democratic challenge in such a heavily Republican district.

The proposed redistricting "digs moats around castles of power as opposed to building bridges of inclusion," State Democratic

see *Gerrymander*, pg. 8

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"Occupy" and "Move on" struggle in county

by Katherine Rodriguez

Throughout the nation, the "Occupy" movement has dominated social media and dinner table discussions. Yet here in Centre County, economic activism has yet to find a protest more substantial than students occupying the HUB.

The local council of MoveOn hosted an event on November 5 asking all participants to move their money from big banks, and move it into smaller banks and credit unions that invest in local communities. They aimed to "tell the big banks—and our government—no more free passes for damaging our economy."

But in practice, few if any supporters participated in the money pull out.

At PNC, which is open until 12:30 p.m. on Saturdays, only one person who wished to remain anonymous came in to close an account. She stated it was because she had moved to New York, and there are no PNC locations near her.

Reasons for this may have included that the major banks being targeted through this event, Bank of America, Citigroup, and Chase don't have a big influence in Centre County. Another reason was that the event was set for 12:30 p.m., while many banks close at noon on Saturday if they are open at all.

Elsewhere, Americans are making a political statement with their money.

According to the American Dream Movement's website, rebuildthedream.com, participants have pledged to close 82,386 accounts nationwide.

"Now is the time for our voices to be heard, and it's time to end corporate control over our democratic government."

--Amanda Maull, Penn State grad student

Credit unions' numbers corroborate these pledges. The Credit Union National Association reported this quarter that more than 650,000 Americans have opened new accounts at credit unions since Sept. 29.

A more recent event called "We are the 99%" gained much more attention. This nationwide event was in response to the Occupy Wall Street protesters being evicted from Liberty Park in New York City. The event was held on Thursday, November 17, and aimed to "bring light to our failing economy." The MoveOn website stated that 469 gatherings were hosted nationwide.

In the local gathering, more than 30 people held signs and chanted "jobs not cuts," gaining attention from onlookers. People handed out signs saying "Tax Wall Street" as well as buttons that said "The American Dream Movement."

The event organizers hoped to gain the attention of Senator Pat Toomey, and to shed light on issues such as the lack of jobs, the failing public school system, and the "22 defective bridges" in the local area,



Barbara Ballenger was the speaker at the We are the 99% event on Thursday, Nov. 17 2011. Over 30 people participated in the event.

according to Barbara Ballenger, a member of the local Move On council.

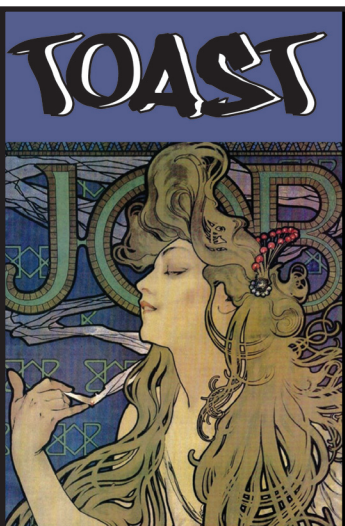
"I've been silent for too long," said Amanda Maull, a graduate student in Sociology at Penn State who participated in the event. "Now is the time for our voices to be heard, and it's time to end corporate control over our democratic government."

Penn State students have been generally more engaged with the nationwide movement. The "Occupy the HUB" action continued for a month between mid-October and Mid-November. According to the letter left behind at the end of occupation, the stu-

dents felt it was important in the wake of the child abuse scandal at Penn State to present a united student body.

But the protesters stuck to their arguments as well.

"We aim to create a dialogue that will benefit the Penn State community, challenging the new administration to address issues such as high tuition, budget transparency (in part through disclosure of corporate funding), sustainability in our education and more effective student representation," the letter stated as it was reposted on Onward State.



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from Default, pg. 3

plus \$5,000 in loan repayments for every term she completed. But it was at the cripplingly low salary of \$900 per month. She took the offer and spent the next 22 months working in New Orleans and Denver assisting Rebuilding Together, a nonprofit organization that rehabilitates houses for low-income homeowners.

