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House of Representatives
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MEMORANDUM

To: All House Members
From: Representative John Hornaman
Date: April 5, 2011
Re: Constitutional Amendment: Conference Committee for Budget Bill

In the near future, I plan to introduce legislation that will amend the Pennsylvania Constitution to establish rules for the appointment of a Conference Committee in the event of a budget impasse.

In prior years, the Commonwealth has experienced several budget impasses including the 101 day delay in 2009. Under House and Senate Rules, a Conference Committee may be appointed in order to find an agreement between the two chambers regarding a specific subject, including the General Appropriations bill. In 2009, several issues arose and talks were often stalled due to disagreements between the individuals participating in the Conference Committee talks. While House and Senate Rules contain provisions regarding the appointment of Conference Committee members, neither set of rules possesses a stipulation regarding a stalemate between the negotiating parties. In addition, rank and file members have had very little say in budget negotiations

My bill proposes an amendment to the Pennsylvania Constitution under Article III, Section 11 (Appropriations), which would allow for the current appointment of a Conference Committee, per House Rule 48 and Senate Rule XX, upon the passage of the June 30 deadline. However, in the event that the Conference Committee is unable to present the House with a budget bill within 30 days of its commencement, the committee is abolished and elections are held in the House and Senate to appoint new conference committee participants.

In the past, Pennsylvanians have suffered due to delayed budget negotiations. In 2009, the ineffectiveness of the Conference Committee led to a lengthy budget impasse. At that time, many rank and file members raised concerns regarding lack of input. While my proposal does not pose an immediate remedy, it provides a future safeguard against prolonged budget sessions and an opportunity for rank and file members to become more involved in the budget process.

If you are interested in co-sponsoring this legislation, please contact Carla Walker in my office via email at cwalker@pahouse.net or at 717-772-2297.