

# EASTERN POCONOS COMMUNITY NEWS

For Friday,  
May 14, 2004

Serving Smithfield, Middle Smithfield, Price and Lehman Townships

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**Lehman moving on purchase of fairgrounds**

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-AARON APPLIGATE-

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-the Pocono Record-

**Rumsfeld's poor job in Iraq**

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**Ronald McDonald visits Middle Smithfield**

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**Middle Smithfield gives firefighters \$45,150**

-LAUREL BISHOW -

**Bushkill's second Relay for Life starts today**

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## A plan to stop outsourcing



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You might recall a few weeks ago, I spoke out against outsourcing jobs as purely un-American and suggested I wouldn't give any quarter to arguments to the contrary. Now a lawmaker, State Rep. Jim Casorio, D-Westmoreland, has asked Gov. Ed Rendell to investigate security risks that could be posed by using overseas workers to process state records.

EDITOR'S  
NOTES



BOB CHARLANZA

Casorio said he's concerned about projects like those reported the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* which included tales of workers in India doing computer coding on a state police database of criminal histories, and workers in India and Mexico fielding questions from food stamp recipients in an electronic benefits transfer system run by the state Department of Public Welfare.

State Rep. Daryl Metcalfe, R-Butler, said the state police project in particular "could be a serious security concern."

Casorio is asking Rendell to forbid state agencies from using record-keeping workers in Mexico and India, effective immediately. Casorio also wants Rendell to inquire whether federal intervention might be needed to make sure that identity records aren't compromised. He raised the specter of such information falling into the hands of terrorists much easier in foreign lands.

The newspaper reported that workers in Banglador, India, are computer coding and testing an upgraded state police criminal history database after Unisys, which signed a state contract three years ago, shifted the work to India though a subcontractor last year.

State agencies had until May 1 to report work that has been moved offshore to the state Department of General Services. Casorio said the state should use its influence as a major customer to stop companies from outsourcing, even without waiting for legislation.

I haven't seen or heard how the outsourcing crackdown is going. Frankly, in this state inertia is hard to overcome no matter what branch of government you are dealing with in Harrisburg. If you have heard anything, let me know.

Meanwhile, I suggest to those who really want to pursue the issue that they could take a page out of the experience of a local company, Berkheimer Associates, which was forced to deal with the problem 18 months ago when public outrage emerged after local municipal officials put their foot down.

The company readily ended its outsourcing of tax processing at the end of February 2003.

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Tim Fehr, president of Berkheimer, assured the Monroe Council of Governments that Berkheimer would no longer send tax work to India.

"We have added local workers to four of our locations," he said. He said the company was not hurt financially by this because the difference in the pay was not great.

"The reason we got into outsourcing was that six or seven years there was difficulty in getting people to take the jobs," he said.

Here is a proposal:

Start a grassroots political movement to get our elected politicians in the state and nation to write legislation prohibiting any job outsourcing when taxpayer money is involved in a contract.

That was the flashpoint in the Berkheimer issue 18 months ago.

Then, if a company says it needs an exemption and must outsource, it would have to prove it to some agency like the department of labor.

And, if granted an exemption it would have to be with a time limit and with a stipulation that the company must pay for training so that local people can be hired and the overseas pact disbanded.

In other words, no company should be able to make money on taking jobs away from Americans.

One argument that the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other business groups use to defend outsourcing is that our children do not get the proper training in school to do these jobs properly.

Traditionally, U.S. business had been willing to pay a bit more in taxes to support our schools when they were turning out a good workforce.

But that has diminished over the past two decades as companies successfully appeal and get lower assessments, saying high school graduates aren't up to snuff and require too much training.

Perhaps the lower tax assessments are warranted, but the overall impact of lowering taxes to the schools and outsourcing jobs to other nations is a double whammy that should be fought.

Business should become part of the solution to providing jobs in the information age, not giving them to those in other countries.

At the advent of the information age, there were glowing predictions of how it would help all. Let's put our youth in the *all* category by stopping outsourcing.

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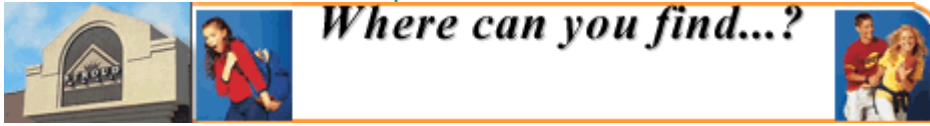
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