Her term with Americorps expires soon, but even with two years in government service, her job prospects look grim.

"I have more experience," she noted, "but experience isn't everything. I think right now personal connections between [a job-seeker] and a potential employer are the best chance to get a job."

Early said she isn't sure how to solve the problem of increasing tuition, spiraling loan debt or tough job markets.

"It's just a vicious cycle," she said. "I don't know what the answer is. But everyone deserves the chance to go to college. If we can push through healthcare reform, why can't we push through higher education reform?"

Now, three years after Early graduated, students are still finding themselves in similar predicaments. Kelsey Suloman, a junior and classical history major at Penn State's University Park campus, said she is carrying \$36,000 in student loans and worries about finding a job to pay them off.

"A degree in classical history isn't like a degree in engineering, where you get a job for sure," said Suloman.

Instead of pursuing a position in her field, Suloman says she will stay in retail sales. American Eagle has offered her a position as a manager, she said, from which she hopes to make somewhere between \$40,000 and \$50,000 per year. That should be enough, she said, to let her "survive."

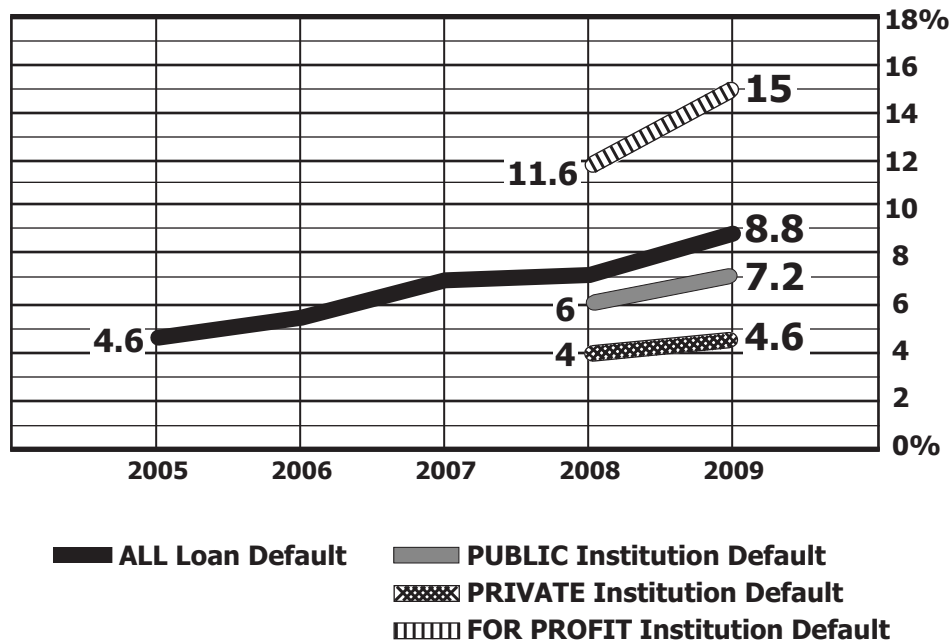
Not everyone is so lucky.

A rising trend in loan defaults

The U.S. Department of Education defines a defaulted student loan as any loan which has been unpaid for more than 270 days. After the Department has attempted to collect on a defaulted student loan, it may take more drastic actions, such as 15 percent wage garnishment, tax refund offsets and direct legal action.

AuBree Goedde is very familiar with the

STUDENT LOAN Default Rate 2005-2009



Graph by Kay Shamalla

process. Goedde graduated from Eastern Michigan University with a degree in Elementary Education in 2005.

"Teaching jobs were few and far between," wrote Goedde in an email. "One job opening [had] 500 applicants."

As a single mother, she lacked the extracurricular activities that would have set her apart from other applicants. Unable to find a job in her field and expected to pay of \$369 of her student loans per month, Goedde defaulted on her student loans.

As a result, the federal government seized her income tax refund, which she says came to about \$4,000.

"When I got the new bill reflecting that 'payment,' my balance didn't change at all because of the insane interest rate," she wrote.

