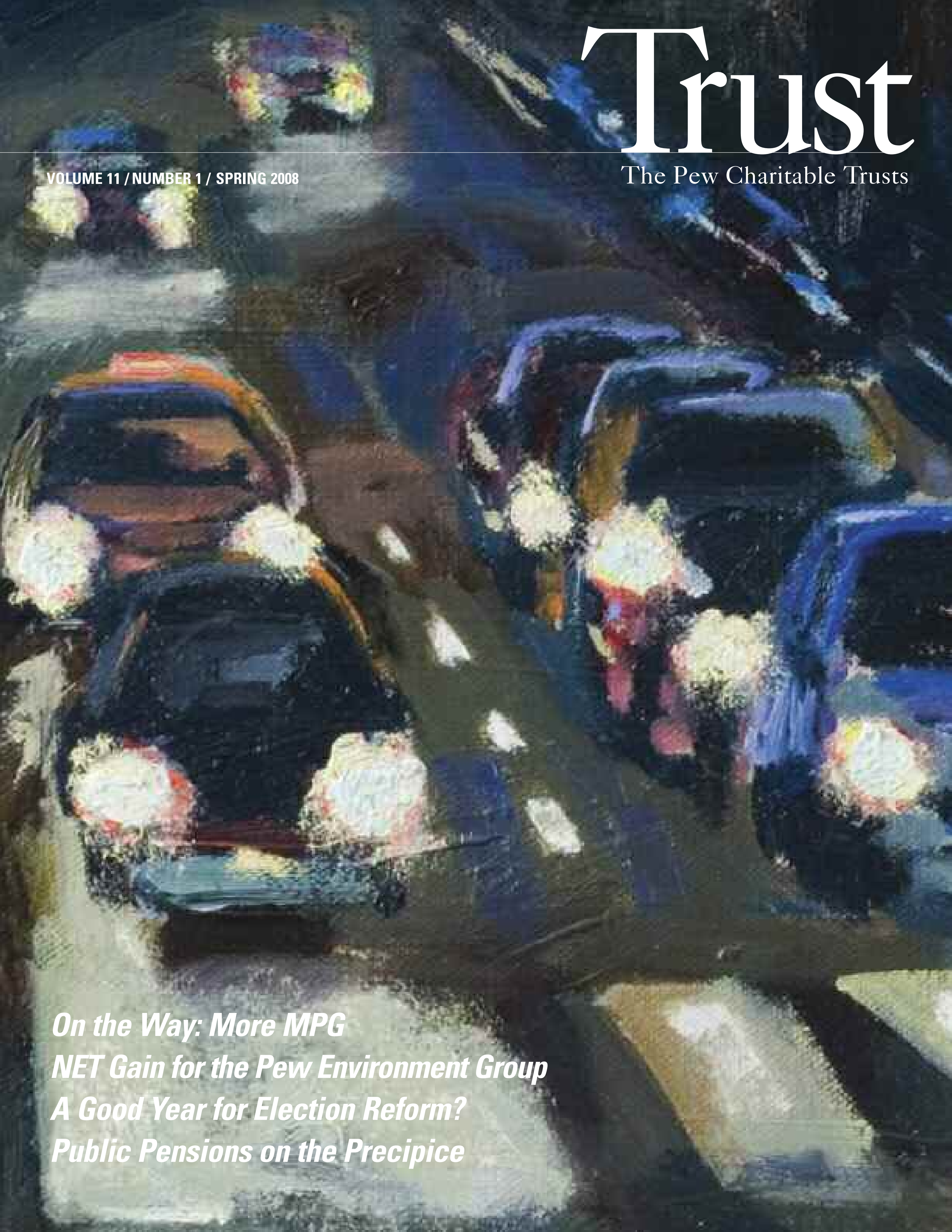


Trust

The Pew Charitable Trusts

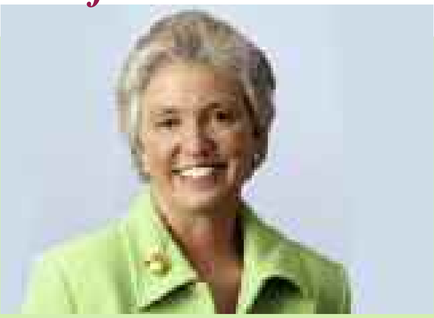
VOLUME 11 / NUMBER 1 / SPRING 2008

On the Way: More MPG

NET Gain for the Pew Environment Group

A Good Year for Election Reform?

Public Pensions on the Precipice



Open Roads

History shows that the automobile had a slow start. In 1509, Leonardo da Vinci described a device that, *centuries* later, would be called a predecessor of the internal combustion engine, whose incremental development in the 19th century made the automobile possible. Then innovation came fast and furious.

One aspect of the growing industry, however, lost ground: fuel efficiency. In 1903, a touring car reached 15 miles per gallon. Some 70 years later, cars averaged only about 13 miles per gallon.

In 1975, in the wake of an oil crisis, Congress set standards for fleet-wide efficiency, known as corporate average fuel economy or CAFE. The goal was 18 miles per gallon in 1978 models, rising to 27.5 by 1985.

Since then, the world has changed in many ways. Terrorism has become a threat in virtually every country. The world's known reserves of petroleum are expected to last only several more decades at current consumption levels. And human-caused greenhouse gas emissions—in part due to transportation—have been confirmed as a factor in global warming. Yet the long-outdated standard of the 1975 law remained in place until December of last year, when a new federal law set the goal of 35 miles per gallon by 2020.

The Pew Campaign for Fuel Efficiency helped Congress reach this destination by providing the public and policy makers fact-based maps for the debate. Like all of Pew's work, the campaign's case was strictly nonpartisan: Increased standards will reduce our dependence on oil, enhance security, save consumers money and stimulate investments in cleaner vehicle technologies.

Helping drive the effort was the National Environmental Trust, begun in 1994 by Pew and other donors. Over the years, NET built an experienced staff of public-policy and campaign professionals who played a central role in both U.S. environmental policy discussions and international treaty negotiations. The Pew Environment Group partnered with NET on many public-education campaigns. Now, Pew has added NET's expertise and effectiveness through a merger that literally creates a whole greater than the sum of its parts. "We are poised to enter a new era in Pew's environmental history," says the group's managing director, Josh Reichert, "and we are better equipped than ever to produce enduring results."

State governments are pulling a heavy load with an expanding array of responsibilities. Education now includes preschool, the criminal-justice systems must control costs without sacrificing public safety, and policy makers seek to strengthen government performance. The states are also facing new issues, such as global warming. For these and other concerns, the Pew Center on the States is an invaluable navigation system, helping states steer a steady course over often-difficult terrain. It conducts trustworthy research, brings together a variety of perspectives and advances nonpartisan, pragmatic solutions for pressing problems.

Two center initiatives are featured in this issue. One is electionline.org, which Pew established as a neutral clearinghouse for information about election reform after the voting debacle during the 2000 presidential election. This effort evolved to provide unbiased and accurate information and guidance to federal, state and local election officials on trends, important issues and best practices in conducting elections.

The Pew Center on the States also produces its own research and analysis, as in *Promises with a Price*, the first report of its kind to examine the pension, health-care and other retirement benefits owed by each of the 50 states to their employees over the next three decades. Currently, the obligations far exceed the funds available. Paying the impending bill will require a significant outlay of taxpayer dollars, and the states must muster the political will to make the necessary investments. The report presents irrefutable data and then describes some of the fiscally responsible steps that states can take, with examples from those demonstrating leadership.

A small note to mark two anniversaries. This issue of *Trust* marks a full decade of publication. In the first issue, we said that the new magazine would describe "the work, commitment, passion and persistence of our partners and the people they serve." That it has done—in a way that recalls advice to an author from one of our founders, J. Howard Pew, back in 1963. Mr. Pew returned an unsolicited book manuscript because of the "technical" presentation of the material: "It must be told," he counseled the writer, "in story form." Compelling narratives and images have been *Trust*'s stock in trade, conveying our approach and solutions to crucial matters of our era.

Sixty years ago, The Pew Charitable Trusts was established. The four founding philanthropists invested their hopes, values and an entrepreneurial spirit in the new institution, and these qualities remain our constant compass, even though the contemporary world is markedly different from theirs. In this anniversary year, we rededicate ourselves to their vision and mandate to apply the power of knowledge to serve the public interest.

Rebecca W. Rimel
President and CEO

Trust

The Pew Charitable Trusts

VOLUME 11 NUMBER 1 SPRING 2008

Trust

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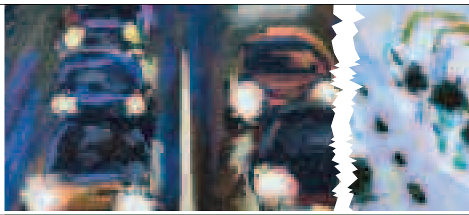
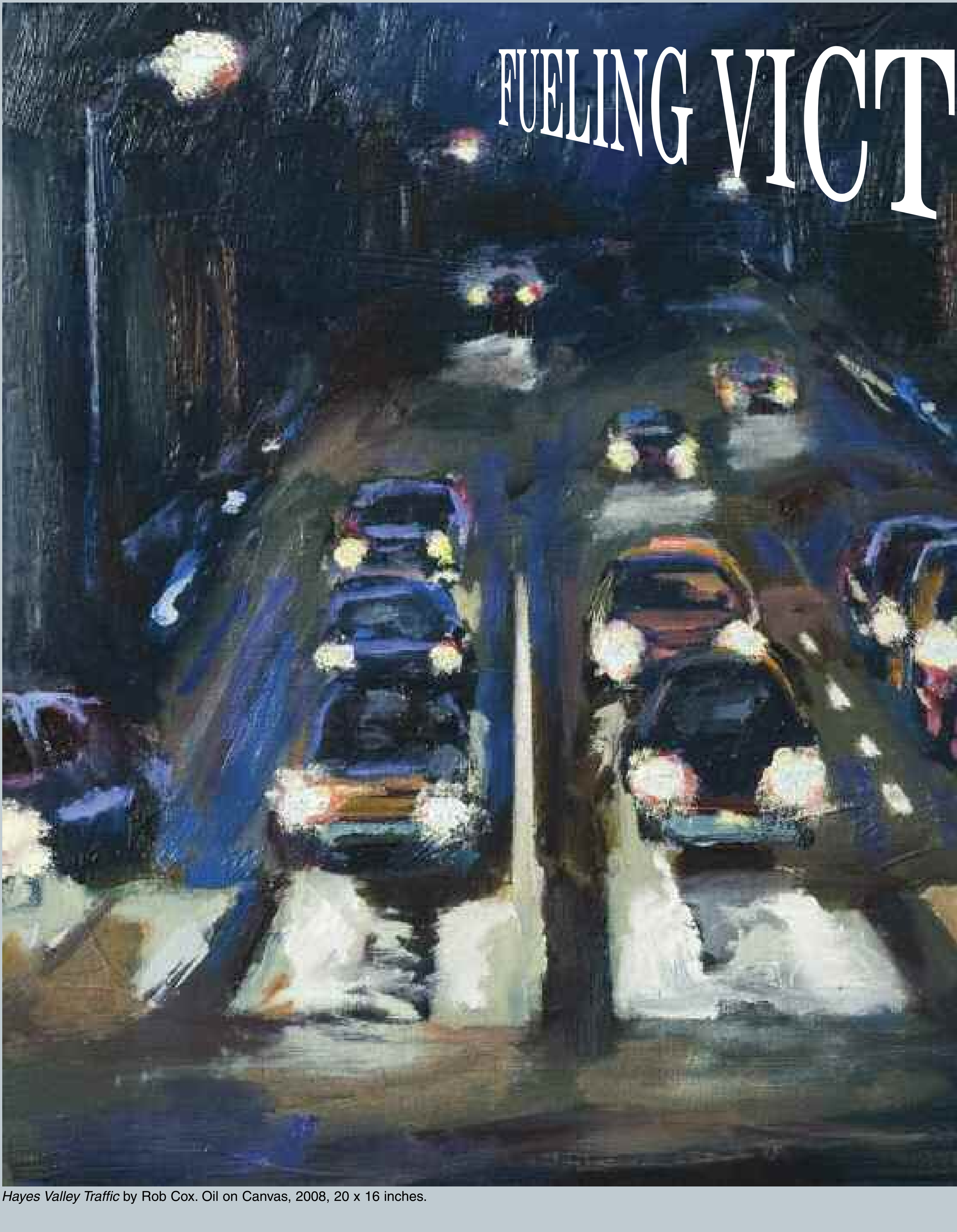


Departments

The Pew Charitable Trusts serves the public interest by providing information, advancing policy solutions and supporting civic life. Based in Philadelphia, with an office in Washington, D.C., the Trusts will invest $283 million in fiscal year 2008 to provide organizations and citizens with fact-based research and practical solutions for challenging issues.

The Trusts, an independent nonprofit, is the sole beneficiary of seven individual charitable funds established between 1948 and 1979 by two sons and two daughters of Sun Oil Company founder Joseph N. Pew and his wife, Mary Anderson Pew.

The official registration and financial information of The Pew Charitable Trusts may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1.800.732.0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.



Hayes Valley Traffic by Rob Cox. Oil on Canvas, 2008, 20 x 16 inches.

