

## Pennsylvania – Law Firms

# Pennsylvania As A Prototype For Recovery

*The Editor interviews John Saler, Chair of Stradley Ronon's Government and Public Affairs Practice Group. Mr. Saler provides government and media relations services to Fortune 500 companies, privately held firms and nonprofit organizations. He has served as a campaign strategist, fundraiser and political commentator, and his political involvement spans over two decades and includes associations with more than 25 campaigns.*

*Mr. Saler was ranked one of the "Top 50 Influential Democrats in Pennsylvania" by Politics Magazine. He was also recognized by Philadelphia Magazine as one of its "People to Watch '08," and was identified as a member of the "Nutter Brain Trust" referring to his role in Michael Nutter's campaign for Philadelphia mayor.*

*We sat down with Mr. Saler to discuss some of the recent initiatives he has seen Pennsylvania take to attract businesses to the area.*

**Editor:** Despite living in a politically adversarial environment, you have worked for candidates from both political parties at both the state and the federal levels. What is your secret?

**Saler:** Though I'm a registered Demo-

crat, I prefer to identify myself as an "ardent moderate." Those I admire most in American politics are the ones I call "the great moderates," all of whom are, intriguingly, Republican. These "great moderates" include Theodore Roosevelt, Nelson Rockefeller and Gerald Ford, whom I actually volunteered for in his 1976 campaign against Jimmy Carter.

**Editor:** What are some of the initiatives being used in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to attract businesses to grow and move here?

**Saler:** While there were many economic development programs in place when Gov. Rendell took office, he has done much to greatly enhance many of them in addition to creating new opportunities, including major infrastructure investments. Some of those Commonwealth programs include the job creation tax credit, customized job training and the opportunity grant program. For example, the Infrastructure and Facilities Improvement Programs (IFIP) help developers in deals including the development of hotels



**John Saler**

around major convention projects and Pennsylvania hospitals that are planning to expand.

**Editor:** Are there any other important focuses of Gov. Rendell's plan?

**Saler:** Gov. Rendell has stated that his seminal policy mission is to institute alternative energy projects. In addition to infrastructure, he pushed through H2O PA, which passed before the economy crashed. H2O PA funds flood and sewer projects. Specifically, the Act provides single-year or multi-year grants to the Commonwealth, its independent agencies and municipalities in addition to municipal authorities with flood control priorities. While some people don't think of this as a major issue in Pennsylvania, applications for more than \$3 billion were filed.

The Governor is also supporting a host of energy programs. Specifically, the Solar Energy Program provides financial assistance in the forms of grants and loans to promote the use of alternative energy in Pennsylvania. The program is administered jointly by the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) under the direction of the Commonwealth Finance Authority (CFA). In fact, all of the pro-

grams fall under the CFA's umbrella.

**Editor:** Is there anything special about these incentives?

**Saler:** What is important is that they are not the typical "bread and butter" fare that require an appropriation. This can speed up the process, making Pennsylvania more attractive to businesses. The Governor's Action Team (GAT) is available to assist businesses with these programs, and further information is available at [www.newpa.com](http://www.newpa.com).

**Editor:** What direction do you think Pennsylvania needs to go in the future?

**Saler:** I think that Pennsylvania and Philadelphia, in particular, has a great opportunity to become a world-class tourist destination. We have the same charm and history as Boston. Our restaurants rival Chicago and New York City. And we have world-class, second-to-none cultural institutions, such as the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Philadelphia Free Library and the Barnes Foundation. We also have an enormous amount of open space, including the largest city park in the world, Fairmount Park – which spans more than 9,200 acres.