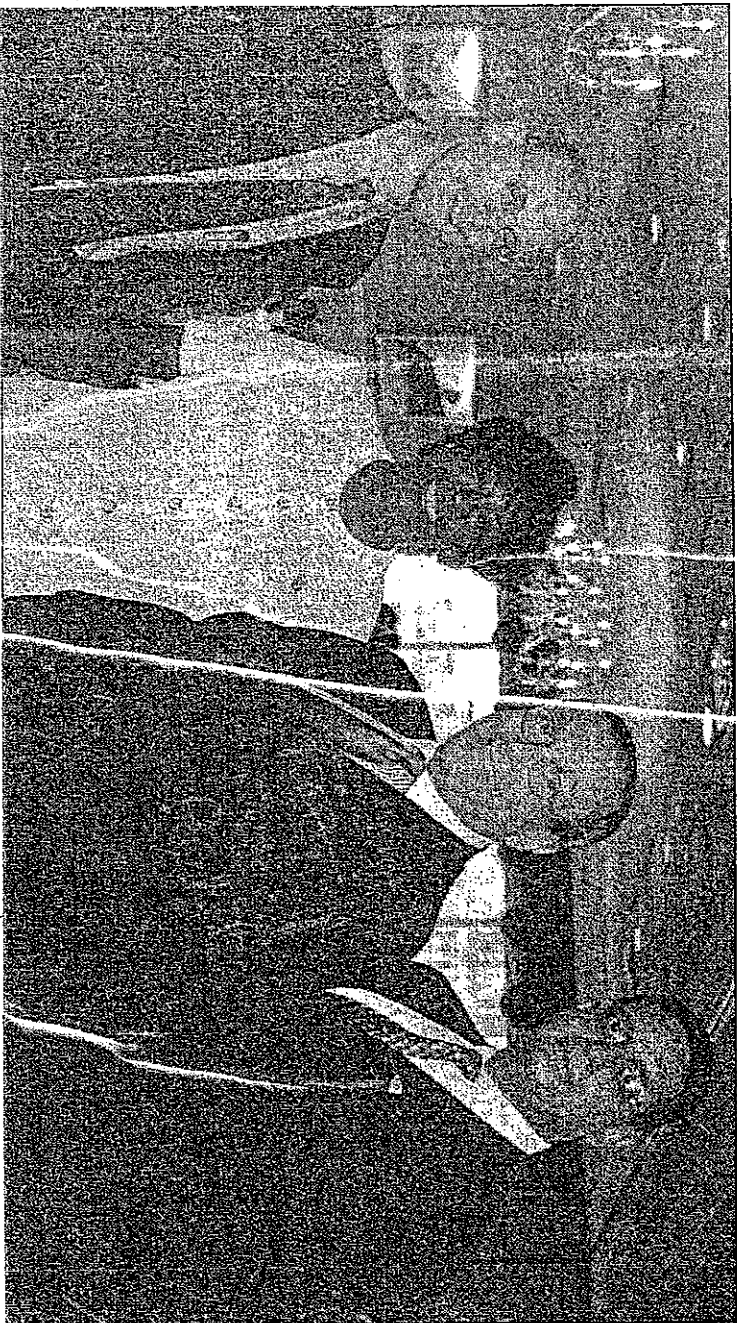




**Will Smith**  
funny, fab-looking  
in "I, Robot"  
B4

# New Pittsburgh Courier BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 21, 2004



PHOTOS BY K. NEELY

**PRESENTERS**—The African American Chamber of Western Pennsylvania hosted a special breakfast meeting to inform its members of updated information about the governor's Economic Stimulus Package and Citizens Bank's commitment to create jobs. Shown with chamber President and CEO Doris Carson Williams, second from left, and chamber board chair Greg Spencer, right, are the presenters Bryce Marecki, Gov. Ed Rendell's policy director, left, and Ralph Papa, president, Western Region Citizens Bank, second right.

## Stimulating the economy Citizens Bank teams with Gov. Rendell's efforts to help create jobs and revitalize communities

by Carlo L. Taylor Sr.  
for New Pittsburgh Courier

When someone's heart stops, medical personnel attempt to stimulate that person's heart in an effort to save a life.

Comparatively speaking, that is what Gov. Ed Rendell is attempting to do via his Economic Stimulus Package.

And Citizens Bank is teaming with Rendell's efforts, offering a booster shot in the form of investing \$100 million to create 4,000 jobs.

A presentation was made to members of the African American Chamber of Commerce of Western Pennsylvania July 16 at the Rivers Club in One Oxford Center, Downtown.

"We want to stimulate the economy and revitalize the communities," said Bryce Marecki, the governor's policy director. "Pennsylvania is trailing the rest of the

nation in terms of job creation, and one of the main reasons is because sites are not readily available," he said. "We want to recover land and return vacant industrial sites into viable business locations."