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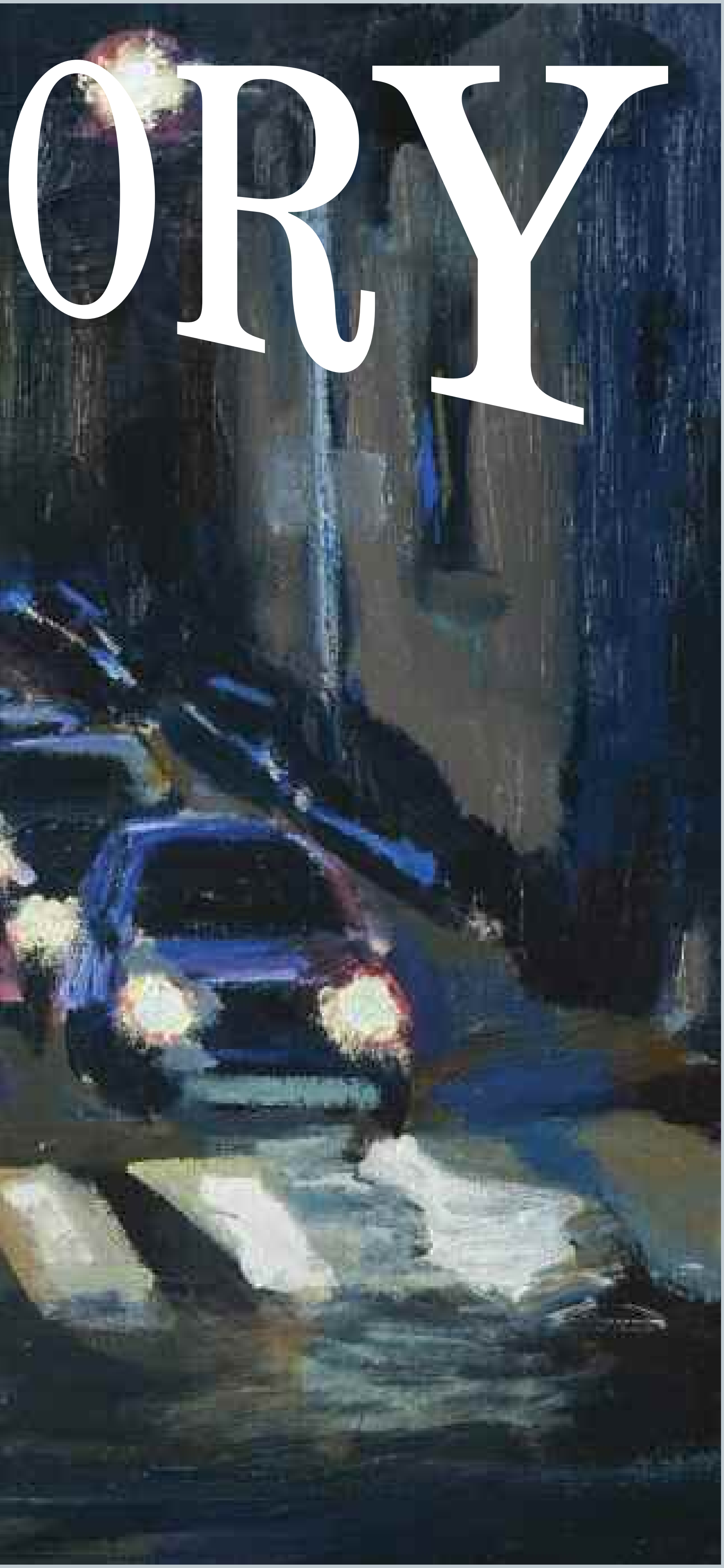


The Pew Campaign for Fuel Efficiency's successful drive helped raise fuel economy standards for the first time in more than three decades.

By Colin Woodard

When it comes to petroleum, the United States is in a bind.

The substance accounts for 40 percent of the nation's energy supply—and powers 97 percent of its transportation—yet only 3 percent of world reserves are within its borders, and the country is vulnerable to anything that might disturb the flow from elsewhere. Seventy percent of U.S. oil consumption goes to the transportation sector, where it is consumed less efficiently than peer nations: Average automotive fuel economy is 35 percent lower than in the European Union and 48 percent below Japan's, with menacing effects to both climate and the environment.

The United States is a nation that, in President George W. Bush's words, "is addicted to oil."

But last December, the nation took an important step in treating that addiction when Congress passed an energy bill, which Bush promptly signed, that raises automobile fuel efficiency standards to 35 miles per gallon by 2020.

The measure, the first congressionally mandated increase in federal fuel economy standards in 32 years, is a boon for the economy, security and the environment. By 2020 it will save an estimated 1.1 million barrels of oil a day, $23 billion in annual consumer fuel costs and 190 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year, or as much as forty coal plants.

"This is a historic move that will decrease our dangerous dependency on foreign oil, save consumers who are paying too much for a gallon of gas, and put us on the road to significant greenhouse gas savings," says Phyllis Cuttino, director of the Pew Campaign for Fuel Efficiency, a multimillion-dollar-investment by the Trusts to promote the measure's passage. "Last spring, few would have thought this could have been achieved."

Indeed, when the campaign got under way in April 2007, it was conceived as a nearly two-year project, and even within that time frame, success was far from certain. A coalition of environmental groups had been working for decades to increase fuel standards but had been defeated by powerful opponents in the automotive and petroleum industries. The last fuel economy bill to reach a floor vote in the Senate, in 2005, received just 28 votes, fewer than half the 60 needed to guarantee passage.

But there were also indications that the policy environment was shifting. Oil prices were approaching $100 a barrel, while public opinion increasingly favored taking action to confront global warming. "We had high gas prices, high oil prices, a growing understanding of climate change and turmoil in the Middle East, Africa and South America," recalls David Friedman, research director of the Clean Vehicles Program at the Union of Concerned Scientists, which had been working on the issue since the 1990s. "People were waking up to the cost of our oil addiction."

As a result, new voices were joining the chorus calling for improved fuel economy: corporate CEOs, retired senior military officers, religious leaders and consumer advocates. "We collectively saw a window of opportunity," says Kevin Curtis, who was then at the National Environmental Trust, which merged into the Pew Environment Group in January. "A targeted campaign with investments in various partner organizations could help it get across the goal line."

Fuel economy standards had remained essentially unchanged since the oil shock in 1975. Over resistance from automakers, Congress passed a law requiring passenger-vehicle efficiency to double to 27.5 miles over ten years. Ford predicted the new standards could result in "a product line consisting . . . of all sub-Pinto-sized vehicles," while Chrysler warned that most full-sized sedans and station wagons would be effectively outlawed.

Of course, that's not what happened. More efficient cars were made without sacrificing safety, performance or large-vehicle types. Pickups, vans and other light trucks, which were held to a lower standard, also saw a near doubling of vehicle mileage by 1985. But gas prices had fallen as well, reducing public pressure to raise standards. Carmakers continued to innovate but channeled engineering gains into increasing performance rather than mileage.

There were frequent attempts to raise the standards further, but each was stymied. In the mid-1980s, the Reagan administration actually lowered standards to 26 mpg for cars and 20 mpg for light trucks, and a 1990 effort to raise standards by 40 percent by 2000 was defeated by a Senate filibuster. Congress prevented the Clinton administration from raising light-truck standards by passing a rider in 1995 that effectively took away its authority to do so. With the rise of sport utility vehicles, fleet-

SEVERAL COMPANIES WITH LARGE FLEETS OF VEHICLES TOOK THE LEAD IN RAISING FUEL EFFICIENCY STANDARDS. MORE EFFECTIVE ENGINES MADE GOOD BUSINESS SENSE, THEY CONCLUDED.

wide-average fuel efficiency dropped through the 1990s. The Bush administration raised efficiency to 27.5 for cars and 22.2 for light trucks.

In the absence of federal action, progress of a sort was occurring at the state level. Under the Clean Air Act, California, which had enacted pollution-control measures for automobiles as far back as 1960, retained the authority to set stiffer emissions standards, subject to approval by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Catalytic converters, vapor-blocking gas caps and low-sulfur diesel were fostered by California over the years, innovations that influenced federal emissions standards by dint of the state's status as the country's largest car market. After 1990, the EPA granted other states the right to adopt California's standards if they so wished; New York and Massachusetts did so, and others indicated an interest.

"It's been a ratcheting effect: California adopts a more stringent standard, it's adopted by other states, and then the federal government ends up following it," notes Jason Mark of the Energy Foundation in San Francisco. "In terms of air pollution, California pulls the country up by its bootstraps."

Until recently, these emissions rules had a negligible effect on fuel economy. "Some emissions technologies improved it and others reduced it, so the overall effect has been negligible," Mark notes. "But the new standards are different."

California's latest standard, adopted in 2004, aims to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, a goal likely to be achieved through improved fuel economy. The standard—which enforces the equivalent of a fleet-wide average of 35 miles per gallon by 2016—was immediately challenged by the Bush administration, which argued that carbon dioxide was not a pollutant and therefore cannot be regulated by the EPA or the state.

But the California rules were upheld in a series of court challenges, including an April 2007 U.S. Supreme Court decision, removing a major roadblock to the 13 states that wished to adopt them. The Energy Foundation supported public education and state-specific research on the benefits of the California standards and then helped fight off automakers' suits to block their implementation.

Meanwhile, ever-higher oil and gasoline prices were vividly illustrating the costs of petroleum dependency—and enlisting powerful new voices to the cause. Seventeen retired senior military officers and corporate CEOs joined the fight under the aegis of the Energy Security Leadership Council; they included Federal Express chairman and CEO Frederick W. Smith, retired Marine Corps General P.X. Kelley, David P. Steiner, CEO of Waste Management Inc., Southwest Airlines executive chairman Herbert D. Kelleher and retired Admiral Vern Clark, former chief of naval operations.

"The military leaders saw a situation where our military was more and more being put in the posture of having to secure the supply of oil not just for the United States but also for the world," says Robbie Diamond, founder of Securing America's Future Energy, the Washington-based nonprofit which convened the council. "Then you had a group of companies with huge vehicle fleets who wanted to signal that they were willing to take the lead on this, even if they had to incur some costs to make it happen."

He continues, saying: "These people who joined the council didn't do it based on their companies' immediate interests. They were really coming from a very pure place, from real concerns about what they saw ahead for their children and grandchildren and the United States."

Their report, issued in December 2006, urged the government to reform and strengthen fuel efficiency standards by 4 percent annually, among other measures. "America's oil dependence threatens the security of the nation," Kelly and Smith wrote in the introductory letter. "The time for action arrived long ago. We must not wait another moment."

The Consumer Federation of America, worried about prices at the gas pump, began calling for Congress to pass a 50-mpg standard by 2030, arguing that at $3 a gallon, the net cost to the consumer would be zero. Evangelical leaders in the Christian Environmental Council had already adopted a resolution calling for at least 65 mpg by 2020 to help head off human suffering in poor nations due to global warming. Even Nissan, an automaker whose fleet was not particularly fuel-efficient, broke with its competitors to support raising standards, and was instrumental in securing the support of senators from states where the Japanese carmaker had plants.

"We had the perfect storm of influences," says Cuttino of the Pew Campaign for Fuel Efficiency. "We were lucky with timing of the external issues that came up, and we seized the opportunity."

The campaign aimed to get Congress to pass higher standards through the advocacy equivalent of a full-court press: coordinating a coalition of interest groups and stakeholders to simultaneously build support nationally and in the states, backed by targeted advertising, independent research findings and high-quality polling data.

SURVEYS BY POLLSTERS WITH DIVERGENT IDEOLOGIES CAME TO THE SAME CONCLUSION: LARGE PERCENTAGES OF AMERICANS WANTED HIGHER FUEL EFFICIENCY STANDARDS.

"As the community who had been working on this had become more and more successful, there was more and more to do, to the point where it was extremely hard for us to keep on top of it," says Friedman of the Union of Concerned Scientists. "To build the necessary coalition, to get the information out there and to educate the public on an issue as large as this takes a lot of people."

For the Trusts, it was also a test of a new, campaign-based approach to affecting policy change. As the Campaign for Fuel Efficiency got under way, the Trusts announced that the National Environmental Trust, a long-time partner with an experienced staff of campaign professionals, would be merging with the Pew Environment Group (see pages 9-11). The consolidated team could direct large advocacy campaigns like that for fuel economy more quickly and nimbly.

"The idea is to bring the campaign management responsibility in-house and, where appropriate, make investments in all sort of organizations to help you get across the goal line," says Curtis, the group's director of campaign operations. "The Campaign for Fuel Efficiency was a wonderful dry run of what the new entity could do." Winning would boil down to convincing uncommitted senators and representatives to support new standards. To that end, the campaign hired two leading pollsters—Democrat Mark Mellman, president of the Mellman Group, and Republican Bill McInturff of Public Opinion Strategies—to gauge attitudes in 30 congressional districts, including that of Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.), the auto industry's fiercest champion.

The pollsters found overwhelming support for a 35-mpg standard, even when presented with critics' arguments. The surveys, which spanned nine states, showed three-quarters of respondents supported the higher standards after hearing both sides of the argument. "I was a bit surprised, as I presumed the results would be closer," says McInturff. "Even in the core of Michigan, arguments for higher standards did strikingly well."

The Big Three automakers employed time-tested arguments against fuel economy. Their lobbying group, the American Association of Automobile Manufacturers, ran radio ads suggesting that soccer moms wouldn't be able to buy SUVs, perhaps compromising their family's safety. Jobs and profits would be at stake, automakers and the United Auto Workers had long suggested, and pickups would become harder to find.

Pollsters were able to demonstrate to lawmakers that the public was not buying the claims. "One thing that was different this time around is we anticipated the opponent's arguments," says Mellman. "This time, we talked to pickup owners and found they wanted even higher fuel standards than others."

Even in automobile-producing states, 60 to 70 percent of survey participants disagreed that vehicles would become small and unsafe, that autoworkers would lose their jobs or that the U.S. economy would be harmed. Seventy-four percent of those polled in the Detroit area said the measures would be good for Detroit, encouraging innovation.

That's a conclusion backed up by research. A July 2007 study by the University of Michigan's Transportation Research Institute found that higher standards would boost automakers' profits and any additional costs to consumers would be more than offset by savings in fuel costs.

"Automakers have been saying many of the same things since standards came in the 1970s, and they made profits after that," says the study's author, Walter S. McManus, Ph.D., director of the university's automotive-analysis division. "All of these massive losses they have had in the last three years had nothing to do with fuel economy standards, and in fact they would have been better off if they had had a more fuel-efficient fleet."

McInturff's polling firm also tested potential arguments and advertising messages—and those being put forth by the auto industry—using focus groups to determine the most effective content. "Our work said that this issue should be framed around energy independence and national security," he says. "I understand the environmental argument, but there were tons of research that said: If you want to build a broader coalition, these were the arguments that were most compelling to do that."