She wants to go back to school to "actually get a good job." But with her loans in default, she didn't qualify for more; college was out of her financial reach. Goedde said she has since worked her way back out of default, but still has thousands of dollars to repay.

According to data published by the U.S. Department of Education, stories like Goedde's are becoming more common.

The national student loan default rate rose from 7 percent in 2008 to 8.8 percent in 2009. These numbers include all loans for all types of colleges and universities. The biggest increase of loan defaults were in for-profit institutions, increasing from 11.6 percent to 15 percent. Default rates at public institutions increased from 6 percent to 7.2 percent over the year, and private institution default rates increased from 4 percent to 4.6 percent.

The federal government has not been blind to the increasing numbers of students defaulting on their loans. The U.S. Department of Education has implemented several programs designed to help graduates in dire financial straits pay off their loans.

The Income Based Repayment (IBR) plan allows eligible students with financial hardships to make reduced payments on their student loans. IBR caps monthly payments at a maximum of 15 percent of disposable income. The new "Pay As You Earn" program introduced by the Obama administration in October of 2011 lowered that maximum to 10 percent, with provisions for even lower payments based on income level and family size.

But IBR helps only students with demonstrable financial hardship. Another repayment program called the Income-Contingent Repayment (ICR) plan helps any borrower with outstanding loans repay their debt. ICR is available only for federally guaranteed Direct Loans from the U.S. Department of Education. Both ICR and IBR have a maximum repayment length of 25 years, after which any outstanding debt is forgiven.

Borrowers with either Direct Loans or Federal Family Education Loans may also opt to participate in Public Service Loan Forgiveness, in which the borrower must make 120 payments while employed in a public service position. The U.S. Department of Education defines a wide range of government occupations as public service, including military service, education, public safety and employees of 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations.

Besides the government programs that have been phased in, the Project on Student Debt suggests a few more ways the nationwide student loan default rate can be reduced. In its report "Student Debt and the Class of 2010," the organization recommends two specific actions to reduce nationwide student loan default rates: increasing access to need-based student aid and requiring school certifications of private loans.

But the best way to lower the student loan default rate, according to writer Sean Brandon with the Keystone Research Center, is to bring down the unemployment rate.

"Too many of today's graduates are left holding a diploma but not a job," said Brandon.

Young graduates, especially, should be hired, Brandon suggested.

"If the unemployment rate rises, like in the last three years, hundreds of thousands of young graduates will default on their student loan payments each year," he said.

If all goes as planned for Emma Bedor, she will have five and a half years before she enters the job market. She isn't sure where she'll be working, or even where she'll do her doctoral work, but she is sure of at least one thing: she is done with loans.

"I won't go somewhere if I don't get full [financial] aid," she said. "It's scary, because our generation, we're taking out more loans than anyone before. It's a lot to think about."

Deutschworks: Open me first gift guide

by Steve Deutsch

Steve Deutsch is a regular satire columnist for Voices.

OPEN ME FIRST: The LAGuide to maximizing your holiday gift pleasure.

The packaging epidemic is in full swing in America. Every thirty seconds someone stays hungry because they cannot open their package of cereal, crackers or chips.

In response, our local gym is offering an associate membership that allows you to bring up to five food items a week for them to open. No wonder millions of Americans eat only fast food---the grease lets the meal slide right out of its package.

There is nothing worse than the holiday season for opening and assembling gifts. The sheer number of gifts and the need to enjoy them before the start of the New Year can be staggering. It is estimated that for each million boxed items containing more than one part, no more than two are put together correctly.

Late last December, my Cousin Myron---a fire-eating, red-headed math genius, called and ordered me to his house. When Myron calls, I respond.

When I got there, I found him staring at a hermetically sealed box containing, it claimed, a flat screen TV and home theater. Somehow, the package was only the size of a shoe box and had the density of an average black hole.

Strewn around Myron were several large knives, a razor, a hacksaw, and what I believe

The guide will hammer home the important little known fact that none of the hardware and tools have been made on planet earth. They cannot be replaced. Ever.

was an acetylene torch. It was cold and drafty. He had thrown a very comfortable arm chair through one of his picturesque, picture windows. Myron was brief.

