

Budget priorities driven by the needs of Pennsylvanians



BY GOV. TOM WOLF

I want to lower taxes for working families in Pennsylvania. I know that in the days since my budget address you've probably heard a whole lot from other people about my plan – what they like, what they hate, what they wish I had said instead.

This year, because of the pandemic, I pre-recorded my budget address. Usually I give the speech live, to the members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, but this year it just wasn't the safe or

right thing to do.

And when I thought about it, I realized that recording my budget address this year gave me an opportunity to speak directly to the people of Pennsylvania, not just to legislators in Harrisburg.

This budget address is for you, and I hope you've seen it. But I also know that long-winded speeches about budgets and legislative agendas aren't exactly everyone's idea of a good time. So for those who haven't seen my address, I want you to hear it from me: This year, I think lawmakers in Harrisburg need to lower taxes for businesses and working families in Pennsylvania.

A budget requires a whole lot of haggling over numbers and formulas, but at its core a budget is a statement of principles. A

budget is how we put our money where our mouth is. And what lawmakers choose to fund – or choose not to fund – shows the people of Pennsylvania exactly where their government's priorities are.

I believe that the priorities in our budget should be driven by the needs of Pennsylvanians, not by the desires of politicians. So in my budget address this year, I spoke about the things I want to do to meet the needs of Pennsylvanians and lower the barriers that hold them back.

I want to lower taxes for businesses and working families. Under my plan, families with two children making \$84,000 or less will receive a tax cut. My plan will also lower the corporate tax rate in Pennsylvania and close loop-

holes to create a level playing field for all businesses that operate in Pennsylvania. Over 400,000 business owners will pay less tax under this proposal than they currently do, receiving a total tax cut of over \$240 million.

I want to invest in our schools to ensure every child in Pennsylvania receives a high-quality education. Education is the cornerstone of our commonwealth, and every child deserves the head start in life that a good education can provide. To ensure a good education for every student, we need to fully and fairly fund schools through the fair funding formula, we need to reform charter schools to ensure quality and transparency, we need to make higher education

more affordable, and we need to invest in our teachers.

I want to get Pennsylvania back on track after the pandemic. We need to direct relief payments to businesses, modernize our workforce and workforce development programs, ensure workers earn a living wage, and invest in our public infrastructure.

I want to build on our past successes. We've worked together to make progress on criminal justice reform, health care, and professional licensure reform. I want to take those successes even further to legalize adult-use cannabis, make health care more affordable, and reform the criminal justice system.

And I want to make Harrisburg politics more transparent and accountable. A gift ban for all public officials, campaign finance reform, and keeping special interests from having too much influence are critical steps to rebuilding trust with Pennsylvanians. And we need election reforms like ex-

panded pre-canvassing and same-day voter registration to ensure that all Pennsylvania voters can exercise their right to vote for the people who will lead them.

Pennsylvania families are facing too many barriers. And elected leaders in Harrisburg, myself included, need to do more to remove those barriers.

By lowering taxes for working families and businesses, investing in education, getting Pennsylvania back on track from the pandemic, building on our past successes, and making Harrisburg politics more accountable to voters, we can remove some of those barriers this year and help Pennsylvanians build better lives in the years to come.

This plan is good for families, good for business, and good for our economy. I invite you to visit my website to find out more about how it would help you.

Tom Wolf is the governor of Pennsylvania.

Slavery's legacy of corporal punishment

BY K. WARD CUMMINGS
Baltimore Sun

Lyon Gardiner Tyler Jr., the grandson of John Tyler, the 10th president of the United States, died this past September. Let that sink in for a minute. Lyon Tyler, a man who died only last year, was the grandson of a man who was alive when George Washington was president. If that doesn't collapse your perception of time, I don't know what will.

For Lyon Tyler, time was indeed truly relative. He could look into his father's eyes and see centuries into our nation's past. It is a gift that most Black Americans share with him. All we have to do is look into the nearest mirror.

To most Americans, the institution of slavery is like a fairy tale whispering softly in the moss-covered branches of a distant cypress tree. But for Black people, the pull of slavery across the centuries is like a net we cannot escape. Its persistently evident legacies are our constant reminder of this nation's sins.