The campaign ran an advertising series (examples to the left) in national newspapers and key radio stations. "Security," an ad in *The New York Times* began: "Better gas mileage doesn't just save money. It protects America."

"With spending at the pump up to $80 a month, Americans need better gas mileage now," stated a *Roll Call* ad placed shortly before the Senate was to vote on the measure in June 2007. Through the campaign's efforts, 85 editorials ran in the three weeks prior to the vote, which passed 65-27, shifting the battle to the House.

The campaign—and spiking oil

A WAY TO MEASURE VICTORY: THE HIGHER FUEL STANDARDS AMOUNT TO TAKING 28 MILLION CARS OFF THE ROAD.

prices—kept the pressure on Congress. The first House version of the energy bill, passed in August, did not include fuel economy because of Detroit's opposition, but House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) vowed it would be restored in the final bill to be negotiated with the Senate.

As negotiations continued in the fall, the campaign's pollsters provided lawmakers with another reason to support the bill: a chance to boost Congress's 30-percent approval rating. Mellman's nationwide voter survey showed that respondents from both parties felt Congress had accomplished little and that passing fuel economy standards would be the strongest antidote available to rectify this perception. Of 20 issues, voters regarded fuel efficiency as the second most important for Congress to tackle, after Social Security.

"The Democrats were worried that, from a political point of view, they would end up owning a failed Congress, and they were desperate to avoid that," Mellman says. "When fuel economy emerged as the most compelling example of something they could do to improve their image, it was a powerful piece of information."

When the dust finally settled in December, the House passed the energy bill containing the measure by 314-100.

"It's a landmark victory," says Cuttino, whose staff had held daily huddles and weekly strategy meetings to coordinate the effort. "We ran this like any other very serious national campaign, keeping up a constant stream of information to put pressure on the votes on the Hill."

While a great victory, fuel-economy proponents note that more work lies ahead, both to ensure that the new rules are implemented properly and to support California's efforts to implement an even tighter standard. The day after President Bush signed the energy bill into law, the EPA announced it would not be issuing the necessary permission to California—the first time the agency had ever declined to do so. "We could get 50 percent more reduction in greenhouse gas emissions with the California standards," the Energy Foundation's Jason Mark observes.

"We have to keep fighting this fight to make sure that people don't insert provisions into new bills that undermine what has been accomplished," adds David Friedman at the Union of Concerned Scientists. "But it's a very nice beginning."

That is the stance of the Pew Campaign for Fuel Efficiency. In a statement issued in December, the initiative pointed out the savings that the law will create in barrels of oil and dollars at the pump. "It makes the auto industry the first major sector of the American economy that will reduce its global warming pollution—by the equivalent of taking 28 million cars off the road. There's nothing underwhelming about that."

And it pointed toward the future: "Americans demanded action on energy security and global warming, and Congress responded. This new fuel efficiency standard shows how powerful these issues have become—and they're not going away." T

For information on the recent history of fuel efficiency, plus links to consumer and auto-industry benefits, go to the Web site of Pew's Campaign for Fuel Efficiency, at www.pewfuelefficiency.org.

Colin Woodard is an award-winning journalist and the author of The Republic of Pirates, The Lobster Coast, *and* Ocean's End: Travels Through Endangered Seas. *He lives in Portland, Maine, and has a Web site at www.colinwoodard.com.*

Deep Green

The National Environmental Trust merges with the Pew Environment Group. The two bring complementary policy and advocacy skills to the work of protecting the world's natural heritage.

By Marshall A. Ledger

© Thomas Mueller, Photographersdirect.com

NET supported the conservation of roadless areas and other measures to protect the remaining U.S. wild forests.

In 1994, many Americans felt stymied in efforts to protect the natural environment. Clearly, they were supportive. They joined environmental organizations—the 10 largest had a combined membership of 12 million people—they donated an estimated $3 billion to nonprofit organizations that supported environmental causes, and a Gallup poll found that some 66 percent of respondents called themselves "environmentalists."

At the same time, with some exceptions on discrete issues, their passion, numbers and resources were not translating into an ability to shape national environmental policy in ways that reflected their potential influence.

This was the context when Pew and a small group of philanthropies established a nonprofit to help assist the efforts of the environmental community to advocate for stronger environmental policies at the national level.

After two short-lived names, the organization was called the National Environmental Trust, and this past January its staff and operations were merged into Pew's Environment program. The consolidated team is called the Pew Environment Group, with an annual budget of more than $70 million and a staff of 80—one of the largest environmental advocacy forces in the country.

Trust turned to the group's managing director, Joshua S. Reichert, to describe the thinking behind the merger.

Trust: Did we characterize the situation in 1994 accurately?

Reichert: There are two additional elements worth noting. Opponents of environmental causes were improving the effectiveness of their efforts by hiring political consultants and sophisticated public relations specialists, employing all of the methods used by the burgeoning K Street firms that had been established in the 1970s to represent corporate concerns in Washington. They often succeeded in framing issues and the corresponding political debate to suit their own interests—remember "jobs versus owls"—and in ways that were often neither balanced nor accurate.

The environmental community needed to do a better job at ensuring that its message and point of view were fairly heard. Americans craved clarity and balanced information on the issues, and still do, because they don't want to stand by and allow the continued destruction and degradation of the nation's forests and wilderness areas, our coastal waters and the life they contain, our water supply and the quality of our air, among many other things.

At the same time, Pew's environmental campaign work in the early 1990s, which was primarily aimed at protecting critical forest and wilderness habitat in the western United States, had to be reinvented with each campaign. In other words, we, as a foundation at the time, had to ask each successive grantee to create the infrastructure needed for effective communications and media work, grassroots organizing and legislative advocacy. We quickly realized that doing it repeatedly from scratch was enormously time-consuming and inadvisable. It was far more efficient to build an organization that was singularly capable of doing this kind of work on a multitude of issues on which we were working.

Trust: And that was the role of what came to be the National Environmental Trust (NET)?
Reichert: Yes. At NET, we brought together a core of highly skilled professionals trained in issue advocacy, field organizing, communications and government relations. They helped form coalitions of national, regional and state organizations and assisted them in the design and implementation of environmental campaigns to affect national policy. The point was to reach the audiences that most needed to learn about the issues and to stimulate action where it was necessary.

Many of the leading environmental organizations were staffed with very experienced and talented scientists, lawyers and policy specialists, but they often lacked the experience in large-scale campaign management and implementation. NET was designed to fill that need.

NET helped coordinate campaigns, devise strategic goals and objectives, educate the public through targeted media and create opportunities for citizens to communicate their views more effectively to policy makers. We hoped that, if this effort was successful, it would not only produce significant policy achievements in its own right, but would also stimulate some constructive changes in the way the U.S. environmental community approached its policy work.

Trust: Did it?
Reichert: I do believe that, over the past decade or more, many environmental organizations have become more effective in communicating their perspective to policy makers, the public and the media, and that some of that positive change has been influenced by NET's work.

If you look at the results of that work over time, there are a number of notable achievements. Among other issues, NET was instrumental in the successful passage of the nation's strongest drinking-water and food-quality protection acts, in preventing passage of amendments that would have weakened the Endangered Species Act, in managing the defense of the Roadless Rule, in helping to strengthen the nation's principal marine fisheries law, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and in playing a central role in building support for adoption of the Kyoto Protocol.

I think it's safe to say that NET met and in many cases exceeded the expectations of its creators.

Trust: How did NET accomplish that?


© Gary Braasch / *Earth Under Fire*

NET has shown that efficient coal-fired power plants could significantly cut greenhouse gas emissions.

NET asked consumers to "Take a Pass on Chilean Sea Bass." Image courtesy of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority.

Reichert: It built a broad nationwide network of relationships with environment, public-health, energy and political writers, and this is why you find the staff cited frequently in the print media.

Its editorial team formed relationships with more than 125 newspapers and essentially constructed a model for editorial communications—which is an all-too-often neglected area for the nonprofit sector.

Its government-relations group earned a reputation for being highly bipartisan and effective and comprised individuals with long Capitol Hill experience who had working relationships with policy makers of all ideological hues.

And its field team developed a presence in nearly half the states and in every major region of the country.

Trust: What made the merger appropriate for Pew?
Reichert: When Pew became a public charity four years ago, we were freed from many of the constraints that apply to foundations, including the ability to operate policy campaigns directly and to lobby. As a result, a host of new opportunities were created that enabled us to dramatically expand our operating capacity and increase the scope and impact of our work.

But we also realized that, to do this right, we would have to increase our personnel across a wide range of areas and bring on staff with proficiency in communications and media, government affairs and field operations.

There were two ways to build this capacity. Buy it—i.e., hire the people we needed one by one, which is a laborious and time-consuming process. Or acquire it. Namely, bring inside Pew the organization that we had created specifically for the purpose of running and managing campaigns in areas in which we were working.

Given that NET contained the human infrastructure that we needed, that it had effectively served as a campaign arm of Pew for many years, that by design it had worked primarily in the areas in which our work was focused and that we had had a close and extremely productive working relationship for more than a decade, this became a relatively easy choice.

Quite simply, incorporating NET into the Pew Environment Group was far more practical, cost-effective and efficient than re-creating it internally. And the Pew board agreed. As a result, we proposed the idea of a merger to the executive staff of NET and its board, and happily they agreed.

Trust: And what made it desirable for NET?
Reichert: Just as it was in our case, I think that the level of trust and comfort, built over many years of collaboration with us, was a significant factor in NET's decision. The staff of both organizations not only worked closely together, but shared common goals and had skill sets and professional backgrounds that complemented one another.

Second, a merger offered the staff of NET the potential of greatly expanding the scope and scale of its work, its geographical range, resource base and long-term effectiveness. All of this translates into greater potential to make a more significant contribution to conservation, which, after all is said and done, is what motivates us all.

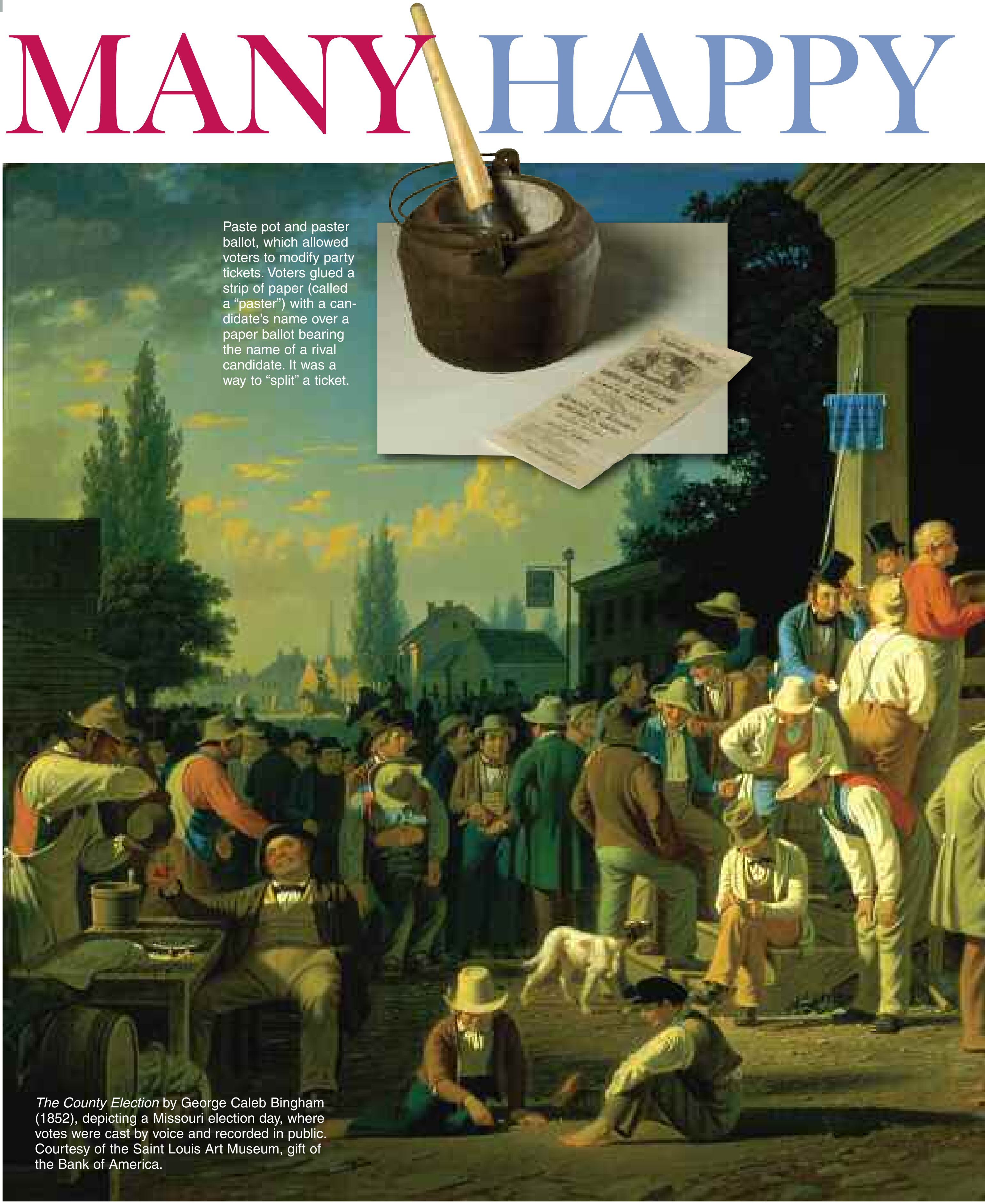
Trust: The timing seems appropriate.
Reichert: Not only for the staff involved. I genuinely believe that we have reached a critical moment in our history with the natural world. For years, scientists have been warning of the potentially devastating impacts of human activity on Earth's terrestrial and marine environment as well as the global atmosphere.

The good news is there is a growing sense of urgency that has gripped the public, and governments throughout the world are waking up to the problems we face. We have a rather narrow window of time to address these problems and a corresponding opportunity to reverse course and begin to more sensibly manage our relationship with nature. Quite simply, this merger will make us more effective at doing that. T

The work of the Pew Environment Group can be found at www.pewtrusts.org.