He screamed, "Open the damned thing."

That is the reason, here at Stevieslaw, we are proud to announce the publication of "Open Me First," the Less-intelligent-than-average American Guide to opening and assembling your gifts. In the guide, you will learn that:

Opening the outer box sets the stage for the rest of the ordeal. We will teach you Zen and Yoga meditative principles to get you in the proper frame of mind. A short prescription and over the counter drug list is also included.

You will learn to recognize "this side up" in over seventy languages, how to deal with the combination of staples, super glue, reinforced tape and plasticized straps made from a material that holds submarine hulls together.

We will thoroughly discuss which sharp tools can be used without voiding your warranty, how not to totally destroy the UPC code which conveniently straddles the box's opening, and when to take your puncture and

infected paper cut wounds to the local emergency room.

Removing your lovely gift from its package is never easy. We will teach you to avoid the mistake---made by millions---of wondering how will I ever get this back into the package if I have to return it. You can't.

The "gift" has been hammered into its cardboard package by hundreds of elves with very tiny hands and a large hydraulic press. If you need to return the gift, just shovel it and its packaging into your trunk. We note that most of the white beaches around the world are now completely covered with the plastic foam material that encases your gift.

Do not break up the foam material no matter how much fun it looks like. In the guide, we will teach you that the electrostatic charge on this material is so strong that you will find little sections of it clinging to your floors, ceilings, clothing, and children forever.

Identifying the "open me first" envelope, buried now under the mass of gift pieces, and perhaps containing the instruction manual and the set of tools and hardware that comes with all challenging reassembly projects, is a critical step.

The guide will make it clear that it is sometimes easier to learn Korean, Swahili or Vietnamese than to find the section in the instruction manual written in English. You will also learn that two-dimensional pictographs of the three-dimensional assembly are much, much worse than useless.

Sadly, you will not find yourself able to laugh at this.

You will learn to move the hardware envelope to a secure and sterile site before attempting to open it. The guide will also include a special section on opening the hardware sleeve.

We will teach you to organize the screws, bolts and tools and to recognize that each lit-



Photo by Steve Deutsch
Steve Deutsch in his original native habitat of New York City.

tle piece of what seems like belly button lint is a critical piece of the assembly.

The guide will hammer home the important and little known fact that none of the hardware and tools have been made on planet earth. They can not be replaced. Ever.

Sensing the need for intervention is an indispensable skill. The guide will show you how to recognize the instant at which "this glorious gift," becomes "this damned thing."

We are sure you will find the section on "cursing like you were born in Brooklyn" as a sign of "assembling your gift overload" invaluable.

You will learn from the guide who to call and where and how to sit to defume while a deft teenager assembles your white elephant using nearly all the pieces.

The LAGuide "Open Me First," will be available at Stevieslaw for \$19.95 on Dec. 15.

A handy kit to extract the guide from its packaging is available for an additional \$4.95.

A handy kit to extract the handy opening kit for the guide packaging is an additional \$1.95.

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from Gerrymander, pg. 4

Chairman Jim Burn told voices. “You disenfranchise the electorate and make it tougher for residents to gain access.”

“Cracking” Silences the Voice of a Community

Monroe County was split the same way 20 years ago. A growing population there was seeking real estate tax reform in Harrisburg due to the cost of building new schools.

“The leadership in Harrisburg didn’t want to create a hotbed of people advocating what they didn’t want to do,” Tim Potts explained.

“Monroe County had six senators and they hated it,” says State Senator Jake Corman (R- 34th) of Bellefonte.

The 2011 proposed redistricting will fix this. According to a recent Monroe Express-Times editorial, “Monroe County, for eons a stepchild in the Senate, having been represented by six senators, will now be one district with one senator.”

According to Rep. Kerry Benninghoff, “It’s not as big a deal as some make it. We State Representatives provide mutual support. We don’t ask for your voter ID card when you come in the office.”

Such a service by Bellefonte’s Benninghoff might come in handy for Patton Township residents of Toftrees. Their proposed State Representative, Rep. Mike Fleck, lives seventy miles away in Three Springs, Pa.

