

When City Council convened its first meeting of the New Year, I was particularly struck by the fact that Council began 2008 with three new members. If I may borrow a sports cliché from college basketball analyst Dick Vitale (especially appropriate at NCAA's March Madness time!), those *Diaper Dandies* have now officially completed their rookie seasons! I offer my thanks for jobs well done to Council members Ricky Burgess, Patrick Dowd, and Bruce Kraus and look forward to continuing to work with them and my other colleagues.

The reality of space limitations limits my ability to document Council's many accomplishments in 2008. I'm proud of our record and will highlight three major legislative initiatives.

As homicides in 2008 were reaching record highs, City Council approved legislation requiring owners of lost or stolen guns to report that to police within 24 hours or face fines and possible imprisonment. Following overwhelming passage (6-1 vote), the ordinance became law without the Mayor's signature.

My office worked closely with CeaseFirePA, the Pittsburgh Police Bureau, and a grass roots coalition of citizens advocating for responsible handgun safety reforms. Police and law enforcement officials as well as Pennsylvania Mayors for Gun Safety supported this measure, characterizing it as a valuable tool to help trace crime guns and prevent illegal handgun trafficking. Although I know this ordinance alone won't solve the gun violence problem, it sends Harrisburg a clear signal that it's time to pass a statewide lost or stolen handguns reporting law.

Another notable piece of proposed 2008 legislation was a Campaign Finance Reform measure which passed 5-4. The Mayor, however, chose to veto this bill. The legislation would have barred candidates for city office from taking more than \$2,000 per election cycle from any individual or partnership and more than \$5,000 from any of the political committees representing corporations and unions. Those limits would have doubled if any candidate used \$250,000 of his or her own money. It also would have required large donors to disclose any contracts, employment relationships or board appointments with the city or its authorities.

It's unfortunate that this bill did not pass because I believe it had potential as a step toward statewide rules on donations to candidates. State Rep. Dave Levdansky, a longtime advocate for campaign contribution limits, agrees, saying that local legislation "raises the subject" and "builds a block of votes" from towns that have local reform. And from a Post-Gazette editorial, "It's time for Pittsburgh....to take down the For Sale signs on city offices."

In November 2007, City Council approved a resolution mandating the Administration to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) from experts equipped to perform an analysis of pay disparities among government employees. That request broadened to an evaluation of overall wage and compensation practices for the city with overview from a citizens review panel. With Council's diligent insistence, a contract with Evergreen Solutions was finally executed late in 2008. I want to especially thank Heather Arnet, executive director of the Women and Girls Foundation for her expertise and patience in shepherding this undertaking through a labyrinth of false starts and multiple delays. I eagerly await Evergreen's findings.

I'll keep you posted!