The dirty little secret about much of Black America is that violence, disguised as corporal punishment, is as much a part of our culture as jazz or black-eyed peas or church.

According to a 2015 study by the Pew Research Center, Black parents are more than twice as likely than white or Latino parents to use violence as discipline in the home. Journalist and Morgan State University professor Stacey Patton believes she understands why. She has written extensively about how "masters" who enslaved people used violence to discipline them and how those enslaved, eventually, embraced the practice.

Violence, against children in particular, was not a habit enslaved Africans brought with them to these shores. According to Professor Patton, "West African societies held children in a much higher regard

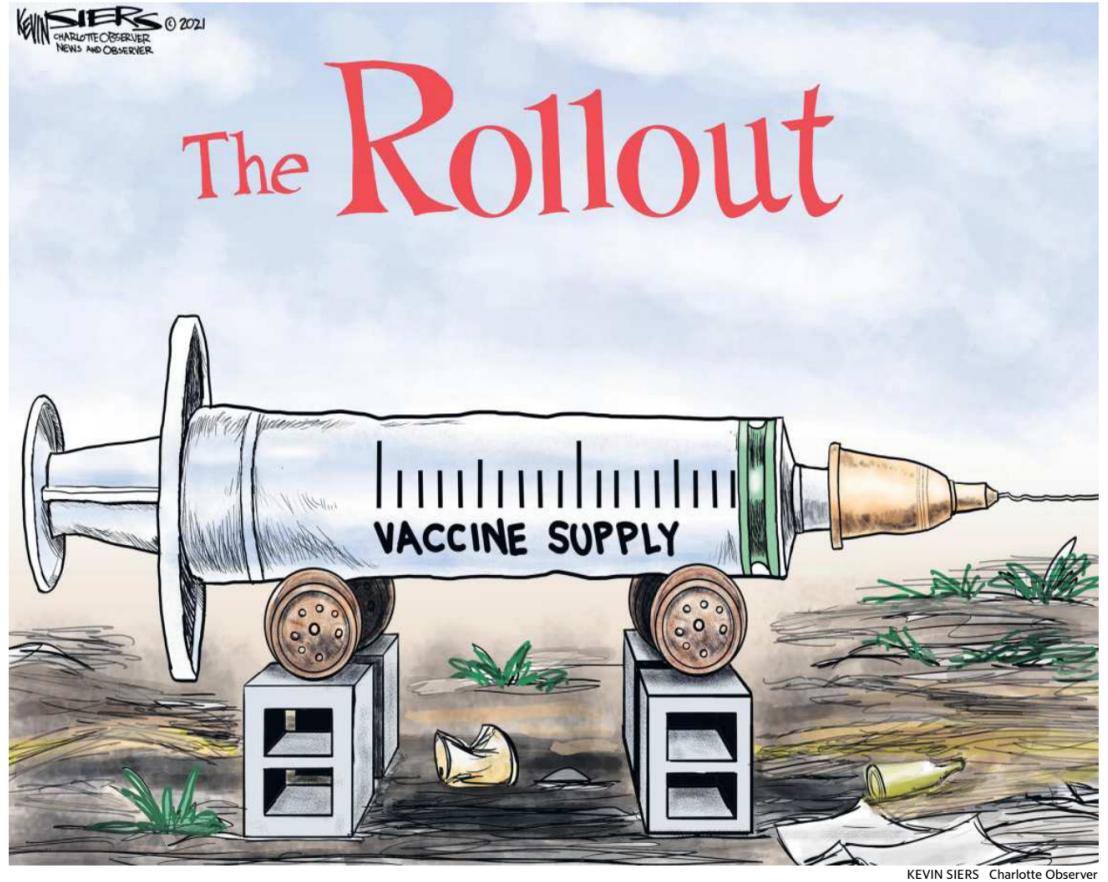
than white societies in the Atlantic world. West Africans believed that children came from the afterlife, that they were gods or reincarnated ancestors."

Traditional West African cultural codes regarding violence were supplanted by the cultural models of the American slave-owning class.