Corman denies that the house redistricting will make a step-child of the Centre Region “There is a Centre Region-based seat. Seventy-five percent of the 77th District’s population is in State College,” he says. Furthermore, Kerry Benninghoff lives in Bellefonte, but asserts, “I’m adopted into the Centre Region.”

Certainly, a Centre Region resident could be forgiven if he goes to the wrong State Representative for access to government. Both Patton and Ferguson Townships are split into three pieces and divided among Fleck, Benninghoff and Conklin, and College Township is split in two pieces shared between Benninghoff and Hanna.

This proposal to partition three of the Centre Region townships defies the Pennsylvania Constitution requirement that “unless absolutely necessary no county, city, incorporated town, borough, township

or ward shall be divided in forming either a senatorial or representative district.”

State Republican Vice-Chair Joyce Haas and a member of the CBICC Government Affairs Committee feels the splitting into pieces of three Centre Region townships is not a Chamber issue unless it affects businesses in those townships and the townships say so.

But State Democratic Chair Jim Burn calls the State College and Centre Region redistricting gerrymandering and says it will disempower the local knowledge industry.

“The redistricting throughout the state is a power grab by Republicans, strengthening areas with Republicans incumbents, disenfranchising the electorate and reducing access by residents,” says Burn. “It’s the last thing we need in this current political climate.”

Meanwhile, for reapportioning the US Congressional Districts, the state legislature, which is responsible for that process, is showing no public signs of life.

But incumbent Congressman Glenn “GT” Thompson, former chairman of the Centre County Republican Party, has heard that his 5th Congressional District might stretch a little further south and west, but will certainly continue to include Centre County, including his hometown of Howard.

If this takes place, once again the “moderate/progressive” State College area will be inserted into the southeast corner of the huge, mostly rural Republican Congressional district that extends all the way north to the I ew York border and west almost to the Ohio border.

Bi-partisan versus Non-Partisan

Redistricting is often presented as bipartisan because both parties are involved.

Common Cause PA Executive Director Barry Kauffman disagrees.

“It’s not Republicans versus Democrats. It’s the major parties versus the voters,” he says, noting that both parties work together to split up the state into districts safe for incumbents of both parties.

“It’s a choice to hold on to power rather than to better serve the public,” Burn told Voices.

According to the Express-Times, “For the most part, Pennsylvania lawmakers will be running for re-election in ‘safe’ districts, thanks to the partisan redistricting process.”

Is there an alternative to such political

redistricting that silences communities and insulates legislators from accountability?

“Redistricting has to be done by a non-partisan committee – by people who are not politically in the system,” says Conklin. “That’s the only way we can get it strictly for the populace and not for the politicians. The most important thing is keeping communities together.”

Conklin reserved judgment about the other districts in the Centre Region, saying Democrats weren’t consulted in making the map and the final draft wasn’t made available to Democrats until just thirty minutes before it was passed by the Legislative Reapportionment Commission.

“I have one of the few districts whose registration is fairly close on both sides,” notes Conklin. “It’s good because it forces you to work for all the people and not for the party.”

The districts of Democrats Mike Hanna and Scott Conklin appear to be relatively balanced between parties. Both representatives consistently draw Republican opponents. In

the 2010 general election, Conklin defeated Haas 56 percent to 44 percent and Hanna defeated two opponents, drawing 59 percent of the vote.

Calls for Reform by a Constitutional Convention

Conklin and a few other legislative leaders have called for a constitutional convention.

“It is fairly certain the leaders won’t let reform happen,” asserts Tim Potts. “We simply have to have a constitutional convention. In a January 2010 Franklin and Marshall poll by Terry Madonna, 75 percent of those polled favored having a constitutional convention. Voters look at the lack of improvement in the legislature and say, ‘We have to take this out of the hands of the legislators because they can’t do it.’”

The next elections for the Pennsylvania legislature take place in 2012 and opponents of gerrymandering have called for citizens to make an end to gerrymandering an issue facing candidates.

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