It is that reason Rendell allocated a \$300 million in grants to repair vacant industrial sites, and another \$250 million to upgrade water and sewage systems, promoting his "new Pennsylvania" theme.

More than \$200 million has been made available for grants and loans for successful businesses, tourism and agriculture sectors, as well as manufacturing and technology companies. To help local and/or small communities benefit from his stimulus package, Rendell has assigned a Technical Assistance Team to help local communities take full advantage of the stimulus package.

The team will work collectively with local governments and community leaders.

The Plan for a New Pennsylvania also returns \$1.5 billion to taxpayers, giving homeowners across the state significant tax relief, an average of 30 percent and no less than 15 percent to any school district across the state, lessening the financial burden faced by many older Pennsylvanians and others who live on fixed incomes.

It closes the resource gap between school districts, while at the same time investing up to \$1.25 billion annually within three years to fund proven programs that boost student achievement.

Rendell's plan also outlines an economic stimulus program that will invest nearly \$2 billion in bonds and loan guarantees to leverage at least \$5 billion in private investment in economic development projects, creating jobs in small and mid-size cities and towns across the state.

In an announcement earlier this year, the governor pointed out that his plan requires new revenue sources like slot machines at racetracks, closing corporate loopholes, combined with increased fines on reckless drivers and a higher tax on malt beverages, last raised in 1947. A modest increase in the personal income tax leaves Pennsylvania with one of the lowest personal income taxes in America.

Also addressing chamber members was Ralph Papa, president of Citizens Bank of Western Pennsylvania. He spoke briefly about the bank's newest commitment to the reviving the region—investing \$100 million to the stimulus package. He proudly iterated that Citizens Bank is No. 1 in the nation in minority-owned business loans. He shared that Citizens Bank's sentiment is for economic growth and development for African-American communities and business owners as well. The other aspect of the bank's contribution is to open doors for at least 4,000 jobs.



**DISCUSSING TEAM EFFORTS**—Ron Porter, left, gains insight on Gov. Rendell's Economic Stimulus Package from Bryce Marecki, the governor's policy director.

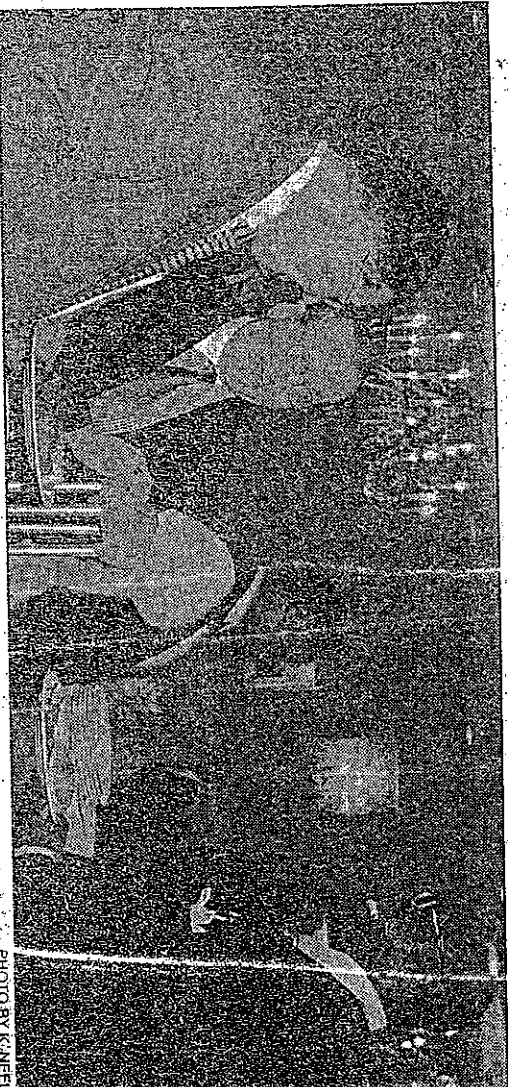


PHOTO BY K. NEELY

**BREAKFAST CHAI**—Ralph Papa, second from left, chats with a guest at the African American Chamber's special breakfast meeting. At right: Superintendent John W. Thompson.

## Stimulating the economy

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Most of the people left the breakfast looking forward to the opportunities that will be created.

Ariana Beck, a pre-med student at the University of

Pittsburgh liked what she heard.

"I liked the fact that they discussed bringing more jobs here, and that the governor is looking to keep young people here," she said.

Also on hand was Pittsburgh Public Schools Superintendent John W. Thompson. He was there to hear what Rencell's initiative was about, and what it will do for Pennsylvania economically.