Marshall Ledger is editor of Trust.

MANY HAPPY



Paste pot and paster ballot, which allowed voters to modify party tickets. Voters glued a strip of paper (called a “paster”) with a candidate’s name over a paper ballot bearing the name of a rival candidate. It was a way to “split” a ticket.

The County Election by George Caleb Bingham (1852), depicting a Missouri election day, where votes were cast by voice and recorded in public. Courtesy of the Saint Louis Art Museum, gift of the Bank of America.

All voting apparati in this story except those otherwise attributed are courtesy of the National Museum of American History with photo credit to Hugh Talman.

RETURNS

By Pat Loeb

In America, every VOTE counts.

But is every vote counted? No one knows better than electionline.org.

"Potomac Tuesday"—the February 12 primaries in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia—brought the leading Republican candidate closer to nomination and tightened the race on the Democratic side. For Dan Seligson, project manager for publications at electionline.org, it brought home just how committed to impartiality his job has made him.

Seligson took the day off to do his civic duty: working the polls in the District of Columbia's 1st Ward and loading ballot cards into the electronic voting machine set up near the stage of the cavernous elementary school auditorium where 40th Precinct voters cast their ballots. A woman, toddler in tow, approached to cast her vote.

"Paper or electronic?" he asked. Like many jurisdictions, the District of Columbia offers both kinds of machines.

"Electronic, I guess," she answered, then looked worried. "Is it safe?" she asked Seligson.

And there was a pregnant pause.

Seligson has researched the question exhaustively. If he were at his regular job, at electionline.org, he could not say definitively that the machines are 100 percent trustworthy. He could say that many state and local officials not only trust them but also consider them superior for their accessibility, ease, flexibility, speed and accuracy. He would add, however, that the machines have failed—spectacularly at times—and that advocates,

Crayon ballot markers, 1908. Left: a touch-screen voting machine from a voting-technology project of the California Institute of Technology and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

voters and some lawmakers want them replaced or refitted to provide a paper audit trail.

Here, though, was a voter about to cast her ballot, who wanted a simple answer, not a policy analysis, so he offered the best answer he had, given the current state of the field.

He smiled, reassuringly. "It is," he said. "It is."

Later, he confided it was difficult to give that reply. And no wonder. A strict dedication to detailed and unbiased fact-finding and reporting is what has helped electionline.org achieve an unusual but invaluable status. In the seven years since its inception, the initiative has become perhaps the most trusted source in the country for information about the administration of elections. It is read

Wooden ballot box with marbles. The term *ballot* is derived from the Italian *ballotta*, meaning "little ball" (but this ballot box was not used in a U.S. election).

regularly by state and local election officials and consulted by journalists looking for the most reliable content.

"It's an odd little niche," concedes electionline.org director Doug Chapin, "but I love filling it."

It was November 8, 2000, the day after the presidential election. Instead of the normal victories and concessions, the country was hearing the phrases *hanging chad* and *butterfly ballot*. Donald Kimelman, currently managing director of Information Initiatives and the Philadelphia Program at Pew, was running the Venture Fund and, as always, on the lookout for developments in the outside world that Pew might play a role in addressing. As he watched the confusion deepen over the next several

Glass globe ballot jar, 1884, typical of the devices used to secure single party tickets.

MAKE VOTING WORK: THE FIRST PILOT PROJECTS

Here's an ambitious goal: improve the nation's voting systems. Why wouldn't that win in a landslide? Because no partisans would favor reforms that appear to advantage their opponents.

Fair enough. That's why Make Voting Work, an initiative of the Pew Center on the States, approaches its work thoroughly schooled in the center's strategy of moving issues forward based on nonpartisan, rock-solid data and information.

"Elections should be a time to celebrate the strength of our democracy, but the 2008 elections find the rules of the game in flux," says Michael Caudell-Feagan, director of Make Voting Work. "Policies, practices and technologies, despite good-faith efforts, are being instituted and discarded without an adequate base of evidence. As a result, the integrity of our elections is relentlessly questioned."

To help fill the knowledge gap, Make Voting Work and the JEHT Foundation have joined to fund projects seeking new ways to measure the health and performance of elections and develop and evaluate pilot projects offering innovative approaches to improve the election process.

State and local election administrators are key to the effort "since they have the knowledge, experience and opportunity to act on the nuts and bolts of voting," says Rachel Leon, senior manager for fair and participatory elections at the JEHT Foundation.

The projects fall into five areas:

- *Voter registration system assessment*. The rationale: Eligible citizens should be able to vote without undue burden, and those ineligible ought to be excluded.

  Yet registration rolls are created from piecemeal data collected by local election officials, state motor-vehicle agencies and get-out-the-vote campaigns, nonpartisan and partisan.

  As a result, rolls fail to keep pace with a mobile society and are often inaccurate; they are also costly to maintain.
- *Vote centers*. The rationale: States are increasingly grappling with the problem of overcrowded, inconveniently located and poorly designed polling places.

  Some states are experimenting with "vote centers" that replace neighborhood precincts and allow voters to cast ballots at large, concentrated polling places anywhere in their city or county—near their work, school, shopping center or other destination.

  The innovation is in its infancy, and it raises important questions, including how to determine where the centers should be located and what their impact is on voter turnout and the cost of running elections.
- *Audits of elections*. The rationale: With the accuracy of voting systems a continuing concern, states seek-

A complex color scheme distinguished the official ballot of the regular Republican ticket in Massachusetts in 1878.

days—and read an analysis predicting that more close elections would make voting-process issues even more crucial in the future—he recognized a feeling from his former newsroom career at *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

"It was like reporters who know they have a good story," he says. "Suddenly, here was [an issue] that just landed in front of us."

The question was what Pew could contribute. Kimelman discussed the possibilities with colleagues and researched the issue. What he found surprised him. It was easy to say the system was broken but, in fact, the problem seemed more fundamental: There was no system. There was a highly complex, decentralized collection of rules and customs that varied not just from state to state but from voting precinct to voting precinct.

Other funders were seizing the issue, putting out multi-point plans and becoming *de facto* advocates for their own proposals. A movement was growing for reform.

Kimelman saw a clear role for Pew emerging. "We could make the process better," he says, "by being a source of timely, reliable information; in other words, inform to reform."

By March, the Pew board approved a three-year grant for the Election Reform Information Project at the University of Richmond. It quickly became known as its Internet site name—electionline.org—which was rolled out later that year. Chapin, a D.C. lawyer who, curiously, was already wedded to this kind of work, became the director.

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ing to ensure the integrity of the electoral process have adopted post-election audit requirements.

Still, the requirements vary dramatically, and there are no generally accepted standards for how to verify an election outcome.

Projects in this category will test multiple techniques for measuring the validity and accuracy of vote counts on various voting systems.

And efforts will be made to broaden the definition of an election audit and identify other elements—beyond vote counts—that should be audited, such as pre-election preparations and poll-worker performance.

- *Online training for poll workers*. The rationale: Volunteer poll workers are the foot soldiers of democracy, but, as recently documented by Pew's electionline.org, their enthusiasm needs to be joined with proper training—particularly essential as voting systems and rules take on greater complexity.

  Studies show that poor poll-worker performance affects elections and reduces voter confidence. More effective and convenient methods of training, especially those using the Internet, hold the promise of better-equipped poll workers and greater voter trust in the system.
- *Election performance assessment*. The rationale: to help election officials, policy makers and the public assess the true impact of changes in policies, practices and technologies, especially through means that can be consistently applied to measure accuracy, convenience, efficiency and security.

In each of these areas, and others in which additional pilot projects and case studies will be commissioned over the coming months, Make Voting Work is establishing working groups that unite the research teams with respected election officials, experts from the private sector and other specialists and community representatives. These groups will help oversee the implementation of individual projects, evaluate and refine methodologies, offer a peer review and dissemination forum, and develop strategies to ensure that proven innovations are engrained in the policies and practices of the field.

All of the research will be disseminated through Pew's Web site and directly by the research teams. To inform Pew and JEHT's ongoing contribution, Make Voting Work will also host a series of major public forums on these research initiatives and other challenges facing the field of election administration; these will take place throughout 2008 and 2009. T

For further information, visit the center's Web site, www.pewcenteronthestates.org, and that of the JEHT Foundation at www.jehtfoundation.org.

Voting machine manufactured by the Standard Voting Machine Company in the late 1890s.

"Identifying someone like Doug was key," Kimelman says. "He lives and breathes this issue. He's enthusiastic about it. Even more, he can explain it in a way that makes a complex, dry topic interesting to people."

What kind of person finds election administration interesting, even before the 2000 election?

"I'm an election geek," Chapin, 44, says cheerfully, without a trace of irony, in electionline.org's corner of Pew's D.C. office. And why? "I grew up around here," he quips, noting that Washingtonians are known to find arcane minutiae fascinating.

He was certainly steeped in the finer points. He formerly served as an associate with a law firm's political-law group; he provided legal advice to corporate clients and specialized in campaign finance, lobbying disclosure, and conflict-of-interest and gift laws at all governmental levels. He also served as minority elections counsel for the U.S. Senate Committee on Rules and Administration.

Chapin has a round, boyish face, fringed by longish, moppy hair (his 8-year-old son told him he needed a haircut after watching him on a TV interview show), a tendency to speak in sports metaphors and a weakness for funny circle graphs by blogger Jessica Hagy of "Indexed." He often posts one next to a big bowl of candy on his desk (both are labeled "Food for Thought"). A sample Hagy scribble: a pie chart purportedly showing recent media coverage; a slice of 25 percent is devoted to the presidential campaign; the rest of the pie, to Britney Spears.

Electionline.org's initial role—as a nonpartisan clearinghouse of information on how, when and where Americans vote—suited him fine. And he is equally at ease with the way the project has developed.

Now, it not only collects information but also researches and analyzes problems in election administration—voter-registration lists, provisional ballots, optical-scan vs. direct-recording electronic (DRE) machines—and it takes the next step in identifying and rigorously evaluating proposed solutions, all while remaining strictly impartial and independent. The organization quite specifically does not care about the outcome of any race.

With Pew's change to a public charity, electionline.org has become a project within the Pew Center on the States, which "is emerging as an important national think tank on state policy issues," said Peter A. Harkness, editor and publisher of *Governing* magazine in the January issue.

A Votomatic vote recorder, with the problematic "butterfly ballot."

The center also houses Make Voting Work, which fosters "an election system that achieves the highest standards of accuracy, convenience, efficiency and security," as the center's Web site notes (see sidebar, pages 14-15). This initiative, launched last year, builds on electionline.org.

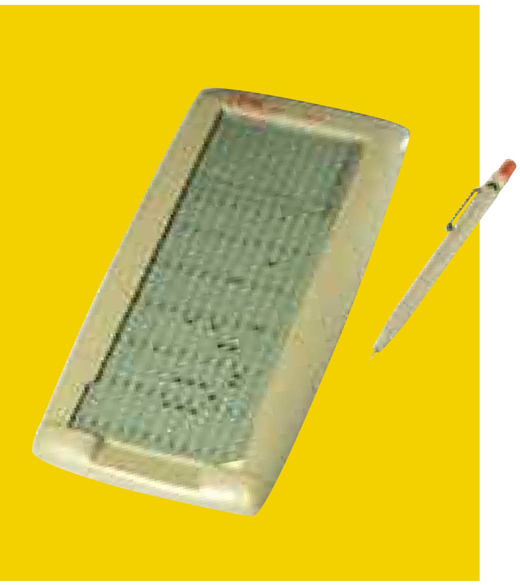
"Election administration has changed dramatically in the last eight years," says Susan Urahn, managing director of the Pew Center on the States. "Yet, though voting machines may look different, voters are rightly asking, as they have in other times, 'Is my vote being counted?' and 'Are election outcomes trustworthy?' Electionline.org remains the premier source for news and analysis in the field, and it has developed an unparalleled network of relationships with state policy makers, leaders in the election field and reporters."

A Votronic touch-screen vote recorder. Courtesy of the International Foundation for Election Systems.

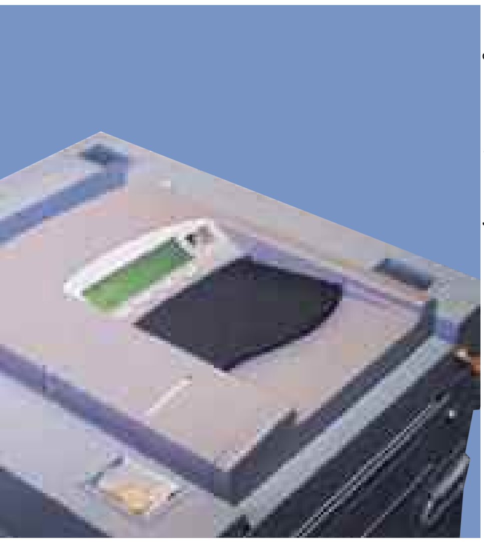
Chapin has assembled a staff that shares his passion—a team all the more remarkable for its focus, since the election-administration process is so mundane that most people pay it no attention, yet, as we all know, it stumbled so badly in 2000 that it nearly caused a national crisis.

On his staff is Sean Greene, who came to electionline.org from the Committee for the Study of the Ameri-

Instructional models of voting devices helped acquaint voters with the operational features of the actual machine. This facsimile was last used in the 1944 presidential election.



An IBM Port-A-Punch and stylus, developed for inventory control in 1959 and adapted for voting by Votomatic in 1962.



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ESSm model 100 precinct-count ballot scanner.

can Electorate, a project that examines voter turnout. Mindy Moretti writes the newsletter. She was recently asked to leave a Scottsdale, Ariz., polling place after pointedly asking to see the bilingual poll worker that she knew Arizona law required.

Then there is Katharine Zambon, who may out-wonk Chapin. Five years ago, when she was 20, "Kat" won her first elective office as a committee person in Buffalo, N.Y. She acknowledges that election administration is "the least sexy thing in the world," but she can't help but get excited as she talks about it: "It's how people interact with their government—the only interaction you have with your government outside the line at the DMV."

