

J. WESLEY LECKRONE

Editor-in-Chief

COMMONWEALTH was founded to provide a mix of traditional academic articles, short and insightful research notes, and thought pieces about contemporary policy issues affecting Pennsylvania. This issue represents an excellent combination of all these formats. The “COMMONWEALTH Forum” provides a perspective on one of the most important, and contentious, issues facing Pennsylvania: the structural budget deficit. Bob Dick of the Commonwealth Foundation provides a free market perspective that focuses on balancing the budget by reforming programs and eliminating inefficiencies. Marc Stier of the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center provides a progressive critique of recent Republican policies in the state and argues that the best course of action going forward is to raise recurring sources of revenue and increase spending. Michael McSkimming, Robert Vance Dunbar, and Ahmet Guler show the importance of language to the operation of government. They examine the development of conservation officer responsibilities and find that a change in title to Conservation Police Officer provides enhanced legitimacy to these public servants and allows them to better carry out their duties. Jeffrey Carroll and John F. McDonald shift the topic to local government taxation in a case study of Philadelphia. They examine the difficult problem of how to wean the city off of its reliance on the wage tax. Finally, James Vike examines why there are more registered independents in New

Jersey than Pennsylvania. Through an analysis of American National Election Study data, he finds that the modified closed primary system in New Jersey encourages people to remain unaffiliated but that citizens are no less partisan or engaged than they are in Pennsylvania, which has a closed primary.

COMMONWEALTH is proud to announce that the first edition of *Pennsylvania Politics & Policy: The Commonwealth Reader* will be published mid-2018 by Temple University Press. *The Reader* is a compendium of the best policy writing from COMMONWEALTH, with updates to many of the manuscripts. Each article also includes discussion questions, a “COMMONWEALTH Forum” with a pro/con discussion of a topic related to the article, and a further reading section. The volume is ideal for classroom adoption in state and local government, public policy, and public administration classes. For more information or to receive an examination copy please visit the Temple University Press website at <http://www.temple.edu/tempres/>.

If you have an innovative pedagogical practice involving politics or policy in Pennsylvania please consider submitting a manuscript discussing your teaching design and learning outcomes. Teaching methods including local governments in Pennsylvania are also welcome. We will begin publishing a new section entitled “Teaching the COMMONWEALTH” in late 2018. All accepted pedagogical manuscripts will be subject to the same strict peer review process as other pieces published in the journal.