

LaRouche PAC Mobilizes Pennsylvania For Homeowners and Bank Protection Act

by Philip Valenti

The City of Hazleton on Jan. 23 became the 35th Pennsylvania municipality to adopt a resolution calling on Congress to enact the Homeowners and Bank Protection Act (HBPA), the emergency economic legislation designed by economist Lyndon LaRouche, with a dramatic 4 to 1 city council vote reported by local television news broadcasts and a detailed article in the daily newspaper covering all of northeastern Pennsylvania. Local elected bodies representing over 2.4 million Pennsylvanians are now on record demanding action by Congress on the HBPA.

Interest in the HBPA has exploded, in reaction to LaRouche's Jan. 22 warning of an "imminent hyperinflationary blowout" caused by the "stimulus" package backed by the Bush Administration and Congressional Democratic leaders, and the attempted bailout of trillions of dollars of mortgage-backed securities and other financial derivatives by the Federal Reserve. "I read Mr. LaRouche's memo," a township official in western Pennsylvania said, "and it is very, very sobering." "I agree with you 100%," said the mayor of a small borough in central Pennsylvania. "The stimulus plan will add to the crisis." "Oh my God, the Weimar Republic!" one borough official exclaimed, when briefed on LaRouche's analysis of the hyperinflation in Germany in 1923. "That's what led to Hitler."

A borough council member in central Pennsylvania, who is also a leader of the area Chamber of Commerce, agreed with LaRouche's warning of hyperinflation, and reported that local banks are "sweating bullets" over the financial crisis. "There is fear on the local level," he said. "The tsunami is coming."

Broad Support for the HBPA

Longtime observers of Pennsylvania politics have been astounded at the breadth of support for the HBPA, which cuts across traditional ideological and regional divisions in the Commonwealth. Statewide support has rallied around State House Resolution 418, a bipartisan resolution calling on Congress to enact the HBPA, sponsored by veteran Philadelphia Democratic legislator Rep. Harold James. "There may be no precedent for this since the days of the protective tariff movement in the early 1800s, or the mobilization of volunteers after the firing on Fort Sumter," one observer said, referring to the way the traditional hostility between Philadelphia and the rest of the state, and the division between eastern and western Pennsylvania is being overcome.

For example, a township supervisor from a strongly conservative Republican central Pennsylvania county wrote to Representative James: "I read the provisions of HR No. 418 and I fully support the content of this bill. It is in the best interests of this Commonwealth to enact legislation asking the Federal government to intercede in this unprecedented financial crisis which was brought on by the hedge funds fiasco."

City council member Gloria Martin-Roberts from the state capital of Harrisburg wrote, "I support with all my being House Resolution No. 418 and remain prayerful that Congress will have the wisdom, commitment to our citizens, and the integrity to ensure that the home mortgage crisis will be reversed through their positive action. Please let Congress know that Pennsylvanians want them to enact the 'Homeowners and Bank Protection Act.'"

Pressure on Congress

The Hazleton vote is a political bombshell dropped in the middle of the Congressional District represented by Paul Kanjorski (D-11), the 12-term second-ranking Democrat on the House Financial Services Committee. All 19 members of the Pennsylvania Congressional delegation, and Senators Arlen Specter (R) and Bob Casey (D), are under growing pressure from their constituents to sponsor the HBPA in Washington. "It is time for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and our Congressional delegation to take national leadership, in the Spirit of 1776," James said in his Nov. 29, 2007 testimony on HR 418 before the House Intergovernmental Affairs Committee.

Freshman Democrat Chris Carney has three significant municipalities in his district, Carbondale, Shamokin, and Sunbury, calling on Congress to act on the HBPA. The Johnstown City Council, hometown of veteran Democratic Rep. John Murtha, passed an HBPA support resolution unanimously; four other councils in his district also passed resolutions. Every member of the city councils of both Philadelphia and Pittsburgh not only voted for an HBPA support resolution, but co-sponsored it as well. That action affects the districts of Democratic Congressmen Mike Doyle, Chaka Fattah, Robert Brady, and Allyson Schwartz. Republicans, such as John Peterson, Phil English, Jim Gerlach, and Bill Shuster, all have significant HBPA support in their districts, in the form of resolutions adopted by borough and city councils.

Local councils representing over 155,000 people in Kanjorski's district alone, are on record calling on Congress to

Municipalities That Have Supported the HBPA and HR 418



* The Scranton City Council sent a letter of support.

enact the HBPA. Support resolutions have been passed by the city council of Wilkes-Barre, the Luzerne county seat; and the borough councils of Nesquehoning, Berwick, and Jim Thorpe (the county seat of Carbon county). The city council of Scranton, the largest municipality in the district, sent a letter of support to Representative James on Nov. 21, 2007, saying: “It is with great pleasure that Scranton City Council offers their full support for House Bill 418. It is their hope that our Legislators will support this and take emergency action to protect homeowners and banks by enacting a Homeowners & Bank Protection Act. This will be of great importance to the citizens of the City of Scranton to protect their assets during this period of financial unrest that is leading to home foreclosures in record numbers.”

The daily *Hazleton Standard-Speaker*, which serves five counties in northeastern Pennsylvania, reported the city council debate on the HBPA in detail in its Jan. 24 edition: “The City Council voted for a resolution supporting State HR 418, which calls on Congress to enact a Homeowners and Bank Protection Act. The vote was 4 to 1, with [Council member Evelyn] Graham casting the lone ‘no.’” The article quoted at length from HR 418, emphasizing that the “mortgage crisis threatens to set off an economic collapse worse than the Great Depression of the 1930s,” and reported on the interchange between Graham and council members Robert Nilles and Jack Mundie, who presented and seconded the resolution, respectively:

“I do not believe it is the job of the government to protect

banks who made bad choices about to whom to lend money,’ Graham said.

“Mundie said he agreed in general, but added he thought some borrowers had been misled by predatory lenders. . . .

“‘I believe this is a firewall between banks and predatory lenders,’ Nilles said. ‘And it will stop protection of predatory lenders.’”

National Organizing

At the National Mayors’ Conference in Washington, D.C. on Jan. 24, LaRouche PAC (LPAC) organizers found that many mayors were eager for information about the HBPA. “We’re dealing with problems, and we need real solutions,” said Mayor Douglas Palmer of Trenton, N.J., the conference chairman.

In Concord, N.H., the state legislature held hearings on the HBPA on Jan. 22. An LPAC representative testified in support of the resolution. The vote will come next week.

New endorsements came from **Maple Heights, Ohio** (a Cleveland suburb); **St. Louis, Mo.**, and **Port Isabel, Texas**. The resolution was introduced into the City Council of **Lorain, Ohio** on Jan. 23.