And there is Dan Seligson, a red-headed Bostonian, who used to cover the Virginia legislature for the Journal Newspapers, based in the Washington, D.C., suburbs. "Part of me wishes I was covering the Red Sox," he confesses. "Election reform is a narrower issue. There is a sameness to the work. Over time, I've embraced the fact that it's good to know more about one thing than almost anyone else."

For this group of people, Super Tuesday was akin to Woodstock for rock critics. They fanned out across the country: Greene to Chicago, Moretti to Phoenix, Zambon to Savannah, Ga., and Seligson to New York City. They blogged on the fly about what they saw.

Seligson navigated his way through the Giants' Super Bowl victory parade to check on the one handicapped-accessible voting center in Manhattan. He was asked for photo identification. New York has no voter ID requirement, and imposing one is no simple matter (the U.S. Supreme Court is now deliberating whether Indiana's voter ID law is constitutional). But building security at the Manhattan location required an ID from anyone entering, meaning that handicapped voters had to clear an extra hurdle to exercise their franchise.

Seligson's observations went up on the Web site, along with reports from the other staff members and from print and electronic reporters in other jurisdictions. Then the highlights were bundled into the newsletter that goes out weekly to more than 2,000 election officials, journalists, policy makers, academics and advocates.

The Web site—a daily clearinghouse of elections news—and the e-newsletter are the tools that keep electionline.org users current.

While producing daily and weekly reports, the staff also work on longer briefings and case studies. For instance, a report in February, the project's 21st major analysis, examines five states that adopted, then rejected, electronic voting machines; the future of voting in the United States is "moving decisively back to paper," the report notes. The project has also reported on poll-worker training, vote auditing and voting progress on the fifth anniversary of the Help America Vote Act.

Electionline.org's output is welcomed and scrutinized, particularly by state and local election officials, who have never before had this kind of access to information about what their colleagues elsewhere were doing.

"It's a valuable resource for us," says Sterling Ivey, spokesman for Florida's chief election official. "We find it useful, particularly as it relates to what's going on nationally and in other states. It's a good barometer to measure what we're doing in Florida."

Electionline.org has also drawn criticism. After it issued the report *Election Reform: What's Changed, What Hasn't and Why* in 2006, Wanda Warren Berry, a board member of New Yorkers for Verified Voting, wrote an extended critique. She noted that the report "provides valuable information" about changes in voting machines and that "the document's history of election reform gives valuable perspective on local efforts." Then she criticized what she called "its muted biases" that appear as "ignoring negative evidence about DREs, derogatory misinterpretation of [paper ballots], a trivializing perspective on the verified-voting movement and a biased overall perspective on progress toward reform."

To Chapin, the very act of staying free from bias can create critics. "It frequently frustrates people that we don't side with them," he says. "But we usually get criticism from both sides of the aisle on every issue we cover—which tells me we're doing our job."

Electionline.org, however, does intend to help set the agenda. Chapin and his colleagues have recently made a big push to reach reporters, expecting that a more informed media will lead to better reporting, which in turn will create pressure for meaningful change. Inaccurate reporting can lead to election-day problems. For example, Seligson recalls, journalistic shortcuts in explaining provisional ballots in Ohio in 2006 led dozens of unregistered people to go to the polls; of course, they were turned away.

Last year, electionline.org held a series of full-day seminars for groups of 35 to 40 reporters in San Francisco, Chicago, Atlanta and Washington and published a guide, *Covering 2008*. The effort earned the project an even higher profile. *Newsweek* recently ran a Q&A with Chapin, and Clive Thompson consulted him for his *New York Times Magazine* cover story about voting machines in January.

"I talked to Doug Chapin about his analysis of what were the technical and political challenges facing touch-screen voting machines, the history of how they came to be adopted across the country, as well as the advantages they offered in comparison to other voting technologies," Thompson writes in an e-mail. "He was very knowledgeable and, indeed, seemed pretty nonpartisan."

Interviews beget further interviews, which is good for electionline.org but can be a double-edged sword. Seligson recalls his first television interview, on *Fox and Friends* in 2004. He knew the show had a political bent, but he was prepared to stick to his usual formula of presenting right-down-the-middle arguments from all perspectives in the election-reform debate. His microphone went on, and the host asked the first question: "Hey, Dan, why are Florida voters so stupid?"

As a nation, we are now in the second presidential cycle since the 2000 mess, and there have been vast changes in the way we vote. The changes have not always been improvements, but the 2008 primary season went smoothly into spring.

Chapin has identified three major areas of concern to watch this year:

- First and foremost, the machines themselves, as states have ricocheted from the DREs that were supposed to cure hanging chads and improve accuracy, to optical-scan paper ballots that can be verified in the event of an electronic failure.
- Voter ID laws.
- Registration lists, the factor Chapin believes will drive most problems in the November election. "This is your admission ticket—the key to deciding who is or isn't the electorate," he says.


Judge Robert Rosenberg examines a potentially questionable ballot in 2000. Courtesy of the Associated Press.

If the election system gets as close to perfection as humanly possible, will electionline.org go the way of punch-card ballots? Chapin thinks that's unlikely. Though it began because of one disastrous event, new issues crop up all the time. "This is a long conversation about the way we conduct elections," he says. "Maybe a consensus emerges on the best way to do it, but even things that appear to be working well need a lot of work behind the scenes—the things voters don't see.

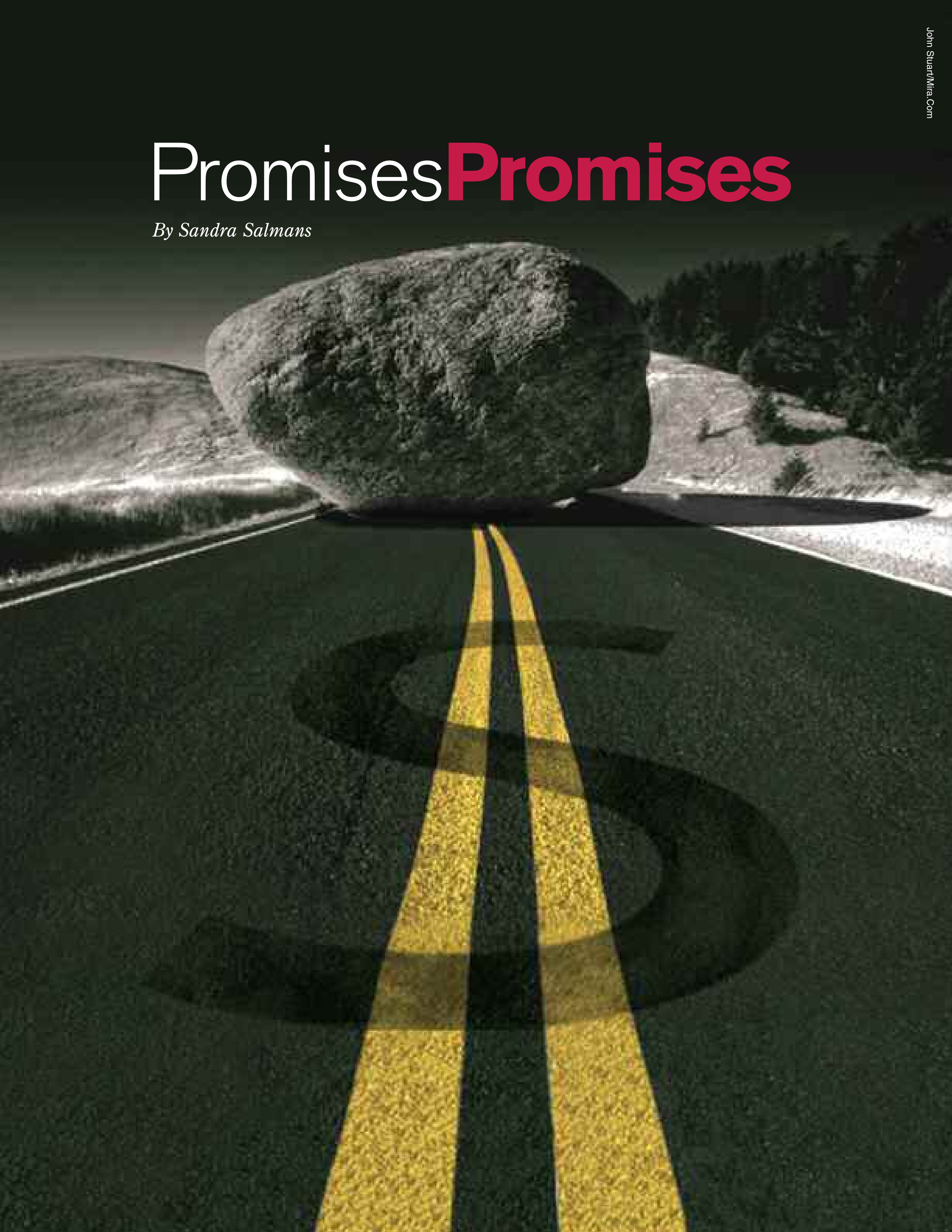
"We need to use the same passion for information about elections to look past identifying problems *after* they have happened to diagnosing and preventing them *before* they occur," Chapin points out. "We don't advocate for any specific solution, but we do believe that voters deserve the kind of changes to the American election system that go beyond short-term solutions and quick fixes. The only way to get there is, quite simply, to continue paying attention," he adds, "and that's what we intend to do." T

You can access electionline.org on the Web by going to www.pewcenteronthestates.org. There, you can read *Back to Paper* and other reports, sign up for the project's online newsletter on election reform and retrieve relevant articles state by state.

Philadelphia-based Pat Loeb has covered election campaigns as a reporter for WHYY-FM and KYW1060-AM radio and as a foreign correspondent for National Public Radio. She has also written two books on the work of the Pew Center for Civic Journalism. She has won awards from the Associated Press, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the Education Writers Association.

Promises**Promises**

By Sandra Salmans



John Stuart/Mira.Com

The Pew Center on the States examines the rising cost of public-sector retirement benefits.

Retirement benefits for public employees—principally pensions and health care—may not be fodder for the six o'clock news. But they are critically important to all taxpayers.

Every dollar spent on such benefits is one dollar less for roads, schools, health care and the pantheon of other needs that put pressure on state budgets. States will spend a staggering $2.73 trillion on pensions, health care and other retirement benefits for their employees over the next three decades.

That is the conservative estimate of a report released recently by the Pew Center on the States. The first-of-its kind, 50-state analysis, *Promises with a Price*, found that over the next few decades the bill for pensions for state employees will amount to about $2.35 trillion, with an additional $381 billion for retiree health care and other post-employment benefits.

While the states on average had saved enough in fiscal 2006 to cover about 85 percent of their long-term pension costs—a reasonable level of funding, according to the report—this average can be misleading. About 19 of the states had set aside far less, with states such as Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana and Massachusetts not even reaching the 75-percent level.

What's more, the states as a whole had put aside only 3 percent of the funds needed for promised retiree health care and other non-pension benefits. That means that states will need to come up with at least $731 billion within 30 years.

In fact, the actual number is likely substantially higher, because it does not include all retirement costs for teachers and local government employees, some of which are assumed by some states.

"This represents an enormous investment of taxpayer dollars, so Americans should be concerned about how states are managing this obligation," says Susan Urahn, managing director of the Pew Center on the States. "Also, for government to be effective and efficient, states need to recruit and retain high-quality public employees, and they need to strike the right balance between controlling costs and making sure they're getting the best workers they can."

"Even for states that are well-funded right now, we feel this is a critical cautionary tale," says Richard Greene, who wrote the report with Katherine Barrett; both are consultants to the Pew Center on the States. For one thing, the report points out, public pension funds have become more aggressive in their investments, so returns are likely to be considerably more volatile than they were in the past.

What's more, when states' funding levels are buoyed by good returns on their investments, as has been the case for some time, there's a powerful temptation to cut back on fiscally sound contribution levels. Says Greene, "We hope the study will help to keep states focused on the importance of properly funding these obligations year in and year out."

In fact, the challenges states face today in meeting their bills are largely the result of short-sighted decisions in the past, says Urahn. Some states have had a buy-now, pay-later mentality about retiree benefits. In hard times, generous post-employment benefits became easy substitutes for salary increases because states could put off paying the bills. In good times, some states believe they can afford to expand benefits—even though these typically carry sizable long-term price tags. For many states, dramatically scaling back benefits has not been a practical option.

As the report explains, demographic trends suggest that the pressure on the states will only get worse. The number of retirees is increasing every year, and the public sector will face an escalating number of retirements sooner than the private sector because the average public employee is older. In addition, people are living longer, a trend that will put even greater demands on both pensions and retiree health-care benefits.

"Deferring funding is risky since workers can't be sure that future generations will be able or willing to set aside the cash needed to pay retirees, and taxpayers can't be sure what their future tax burden will be to pay for these benefits," sums up Olivia S. Mitchell, Ph.D., executive director of the Pension Research Council and director of the Boettner Center for Pensions and Retirement Research, both at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, where she is a professor.

The report's key findings:

- Funding is erratic. In the past decade, only about a third of the states have consistently contributed the full amount that their own actuaries said was necessary. In 2006, 20 states contributed less than 95 percent of the amount targeted, and 10 states contributed less than 80 percent.
- The long-term price tag for retiree health-care and other benefits, such as dental care and life insurance, was about $381 billion at the end of fiscal 2006, and about 97 percent of that—a whopping $370 billion—was unfunded. Non-pension liabilities make up more than half of what states have not yet funded.

- States that do not keep up with payments for either pensions or other post-employment benefits are engaged in a massive intergenerational shift of resources, as future generations are required to pay for the services delivered by past ones.

While the states have been required for some time to report their long-term pension liabilities, data on other post-employment benefits have not been widely available. Under a new rule of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board, however, states are required to disclose their liabilities for non-pension benefits, and those numbers will be released between December 2008 and March 2009.

But because states had to begin their calculations—some for the first time—Pew assembled a team that included Barrett and Greene as well as Lori Grange and Kil Huh, senior officer and project manager, respectively, for the Pew Center on the States, and others to report on the extent of the liabilities and funding in all 50 states. Barrett and Greene produced a related report on Philadelphia (see box, starting on the right).

