

## **Wolf talks about taxes in York, touts Rendell's proposals**

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Tom Wolf still fervently believes that when government is involved in people's lives, good things can happen.

But when the York native took on the position of Secretary of Revenue about 10 weeks ago, he admits there were friends that "questioned his sanity."

That's because as head of the revenue department, one of Wolf's jobs is to be an advocate for Gov. Ed Rendell's new tax proposals.

And there's a lot of those this year.

While tax increases, or rather "revenue enhancements" as he called them, might not be a popular topic of discussion in conservative York County -- or anywhere in the state -- Wolf said the last 10 weeks at the Capitol have been a joy.

"I have to say, I love what I'm doing up there," Wolf said yesterday, speaking before the Pennsylvania Economy League and York County Chamber of Commerce at the Yorktowne Hotel.

Wolf stepped down as chairman of his family's business, The Wolf Organization, last year and later put his hat in for the position of Pennsylvania treasurer, vacated when U.S. Sen. Bob Casey took office on Capitol Hill. Rendell came back to Wolf and offered him the position as secretary of revenue, a role he stepped into 10 weeks ago.

The state Senate last week unanimously agreed to his confirmation.

Wolf used the majority of his speech in York yesterday advocating changes that Rendell has proposed to tax policies, calling the sales tax increase from 6 to 7 percent, a higher tax on cigarettes and a new tax on other tobacco products, a new fee on electricity bills and tax on trash haulers "cost shifts."

As for a tax on the profits of oil companies to help pay for road improvements, Wolf said "this definitely is a tax increase, there's no doubt about it."

There are tax reductions as well, Wolf said, including the continued phasing out of the capital stock/franchise tax, a business tax he called "pretty stupid." The tax is levied businesses classified on corporations doing business within Pennsylvania.

Overall, he called the tax changes a "series of discrete items."

"What I see in this budget is a lot of investments and not a lot of empty consumption," Wolf said.

On other topics:

--- Rendell's plan to privatize the Pennsylvania Turnpike is "innovative," Wolf said, adding that other four-lane highways might be given the same consideration in the future. He pointed out the government has not always been involved in transportation infrastructure, and it was private businesses that originally built and maintained railroads.

"It may come to be one day that if you want to drive on a four-lane highway, you have to pay to use it," Wolf said.

--- When asked about privatizing the state liquor stores, he called it "interesting," but "the idea never seems to get any traction."

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