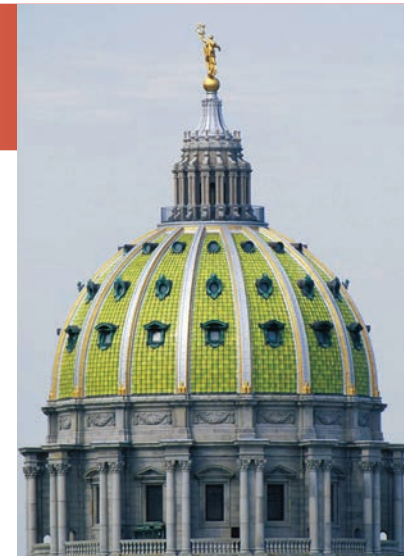


# Great Potential



## An Interview with The Honorable Tom Corbett, Governor of Pennsylvania

**EDITORS' NOTE** In January 2011, Tom Corbett was inaugurated as the 46th Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In the early 1980s, Corbett served President Ronald Reagan as an Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania. Following several years of private law practice, Corbett was called back to public service in 1989, when President George H. W. Bush appointed him to serve as U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania. In the 1990s, Corbett provided criminal law and policy expertise to then Congressman Tom Ridge, later filling several key roles in Governor Ridge's Administration. In 1995, he was nominated by Governor Ridge as Attorney General. Upon confirmation from the Pennsylvania Senate, Corbett pledged that he would not run for reelection in 1996. He served as Attorney General in this capacity from 1995 to 1997. In 1997, Corbett returned to the private practice of law in Pittsburgh. In 1998, he joined Waste Management as their Assistant General Counsel for Government Affairs. In 2002, Corbett formed his own law firm, Thomas Corbett and Associates, practicing until his election as Pennsylvania Attorney General in November 2004. In 2008, he was reelected as Pennsylvania's Attorney General. Corbett served his country as a member of the Pennsylvania National Guard 28th Infantry Division from 1971 until 1984, rising from Private to Captain. He received his undergraduate degree from Lebanon Valley College in Annville, Pennsylvania, and taught civics and history in Pine Grove Area High School in Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania. In 1975, he received his law degree from St. Mary's University School of Law in San Antonio, Texas.



The Hon. Tom Corbett

### How have you made such a significant impact so quickly, especially in terms of the budget?

You have to first look at how much you have in revenues. I made two promises – one, we weren't going to raise taxes; and two, we were going to have an on-time budget. When you're not raising revenue and revenues don't increase because the economy isn't doing well, you have to reduce your spending to meet the revenues. It's called fiscal discipline.

### You make it sound easy but others wonder why it's not happening elsewhere.

The Republicans supported me; the Democrats didn't. They may not have liked it, but they knew I was not signing a budget that was out of whack

fiscally. Over the past few years, the Governor continued to increase the size of the budget. I went in the opposite direction. It has been tough on a lot of people; we reduced spending in a number of different areas. But government has to live within its means.

### What results are you seeing from your efforts on job creation?

We've not seen as much unemployment as we might have because of the development of the Marcellus Shale formation in regions of Pennsylvania. Until national unemployment dropped

slightly in December and January, Pennsylvania's unemployment rate was almost a full percentage point lower than the national average. This demonstrates that there is a great future for the state, not just in natural gas, but in other areas as well.

I've created an atmosphere where businesses have some predictability in Pennsylvania. We have instituted TORT reform and some tax reform, as well as some unemployment compensation reform.

### How much of an opportunity is there from Marcellus Shale and why isn't there a better understanding of its value?

Natural gas provides clean energy – that is why environmentalists say we should be developing it. It provides the opportunity to develop other products around it, so certain companies are considering building ethylene crackers and the petrochemical industry would fall in line behind that. Roads are being built and companies are growing because this industry is returning to Pennsylvania. We have the natural resource here, but I emphasize that we need to protect our environment and my Department of Environmental Protection is doing that.

I also believe in developing the Port of Philadelphia. We invested some resources in the Aker Philadelphia Shipyard and it has started building two ships on spec. In the meantime, Exxon Mobil has also ordered two new tankers, which will create thousands of direct and indirect jobs at the Port.

We're also talking to the railroads about extending further into Southport so we can make better use of that port. Additionally, we've lent \$15 million to the federal government to continue dredging the Delaware River. By 2014, the bigger tankers that will be coming through the Panama Canal can come up the Delaware River to Philadelphia to make use of our port because it's not nearly as congested as the ports of New York, Newark, Baltimore, or Norfolk.

### How do you measure your impact on improving K-12 education and what are your plans to continue that improvement?

With K through 12, I look at the graduation success rate – not the test scores. In major cities like Philadelphia, the drop-out rate is over 40 percent, which is terrible. My predecessors would point out how the scores were improving. But the graduation rate is what affects the individual and the economy over the long term. About 40 percent of the people serviced by the welfare department do not have a high school degree and when it comes to the corrections system, over 44 percent of males do not have a high school degree.

We end up spending a lot of money in areas that are the result of the failure to educate. I'm a huge proponent of school reform that addresses teacher evaluation, increasing our educational income tax credit number, charter reform, and school opportunity grants. This allows children from the worst 155 schools in the entire state to take the state subsidy that the school receives and use it to attend another nearby public school, charter school, or private school.

### What is Pennsylvania's edge in terms of competing for foreign investment?

We have clean and cheap energy; we have great waterways; and we have academic talent coming from world-class colleges and universities across the state. We also have a medical community that is world-class.

If you're looking for culture, you can't beat Philadelphia or Pittsburgh. Close to 60 percent of the population of the entire country lives within a five-hour drive of Pennsylvania.

We have railroads and rivers coming through Pennsylvania that are easily accessed. We also have a beautiful landscape and a great deal of open space. We're a diversified state. So we have great potential.

### How has the Penn State sex abuse scandal affected the school?

There was an individual who did something terribly wrong, which led to others doing things that were morally, and in some cases criminally, wrong. But there were only a handful of people involved and that takes nothing away from Penn State. It is Penn State's challenge to show that it remains a wonderful university. The school is a great resource for Pennsylvania and I will support it 100 percent. ●

*Pennsylvania Capital's spectacular 272-foot, 52 million-pound dome inspired by Michelangelo's design for St. Peter's Basilica in Rome*