"I think a lot of state officials were horrified by what they found," says Barrett. "Actually, we were kind of gratified when we heard that they were alarmed—that seemed like a good sign that they were aware of the magnitude of the issue."

The situation is quite different from that in the private sector, where defined benefit pensions have become the exception to the rule. Increasingly, companies have abandoned them in favor of 401(k) plans, or defined contribution plans, to which employees contribute a percentage of their pay. The report found that 90 percent of public sector employees have pensions, compared with 20 percent of private sector employees; furthermore, the public sector retiree's median pension in 2005 was $17,640, compared with $7,692 for the private sector worker.

A similar gap between the private and public sectors was found in retiree health benefits. According to the study, 82 percent of workers for state and local governments with more than 200 employees received retiree health benefits of some kind, compared to 33 percent of workers for large private-sector employers.

Stephen D'Arcy, Ph.D., professor of finance and the John C. Brogan Faculty Scholar of Risk Management and Insurance at the University of Illinois, says he was "astounded" by the public sector number. "People should know about this, they should care about this, and they should elect legislators who are willing to address this problem," he adds. "These have been major hidden costs, and the fact that this information is being revealed will have an impact."

The report found that, while there are no quick and easy solutions, states can take steps to reduce their liabilities. In some cases, states may owe so much that they feel compelled to restructure benefits to cut costs. In general, states have more flexibility to make changes to retiree health-care

In Philadelphia, a "Quiet Crisis"

Disturbing as the national pensions picture is, it looks even grimmer for the City of Philadelphia. That is the conclusion of *Philadelphia's Quiet Crisis: The Rising Cost of Employee Benefits* by Katherine Barrett and Richard Greene, the consultants who also conducted the 50-state study.

The report, supported by the Economy League of Greater Philadelphia and Pew, found that Philadelphia's pension and health care costs for city employees are rising at a much faster rate than the city's revenue. The amount of money the city pays to cover pension obligations and health care benefits for current and retired city employees rose to $650 million in fiscal 2005—19 percent of the city budget—from $403 million in 1998. Unchecked, by 2012 these costs will rise to 28 percent.

The situation "threatens to drain the resources needed to tackle other problems facing the city," says Donald Kimelman, managing director of Pew's Information Initiatives and the Philadelphia Program.

Moreover, much of that obligation is unfunded. Partly because the city, encouraged by optimistic earnings assumptions, paid little or nothing into the pension fund in the 1970s and 1980s, the city's unfunded liability rose to $3.9 billion, or nearly half of its $8-billion future pension obligation—one of the lowest levels in the country.

The report also compared Philadelphia to nine other cities and found that its funding level was the second lowest; only Pittsburgh was lower. Five of the other cities achieved a desirable 85 percent funding level; three were at 90 percent or more.

Other key findings:

- The number of pension recipients is now higher than the number of active workers—33,907 claimants in 2006 versus 28,701 employees. That gap will increase in the coming years as more city workers reach retirement age.
- The average annual city pension ranges from $29,000 for municipal employees to $42,000 for firefighters, comparable to that in other cities. However, Philadelphia's employees contribute less of their own money into the pension fund than those in other cities.
- On a per-capita basis, Philadelphia pays more for health care benefits than nearly any other city in the nation, and that amount has in-

creased by 33 percent in the past two years alone—to an average of $13,030 per person this year, or nearly 10 percent of the city's total budget. That is triple the average in the region's private sector and well above the average for state and local governments.

The report also featured a number of recommendations for ways the city could lower benefit costs. These included: increasing employee contributions to pension plans; auditing the pension plan; reexamining the city's Deferred Retirement Option Plan, which allows employees to accumulate retirement benefits while they continue in their jobs; increasing co-pays for health care; and changing practices to give the city more control over health-care spending.

Shortly after the release of the report, the new mayor of Philadelphia, Michael A. Nutter, proposed floating a $4.5-billion pension-obligation bond to deal with the problem. Under the plan being considered—the largest bond issue in city history—proceeds would be used to shrink the pension fund's unfunded liability from 49 percent to 5 percent. At the same time, the bond would enable the city to reduce its annual pension costs by taking advantage of current low interest rates. The bond plan would also generate $10 million a year for the city to move new civil-service-exempt employees into a defined-contribution plan.

Bond issues are "tricky, as you're taking on an additional liability," warns Alicia H. Munnell, Ph.D., a retirement specialist at Boston College.

Still, "if structured properly, it could dramatically improve the health of the pension fund," says Uri Monson, acting executive director of the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority, the state agency that monitors city spending.

"While there are no quick and easy solutions," notes Pew's Kimelman, "there are fiscally responsible steps the city can take today to ameliorate the problem while remaining fair to municipal workers."

Sandra Salmans

For more information, go to www.pewtrusts.org, and click on Our Work. Under Philadelphia Area, click on Civic Initiatives in Philadelphia, and scroll down to the report.

benefits than to pensions. Some possibilities:

- States are raising the retirement age and closing loopholes within pension systems that allow employees to inflate the amount they collect after retirement.
- For non-pension benefits, states are increasing premiums and co-pays and raising the number of years of employment required for lifetime or fully subsidized benefits, among other reforms. As in the private sector, they are also experimenting with more efficient approaches to managing health care costs, such as requiring retirees to join a Medicare Advantage Plan (which augments the original Medicare's benefits at additional cost), promoting wellness programs and other preventive measures, and joining with localities to bundle their plans under a single administrative umbrella.
- At least 13 states, including Alabama, Delaware, Georgia and West Virginia, have set up irrevocable trusts to pay for retiree health care in the years to come. These trusts, which require that all the money that goes in is used in a predetermined way, protect funds from being raided for other purposes.
- At least five states, including Ohio, Oregon and Washington, offer hybrid pension plans that combine elements of both defined benefit and defined contribution plans. In Alaska and Michigan, certain employees are no longer promised a set benefit when they retire. Instead, they make annual contributions to a savings plan, to which the state government also contributes.

Although it addresses issues typically well below the radar, *Promises with a Price* attracted a remarkable amount of media coverage, from national press to reports by local newspapers on the situation in their own states. And experts hailed the report as raising the curtain on an area of state budgets that has too long been kept in the dark.

"It's nice to have confirmation that there's a big problem here," says Alicia H. Munnell, Ph.D., the Peter F. Drucker Professor of Management Sciences and director of the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College. "The numbers will spur action, both in funding and assessing the feasibility of incurring these costs. It will make government entities take a serious look at benefits and either fund them or pare back the benefits for new hires."

"As the Pew Center on the States developed this report, it became increasingly difficult to avoid the cliché 'a ticking time bomb,'" says Urahn. "Yet that's precisely what this is. And it joins a whole host of other fiscally explosive issues that the states are confronting, including corrections and infrastructure needs. While there are few easy solutions available, it's clear that just hiding from these bills that are coming due is the least desirable approach." T

For the full study and fact sheets for each state, go to www.pewtrusts.org. Click on Our Work, scroll down to State Policy and Performance, and click on Pensions and Retiree Benefits.

Sandra Salmans is senior writer at Trust.

Protecting the Boreal Forest

By Scott Scrivner and Lester Baxter

© Irene Owsley

Mackenzie Mountains, Northwest Territories, Canada.

In 1899, Governor Theodore Roosevelt spoke to the New York State Assembly about the value of conservation and the threat of extinction: "When I hear of the destruction of a species, I feel just as if all the works of some great writer have perished." Shortly thereafter, President Roosevelt acted on the sentiment behind his words, creating federal protection for forests and wilderness throughout the nation.

Nearly a century later, Roosevelt's system of parks and protected areas lives on, and so too does the case for conservation. Aware of the need to protect wilderness and the life that it shelters, in 1992 Pew launched a program to conserve intact old-growth forests and wilderness ecosystems. By the late 1990s, Pew's program had gained considerable momentum, and an evaluation found that it had made important contributions to wilderness protection in its first seven years.

Building on this early progress, the Environment program (now called the Pew Environment Group) continued its efforts in the United States, but also began to craft a conservation strategy for Canada's great boreal wilderness. This far-reaching expanse of publicly owned forest and taiga represented a particularly ripe, yet largely untapped, opportunity.

In 1999 Environment staff launched a campaign to protect Canada's boreal forest, ultimately setting the goal of protecting 100 million acres of wilderness by 2010. For context, the entire area overseen by the U.S. National Park Service currently totals 84 million acres, of which 52 million acres are national parks.

Now involving more than 1,500 scientists from around the world, more than 75 major companies, 115 Canadian First Nations and many Canadian and international environmental groups, the resulting wilderness protection campaign had three principal elements: (1) a regional aspect made up of ground-level efforts designed to protect specific areas; (2) a national collaborative approach designed to engage the forest industry, First Nations (Canada's aboriginal groups), government and others to build broad support for protection from within Canada; and (3) an international advocacy strategy designed to promote awareness of the need for wilderness conservation among consumers and other key constituencies who would encourage cooperative action to protect Canadian wilderness.

Designing an Evaluation, Understanding and Refining a Program

In 2006, Pew's Environment and Evaluation staff agreed that this Canadian wilderness protection strategy was sufficiently mature to be well suited for a mid-course evaluation. From 1999 through the end of the evaluation period in December 2006, approximately $35.4 million had been invested in Canadian wilderness conservation, with major support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Lenfest Foundation.

The evaluation had three principal objectives: (1) understanding the ways in which the campaign contributed to new wilderness protection in Canada; (2) identifying the decisions and external circumstances that helped or hindered the campaign's progress; and (3) providing recommendations to improve the likelihood of meeting Pew's long-term 100-million-acre conservation goal.

The evaluation was conducted by a team of senior evaluation and conservation experts made up of David

LaRoche, an independent consultant with more than 25 years of experience in environmental conservation; David M. Gardiner, formerly the executive director of the White House Climate Change Task Force and senior administrator for policy analysis at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; and Gary Bryner, Ph.D., professor of political science at Brigham Young University.

The team used a range of methods to inform their work, including more than 90 interviews with key stakeholders, case studies of specific wilderness-protection efforts, a review of land-protection records and policies, and an assessment of media coverage of the campaign.

The Alberta Wetland. Wetlands like this are great carbon sinks and a strong defense against global warming.

Findings and Recommendations

The evaluation found that Pew's strategy had made strong progress toward its goal, and identified the campaign as the decisive player in protecting approximately 60 million acres—exceeding the combined area of Pennsylvania and New York—through the end of the evaluation period in December 2006. Indeed, the evaluation found that the campaign was largely on track to meet its protection goal for the end of the decade if several key recommendations were followed.

Successful Regional Efforts Were Supported by a Strong National Component

The wilderness protection campaign relied in part on a series of regional efforts to pursue specific protected-area proposals that built on earlier work by conservation groups such as the World Wildlife Fund-Canada and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society.

In partnership with local conservation groups and aboriginal First Nations, the campaign worked to map the boreal landscape, plan and develop park and protected-area proposals, raise awareness in affected communities, and identify promising future protection opportunities.

At the national level, the campaign also worked closely with Canadian and international environmental organizations, corporations and First Nations to find common ground around the Canadian boreal forest conservation framework, a visionary plan to protect and sustain this globally important ecosystem over time.

The national aspect of the campaign emerged as a valuable complement to the regional efforts by providing coordination, supporting research and scientific analysis, and raising public awareness more broadly. It also played an important role by assisting First Nations in land-use planning efforts as part of an overall objective to build a broad coalition for wilderness protection.

The evaluation saw continued promise in this combined regional-national approach, but cautioned against assuming that it could be easily replicated in other areas unless the campaign adapted in targeted, opportunistic ways.

A major recommendation: *The campaign should carefully apply approaches from areas of greatest success, such as the Northwest Territories, as it focuses on promising opportunities in other provinces and territories.*

An International Advocacy Effort Created Momentum and May Have Laid the Groundwork for Future Protection

The Canadian wilderness protection campaign also included an international public education effort designed to both raise awareness of the boreal as a region in need of protection and build on this recognition to generate additional public, industry and government enthusiasm for wilderness protection.

The evaluation found that the international advocacy component was a necessary part of the strategy and provided evidence that this approach had been essential in securing industry agreements to manage approximately

116 million acres in accordance with the Forest Stewardship Council's sustainable-forestry standards.

Although the evaluation did not establish a direct link between this part of the strategy and formal wilderness protections, it did suggest that the broad international campaign built infrastructure and awareness that could prove instrumental in bringing about future wilderness-protection gains.

Facing Challenges in Managing of a Complex Campaign, Refining a Visionary Approach

As the evaluators themselves noted, "The campaign is a highly nuanced enterprise cutting across four cultures, numerous sub-cultures, linguistic divides, multiple levels of governmental structures and numerous sectoral interests."

Even successful campaigns inevitably face challenges. And in this case the evaluation identified that at times the Canadian and international aspects of the campaign risked being at odds with one another.

For example, some international campaigners viewed the separate Canada-based collaborative approach as being unnecessarily restrained, while some Canadian advocates viewed the international campaign as being overly aggressive.

The evaluation recommended building on existing efforts to:

- *Increase coordination between the different campaign participants and recognize clear and distinct roles for each.*
- *Develop and integrate a state-of-the-art communications approach into all elements of the campaign, develop and consistently project a clear and compelling message that creates a sense of urgency regarding the need to protect specific tracts of wilderness.*
- *Continue to effectively adjust strategy and campaign structure, explore additional opportunities to protect Canada's northern boreal wilderness, and search for ways to continue to extend the reach and impact of the public-education component.*

Aftermath

Thanks in part to strong ongoing programmatic work as well as changes instituted as a result of this evaluation, wilderness protection in Canada surged in 2007. By year's end, the program was able to announce that it reached its 100-million-acre goal well in advance of its original timeline (for details, see the campaign's Web site, www.interboreal.org).

In addition to the specific suggestions that the evaluation provided, one key lesson that emerged for program staff was that, in the best cases, the very act of participating in the evaluation process itself can be a valuable source of learning.

Steven E. Kallick, a senior officer in the Environment program at the time the program was designed and now director of Pew's International Boreal Conservation Campaign, noted: "During the recent evaluation of the Canadian wilderness program, we discovered that the scientific work we supported wasn't on track. The evaluators kept asking us how we knew which areas were the most important ones to protect.