The historian Michael Dickman, also points a bloody finger at De Bow's Review, a widely read "agricultural" magazine circulated from 1846 to 1884, which was filled with recommendations about the strategic and tactical use of violence as a method to subdue and motivate enslaved populations. "The master class of the Old South envisioned the whip as a device that corrected the errors and mistakes committed by their slaves. Masters frequently described whipping in such utilitarian terms, depicting it as a practice that was rational and had the best interests of their slaves in mind."

If violence is the long crimson river that bathes the roots of my family tree, slavery is its source. Its waters weave a meandering path across time to reach me. I rise and make way for it at family gatherings. It is but one of many legacies of slavery that still haunt the Black community. Ridiculous myths about Black congenital intellectual inferiority lay at the root of Black political disenfranchisement for centuries and persist to this day. Insecurities about Blacks in the Antebellum South gave rise to the creation of the police in this country. And, lingering perceptions about the sexual potency of Black males is the reason that interracial relationships in the media between Black men and white women are only now becoming common.

Most Americans are privileged enough to be unaware of these persistent and harmful legacies of slavery. Black Americans aren't so lucky.



KEVIN SIERS Charlotte Observer

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DISAPPOINTED IN VACCINE ROLLOUT

I am over 65, so I am eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine. Also, I am white, own a computer, shelter at home, have an adequate income and savings, receive help with groceries/pharmacy and food deliveries, live in a safely managed apartment complex, speak English, have a support community, have health insurance ...

In Washington Heights, a densely populated Hispanic neighborhood in NYC that was disproportionately hit hard by COVID-19, a center was set up to vaccinate a large number of those eligible in the neighborhood. It turned out that the center mainly vaccinated white people who came in from other neighborhoods. The statistics show equity is a problem throughout NYC. Florida has begun to require proof of residency because people with means travel across state lines and take advantage of the state's vaccine supply.

There are rules about rolling out the vaccine, but the rules preference people with certain profiles. In the

richest country in the world, which many are proud to call a Christian nation, it is tragic that we are a long way from heeding the words of Jesus who equated helping those in need to helping Jesus himself (Matt. 25:31-46). Instead it seems the first remain first and the least continue to be last. I will get vaccinated with gratitude when it is my turn to protect myself and my neighbors. I will also be brokenheartedly aware of a rollout system built on systemic injustice; a rollout desperately in need of reform. Lives depend upon action.

Barbara Nilsen, State College

ALL CHILDREN DESERVE EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Picture this, a fifth-grader in the back seat of her mom's car at some location where she can get internet access so she can meet with her learning support teacher. Why? She does not have adequate internet access at home.

The internet is a critical

part of learning, especially right now. Even without a pandemic, school children with inadequate technology and access to the internet are at a learning disadvantage.

In 2020 the Pennsylvania General Assembly passed ACT 132, which provided \$5 million in funding for nongovernmental groups to install broadband across underserved areas of Pennsylvania. This is good, but internet without the tools to use it is useless. We need to make sure our students all have access to technology (computers as well as the internet) and the ability to use both.

HR 86 sponsored by Rep. Dan L. Miller (Allegheny County) creates a grant program to cover computers and internet access for children who cannot afford them. The bill also requires that schools and teachers are prepared for online learning when necessary.

All children deserve equal access to education. It is an embarrassment to Pennsylvania that our school children do not have adequate access to tech-

nology. Please contact your state representative and ask him/her to become a co-sponsor of HB 86.

Susan Johnston, State College, and Mary Dupuis, State College. The authors are members of the public policy committee of AAUW State College.

CVIM, ARMY OF VOLUNTEERS RAN SUCCESSFUL CLINIC

This community has benefited from the services of the Centre Volunteers in Medicine (CVIM) for a number of years! On Saturday, they outdid themselves in organizing COVID vaccinations for local residents. Signing up was fairly easy and they notified us of our time slots. I don't know how many volunteers were there, but it seemed like a whole, very organized, army! Hundreds were shepherded quickly and efficiently through the various steps, with knowledgeable, kind and efficient volunteers. We thank you all for our shots!

Judith Swisher, State College



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DAILY PRAYER

God, teach us to learn and practice humility, patience and self-discipline in the midst of a world with too little of all three. May our good example inspire others. Amen.