"In essence, they were asking us about the scientific basis underlying our policy recommendations. And we found we couldn't give good answers to these questions. I realized then that we had to support better science."

By focusing attention on key lessons and opportunities for refinement, this evaluation represents a strong example of the type of insight that we in Pew's Evaluation group hope to provide to our colleagues in the program areas. We would be hard-pressed to better describe our goal for institutional learning than did Steve, who quite simply and effectively described the ultimate outcome of this project: "Our evaluation helped us to get better at what we do." T

Scott Scrivner is an officer and Lester Baxter is deputy director in Evaluation and Program Analysis at Pew.

The extent of North America's boreal forest.

IMPROVING PUBLIC POLICY

Pew Environment Group

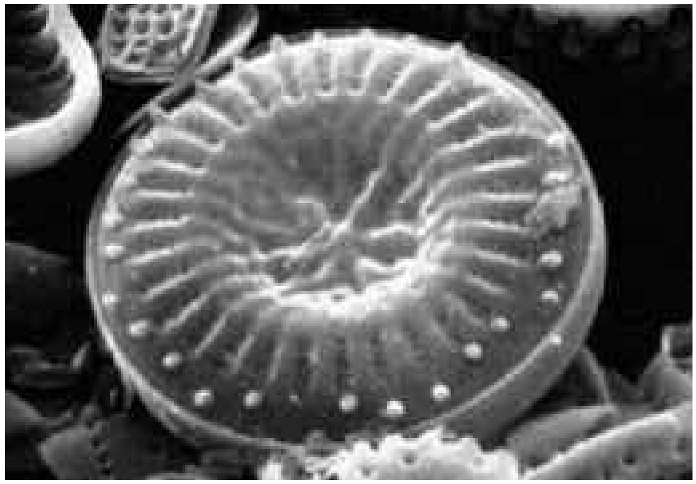
Conservation of Living Marine Resources

Marine Fish Conservation Network
Washington, DC, $350,000, 1 yr.
To advocate for an end to domestic overfishing through effective implementation of the new Magnuson-Stevens Act and advance key ecosystem-based fisheries management recommendations of the Pew Oceans Commission through public education, policy analysis and strategic communications.
Contact: Bruce J. Stedman
202.543.5509
www.conservefish.org

The Pew Charitable Trusts for Ending Overfishing in New England
Philadelphia, PA, up to $4,181,800, 3 yrs.
To ensure that the New England Fishery Management Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service implement the new Magnuson-Stevens Act conservation mandates to establish science-based catch limits that end overfishing.
Contact: Steve Ganey
503.230.0901
www.pewtrusts.org

The Pew Charitable Trusts for Ending Overfishing in the Southeastern United States
Philadelphia, PA, up to $3,000,000, 3 yrs.
To ensure that the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Councils and the National Marine Fisheries Service implement the new Magnuson-Stevens Act mandates to establish science-based catch limits that end overfishing.
Contact: Lee Crockett
202.552.2065
www.pewtrusts.org

The Pew Charitable Trusts for Marine Finfish Aquaculture Standards
Philadelphia, PA, up to $850,000, 2 yrs.
To develop science-based, precautionary standards for the conduct of sustainable marine finfish aquaculture.
Contact: Chris Mann 202.552.2035
www.pewtrusts.org



Scientists can use diatoms, a type of microscopic algae (above), to analyze conditions in any environment that contains water, including soil, and assess the water quality or even evidence of climate change. Pew Conservation Fellow Felicia Coleman, Ph.D., of Florida State University, has helped in the discovery of new marine species of diatoms.

Aquaculture accounts for 40 percent of global seafood consumption, and that percentage is only expected to grow in coming decades. While the farming of shellfish and aquatic plants can be benign and even beneficial, marine finfish aquaculture poses significant risks to marine resources and ecosystems.

U.S. Government regulation alone is insufficient to mitigate the serious impact of marine finfish aquaculture on the health of the oceans and marine life, since most aquaculture products consumed in the United States are imported from other countries with varying environmental laws.

The Marine Finfish Aquaculture Standards project is designed to respond to this problem by creating a set of science-based, precautionary "gold standards" that emphasize marine environmental protection. It also promotes adoption of these criteria by the industry through outreach and participation in a series of standard-setting workshops.

The Pew Charitable Trusts for the Oregon Marine Heritage Campaign
Philadelphia, PA, up to $1,848,000, 2 yrs.
To support a campaign that will seek to establish a system of marine protected areas in Oregon state waters, including some no-take marine reserves as well as area restrictions on both bottom trawling and forage fish fisheries, to protect biodiversity, vulnerable habitats and the marine food web.
Contact: Steve Ganey
503.230.0901
www.pewtrusts.org

The Pew Charitable Trusts for Stopping Illegal Fishing in the European Union
Philadelphia, PA, up to $1,700,000, 1 yr.
To secure rigorous and transparent controls against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing from the European Union, thereby establishing high standards for subsequent action by international fisheries management institutions.
Contact: J. Charles Fox
202.552.2140
www.pewtrusts.org

University of Miami
Coral Gables, FL, $3,000,000, 3 yrs.
To support the Pew Institute for Ocean Science.
Contact: Ellen Pikitch, Ph.D.
212.756.0042
www.pewoceanscience.org

Global Warming and Climate Change

National Religious Partnership for the Environment
Amherst, MA, $450,000, 2 yrs.
For the Interfaith Climate Campaign to broaden support for action to address climate change by engaging people of faith across the spectrum of American life.
Contact: Paul Gorman
413.253.1515
www.nrpe.org

The Partnership Project, Inc.
Washington, DC, $200,000, 1 yr.
To provide support for public education on climate policy.
Contact: Julie Waterman
202.429.2647
www.saveourenvironment.org

Old-Growth Forests and Wilderness Protection

Campaign for America's Wilderness
Durango, CO, $5,250,000, 18 mos.
For general operating support.
Contact: John Gilroy 585.249.0978
www.leaveitwild.org

The Pew Charitable Trusts for the Heritage Forest Campaign
Philadelphia, PA, up to $1,750,000, 1 yr.
To continue to generate public and policy-maker support for roadless-area forest preservation in at least two dozen states, including an intensified focus in the politically challenging terrain of Idaho, Colorado, Wyoming and Utah, where many of these pristine forests are located.
Contact: Jane Danowitz
202.552.2132
www.pewtrusts.org

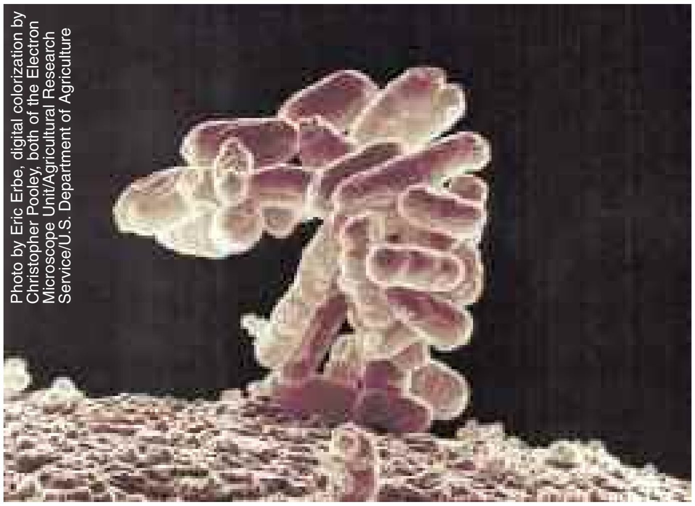
Trout Unlimited National Office
Arlington, VA, $750,000, 1 yr.
For the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership to continue public-education and outreach efforts to protect national forest roadless areas and modernize hardrock mining policy, and also to secure federal administrative action that will prevent leasing and drilling where it overlaps with significant fish and wildlife resources.
Contact: George Cooper
703.522.0200
www.trcp.org

Health and Human Services Policy

National Program

The Pew Charitable Trusts for the Food Safety Initiative
Philadelphia, PA, up to $6,000,000, 3 yrs.
To ensure that foods consumed in the United States are free from illness-producing pathogens.
Contact: H. Cheryl Rusten
215.575.4853
www.pewtrusts.org

Known microbial pathogens—such as E. coli, salmonella, campylobacter and shigella—annually account for 5,000 deaths in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. They also give rise to more than 76,000,000 illnesses and 325,000 hospitalizations every year and



E. Coli, with the oblong shapes of the bacteria magnified 10,000 times.

can cause serious, permanent physical damage. In addition to the human suffering, every outbreak costs the economy thousands to millions of dollars in lost productivity and medical costs.

One way to approach this problem is by improving the oversight role of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The Food Safety Initiative seeks reform in the FDA through a new, proactive system that (a) identifies, up front, the level of risk associated with different foods; (b) mandates processes to reduce that risk; and then (c) allocates inspection and testing resources according to need. The effort focuses on domestic produce, imported foods and reporting of food-borne illnesses.

The Pew Charitable Trusts for Kids Are Waiting
Philadelphia, PA, up to $3,000,000, 2 yrs.
In support of Pew's foster care initiative.
Contact: Hope Cooper
215.575.2143
www.kidsarewaiting.org

Biomedical Research and Training

Regents of the University of California, San Francisco
San Francisco, CA, $2,466,000, 2 yrs.
For continued funding of the administration of the Pew Scholars in the Biomedical Sciences and the Pew Latin American Fellows programs.
Contact: Edward H. O'Neil, Ph.D.
415.476.9486
http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pewscholar.html

Local Program

OMG Center for Collaborative Learning
Philadelphia, PA, $2,000,000, 2 yrs.
To continue to provide capacity-building support to health and social service organizations in the Philadelphia region.
Contact: Gertrude J. Spilka
215.732.2200 x232
www.omgcenter.org

Pennsylvania Health Law Project
Philadelphia, PA, $300,000, 2 yrs.
For general operating support.
Contact: Michael J. Campbell
215.625.3874
www.phlp.org

Other Projects

United Way of Southeast Delaware County
Chester, PA, $75,000, 1 yr.
In support of the 2007 annual campaign.
Contact: Louis C. Mahlman
610.874.8646 x103
www.uwdelco.org

United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, PA, $1,040,000, 1 yr.
For the 2007 Annual Campaign to assist local agencies in improving the quality of preschool child care and education and for support of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia.
Contact: Susan Forman
215.665.2568
www.uwsepa.org

The Wistar Institute of Anatomy and Biology
Philadelphia, PA, $1,000,000, 3 yrs.
To recruit three new biomedical investigators and equip their laboratories.
Contact: Russel E. Kaufman, M.D.
215.898.3926
www.wistar.upenn.edu

Pew Center on the States

The Pew Charitable Trusts for the Pew Center on the States
Philadelphia, PA, up to $4,220,000, 1 yr.
In support of the Pew Center on the States' efforts to identify and advance effective public policy approaches to critical issues facing states.
Contact: Susan K. Urahn
215.575.4755
www.pewcenteronthestates.org

Campaign Finance Reform

Campaign Legal Center, Inc.
Washington, DC, $1,500,000, 2 yrs.
For general operating support.
Contact: Trevor Potter
202.736.2200
www.campaignlegalcenter.org

Democracy 21 Education Fund
Washington, DC, $600,000, 2 yrs.
To ensure that the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act is effectively implemented and identify additional reforms that would strengthen campaign finance laws by the monitoring of policy development, deployment of a legal team, coordination with the reform community and public education.
Contact: Fred Wertheimer
202.429.2008
www.democracy21.org

Early Education

Action Against Crime and Violence Education Fund (Fight Crime: Invest in Kids)
Washington, DC, $3,000,000, 3 yrs.
To expand and intensify its work at the state and federal levels to advance universal pre-kindergarten for 3- and 4-year-olds.
Contact: David S. Kass
202.776.0027 x119
www.fightcrime.org

Council of Chief State School Officers
Washington, DC, $300,000, 18 mos.
For the Early Childhood Accountability project to assist states in evaluating and improving the effectiveness of their pre-kindergarten programs.
Contact: Thomas Schultz
202.312.6432
www.ccsso.org

The Institute for Educational Leadership, Inc.
Washington, DC, $5,500,000, 1 yr.
For Pre-K Now to support state public-education and advocacy campaigns as well as inform national debates on the benefits of and need for high-quality pre-kindergarten for all.
Contact: Libby Doggett
202.862.9865
www.preknow.org

"The Child Who Travels on a Plane with her Papa and her Cat" by Ana Borgstede, a participant in a holistic preschool program conducted by visual artist Jacqueline Unanue in Philadelphia.

Hugh Talman/National Museum of American History

Touch-screen voting in Maryland in 2004.

Make Voting Work

The Pew Charitable Trusts for Make Voting Work
Philadelphia, PA, up to $7,780,000, 2 yrs.
To identify a clear set of actionable policies, practices and technologies that will optimize the accuracy, convenience, efficiency and security of U.S. elections.
Contact: Michael Caudell-Feagan
202.552.2142
www.pewcenteronthestates.org

Make Voting Work collects the data needed to prioritize problems in elections and publicly ranks how well states are performing in making voting convenient without compromising accuracy. It is also stimulating and road-testing pilot projects for effective election systems in jurisdictions that can serve as models for others across the nation.

In this stage of the initiative, Make Voting Work is conducting research in key areas of election administration (see pages 14-15) and disseminating the findings in ways that are highly relevant to policy deliberations. The aim is to have practical applications for election administrators which are also easily understood by the public and media. The project is also expanding the number of private-sector partners lending their expertise, and it is developing a series of state report cards to set the agenda for the field and promote reform.

Historical Interests

Bryn Mawr College
Bryn Mawr, PA, $1,300,000, 2 yrs.
To support the renovation of Marjorie Goodhart Hall and thereby increase opportunities for students to participate in the arts.
Contact: Kimberly E. Cassidy, Ph.D. 610.526.5000
www.brynmawr.edu

Other Projects

Philadelphia Academies, Inc.
Philadelphia, PA, $375,000, 2 yrs.
To connect public school youth to careers and increase collaboration with the School District of Philadelphia, nonprofit organizations and the business community.
Contact: Lisa J. Nutter
215.546.6300 x127
www.academiesinc.org

INFORMING THE PUBLIC

Information Projects

Teachers College Columbia University
New York, NY, $50,000, 1 yr.
In support of the creation of a free, online digital archive of interviews with influential Americans conducted by Richard Heffner over 50 years of his weekly public television program *The Open Mind*.
Contact: Richard D. Heffner
212.224.1368
www.tc.columbia.edu

SUPPORTING CIVIC LIFE

Philadelphia Program*

Culture

Philadelphia Center for Arts and Heritage

The University of the Arts
Philadelphia, PA, $879,000, 1 yr.
Philadelphia Center for Arts and Heritage
Contact: Melissa Franklin
267.350.4920
www.pcah.us

Since 2005 the Philadelphia Center for Arts and Heritage has housed Pew's six Artistic Initiatives and the Philadelphia Cultural Management Initiative. While the accomplishments of any one of the individual initiatives are impressive, the volume and extent of their collective contribution to individual artists and arts organizations become all the more clear when viewed as a whole. In the past year alone, the initiatives funded almost 700 visual arts exhibitions and music, dance and theater performances in the Philadelphia region.

In the coming year, the center will continue to leverage its shared resources through a new information management database and a comprehensive communications strategy that highlights the excellent work of the initiatives and the artists and organizations they support.

Artistic Initiatives

Dance Advance, $1,486,000, 1 yr.
Contact: William Bissell
267.350.4970
www.danceadvance.org

Heritage Philadelphia Program, $729,000, 1 yr.
Contact: Paula Marincola
267.350.4930
www.heritagephila.org

Pew Fellowships in the Arts, $1,425,000, 1 yr.
Contact: Melissa Franklin
267.350.4920
www.pewarts.org

Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative, $1,660,000, 1 yr.
Contact: Paula Marincola
267.350.4930
www.philexin.org

Philadelphia Music Project, $1,704,000, 1 yr.
Contact: Matthew Levy
267.350.4960
www.philadelphiamusicproject.org

Philadelphia Theatre Initiative, $1,688,000, 1 yr.
Contact: Fran Kumin 267.350.4940
www.philadelphiatheatreinitiative.org

Cultural Data Project

The Pew Charitable Trusts for the Cultural Data Project
Philadelphia, PA, up to $700,000, 3 yrs.
To establish a revolving fund to support marketing and cultivation costs associated with new states and partners launching the National Cultural Data Project.
Contact: Barbara Lippman
215.575.4872
www.pewtrusts.org

Other Projects

The Philadelphia Orchestra Association
Philadelphia, PA, $500,000, 2 yrs.
To renovate key historical architectural features and improve public amenities of the Academy of Music.
Contact: Lawrence J. Fitzgee
215.790.5881
www.philorch.org

Civic Initiatives

David Library of the American Revolution
Washington Crossing, PA, $75,000, 2 yrs.
To enable the David Library of the American Revolution to conserve, digitize and properly store its Sol Feinstone Collection.
Contact: Meg McSweeney
215.493.6776
www.dlar.org

*All of Pew's work in Philadelphia is now united in a single department, the Philadelphia Program. The priorities reflect longstanding Pew concerns for the region: (1) investments in arts and culture organizations and artists; (2) grants that support the health and social needs of children and families, vulnerable adults and the elderly; and (3) other civic investments that make Philadelphia a better place for both residents and visitors and inform discussion on important issues facing the city.

"The Academy of Music" by Alfred Bendiner from his book *Bendiner's Philadelphia* (1964). Courtesy of the Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania.

The David Library of the American Revolution in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, devotes itself to the study of American history from the French and Indian War to the beginning of the republic.

Its Sol Feinstone manuscript collection, housed at the American Philosophical Society, contains 2,500 documents, including hundreds of letters written by George Washington, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson, plus British, French and German military commanders. Together, these materials tell the rich story of America's struggle to establish itself as an independent and enduring nation.

The collection is in critical need of immediate conservation. This project to preserve and properly store the documents from the founding era will ensure that they are accessible to the American public. In addition, the proposed digitization of 500 documents in the collection will further increase the public's access to the papers.

Delaware Valley Earth Force
Wyncote, PA, $150,000, 3 yrs.
To support the Delaware Valley Estuary Initiative, a program that combines environmental and civic education as well as service learning to help young people gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to become active citizens in their communities.
Contact: Janet Starwood
215.884.9888
www.earthforce.org

Friends Center Corporation
Philadelphia, PA, $250,000, 1 yr.
In support of environmentally sustainable renovations to the Philadelphia-based Friends Center, home to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, the Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting and the American Friends Service Committee.
Contact: Patricia McBee
215.241.7000
www.friendscentercorp.org

National Civic Initiatives

The Library of Congress
Washington, DC, $1,000,000, 1 yr.
To support the creation of a new visitor experience at the Library of Congress's Jefferson Building that would better display priceless historic artifacts and use digital technology to connect tourists and student groups with the library's vast online collections.
Contact: Jo Ann Jenkins
202.707.0351
www.loc.gov

The Pew Charitable Trusts for the Papers of the Founding Fathers Project
Philadelphia, PA, up to $189,000, 1 yr.
In support of an effort to bring greater accountability and increased federal funding to the Founding Fathers Project and to support the digitization of the founding fathers' papers. (See page 31.)
Contact: Susan A. Magill
202.552.2129
www.pewtrusts.org

Washington, D.C. Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation, Inc.
Washington, DC, $1,000,000, 1 yr.
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial
Contact: Kerry-Ann T. Powell
202.737.5420
www.buildthedream.org

This project supports the building of a memorial dedicated to the life and many legacies of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

The four-acre memorial, to be built on the banks of the Tidal Basin, is envisioned as a quiet and contemplative space that will complement the site's sloped topography. It will feature stone and water elements along with excerpts from Dr. King's writings and speeches selected to highlight themes closely associated with him: democracy, justice, hope and peace.

The site will include a visitor center designed to educate and inspire Americans as well as international visitors. Here, they will learn about Dr. King's commitment to social justice, his role as a civil rights leader and his use of nonviolent tactics to achieve equality for African Americans.

Religion

Religion and Public Life

The Pew Charitable Trusts for International Religious Freedom
Philadelphia, PA, up to $331,000, 18 mos.
In support of two conferences for nonprofit, governmental and religious leaders, and scholars, to review current efforts to advance religious freedom internationally and discuss future strategies.
Contact: Julie L. Sulc 215.575.4855
www.pewtrusts.org

Other Projects

WGBH Educational Foundation
Boston, MA, $2,000,000, 2 yrs.
In support of "God in America."
Contact: Michael Sullivan
617.300.2000 x5384
www.wgbh.org

The six-hour public television series "God in America" will examine the religious history of the United States as it has played out in the life of the nation.

The documentary will encompass more than 500 years of religion in America, beginning with the first voyage of Christopher Columbus and closing with the 2008 election campaign. It will cover both familiar territory, such as Thomas Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptists in which he used the now-famous phrase "wall of separation" between church and state, and lesser known terrain, such as the role new immigrants have played in shaping the religious landscape of America.

Overall, the series will illuminate both the richness and diversity of religious belief in the United States and show how religion has shaped the course of the nation.

Illustration by R. Gregory Christie for the book *Rock of Ages: A Tribute to the Black Church* (2002) by Tonya Bolden. Courtesy of R. Gregory Christie.

For the first time in history, more than one in every 100 adults in America are in jail or prison—a fact that significantly impacts state budgets without delivering a clear return on public safety.

According to a report released in February by the Pew Center on the States' **Public Safety Performance Project**, 2,319,258 adults were held in American prisons or jails, or one in every 99.1 men and women, at the start of 2008. During 2007, the prison population rose by more than 25,000 inmates. Thirty-six states and the Federal Bureau of Prisons saw their prison populations increase in 2007. Ten states experienced inmate population growth of 5 percent or larger; Kentucky had the largest, with 12 percent.

A close examination of the most recent U.S. Department of Justice data (2006) found that while one in 30 men between the ages of 20 and 34 is behind bars, the figure is one in nine for black males in that age group. Men are still roughly 13 times more likely than women to be incarcerated, but the female population is expanding at a far brisker pace. For black women in their middle to late 30s, the incarceration rate also has hit the one-in-100 mark. In addition, one in every 53 adults in their 20s is behind bars; the rate for those over 55 is one in 837.

In addition to detailing state and regional prison growth rates, Pew's report, *One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008*, identifies how corrections spending compares to other state investments, why it has increased, and what some states are doing to limit growth in both prison populations and costs while maintaining public safety.

As prison populations expand, costs to states are rising. Last year alone, states spent more than $49 billion on corrections, up from $11 billion 20 years before. Yet the national recidivism rate remains virtually unchanged, with about half of released inmates returning to jail or prison within three years. And while violent criminals and other serious offenders account for some of the growth, many inmates are low-level offenders or people who have violated the terms of their probation or parole.

"For all the money spent on corrections today, there hasn't been a clear and convincing return for public safety," says Adam Gelb, the project's director. "More and more states are beginning to rethink their reliance on prisons for lower-level offenders and finding strategies that are tough on crime without being so tough on taxpayers."


Alan E. Cober/Corbis

The report points out the necessity of locking up violent and repeat offenders, but notes that prison growth and higher incarceration rates do not reflect either a parallel increase in crime or a corresponding surge in the nation's population at large. Instead, more people are behind bars principally because of a wave of policy choices that are sending more lawbreakers to prison and, through "three-strikes" measures and other sentencing laws, imposing longer prison stays on inmates.

As a result, states' corrections costs have risen substantially. Twenty years ago, the states collectively spent $10.6 billion of their general funds—their primary source of discretionary dollars—on corrections. Last year, they spent more than $44 billion in general funds, a 315 percent jump, plus some $5 billion more from other sources.

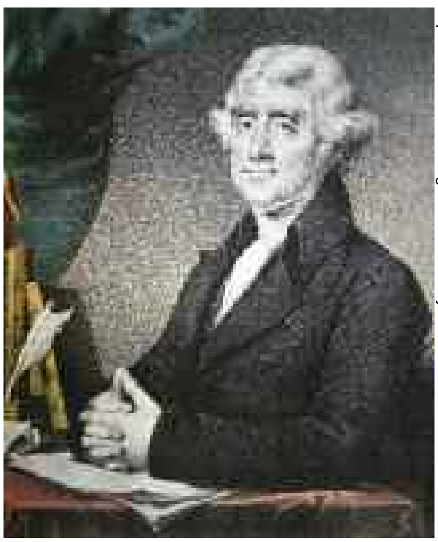
Coupled with tightening state budgets, the greater prison expenditures may force states to make tough choices about where to spend their money. For example, Pew found that over the same 20-year period, inflation-adjusted general-fund spending on corrections rose 127 percent while higher education expenditures rose just 21 percent.

"States are paying a high cost for corrections—one that may not be buying them as much in public safety as it should. And spending on prisons may be crowding out investments in other valuable programs that could enhance a state's economic competitiveness," says Susan Urahn, managing director of the Pew Center on the States. "There are other choices. Some state policy makers are experimenting with a range of community punishments that are as effective as incarceration in protecting public safety and allow states to put the brakes on prison growth."

According to the report, some states are holding lower-risk offenders accountable in less-costly settings and using intermediate sanctions for parolees and probationers who violate conditions of their release. These include a mix of community-based programs such as day reporting centers, treatment facilities, electronic monitoring systems and community service—tactics recently adopted in Kansas and Texas. Another common intervention, used in Kansas and Nevada, involves making small reductions in prison terms for inmates who complete substance-abuse treatment and other programs designed to cut their risk of recidivism.

The Pew center was assisted in collecting state prison counts by the Association of State Correctional Administrators and the JFA Institute. The report also relies on data published by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Association of State Budget Officers and the U.S. Census Bureau.

To view the entire report, including state-by-state data and methodology, visit www.pewcenteronthestates.org.



© private collection/Bridgeman Art Gallery

His day is coming: Jefferson in a painting after Stuart Gilbert and published by Nathaniel Currier.

Thomas Jefferson, who loved reading history, made a good bit of it himself—as did our nations' other founding fathers. These men kept meticulous records of their thoughts and deeds—believing that their accounts would help later generations understand and better appreciate the early struggles for freedom.

"It is the duty of every good citizen," said Jefferson, "to use all of the opportunities which occur to him for preserving documents relating to the history of our country."

It has taken a while, but his words are being heeded.

More than 50 years ago, Congress approved the **Founding Fathers Papers Project** to oversee the publication of definitive editions of six founders' writings, along with the historical notes and edits that would make the meaning and context of these documents clear to modern audiences. Since 1981, Pew has supported this work, contributing more than $7.5 million to the project as well as to specific universities overseeing individual editing efforts.

But progress has been slow. While Alexander Hamilton's papers have been completed in 26 volumes, George Washington's papers will not be complete until 2023 (54 volumes have been published, with 35 to go). Jefferson's end date is 2025 (34 published and some 40 to go). Benjamin Franklin's is 2016 (38 done, 9 to go); James Madison's, 2030 (30 done, at least 16 to go); and John Adams's, 2050 (30 published, 29 to go).

And although the intent has always been to make the papers widely available to the public, the cost to do so has become increasingly prohibitive. A single Hamilton volume costs $180, and the complete set $2,600, for example—out of the reach of most public libraries and institutions of higher learning. Indeed, a recent poll of 200 major public libraries found that just 12 had more than one founding-father volume.

In February, the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee held hearings on the founding fathers project to explore ways to hasten the scholarly work and its public dissemination. Pew president and CEO Rebecca W. Rimel, invited to testify, called for an accelerated publication schedule, wider public access to the papers through digital technology and greater congressional oversight of this important federal initiative.

For details on the editing projects taking place at various universities and institutions, and for more information on Pew's work to preserve U.S. historic treasures, visit the Web site www.pewtrusts.org.

What makes a great art exhibition? The question might seem to invite a subjective response, but, for the Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative, it must be answered directly.

This project annually gathers panels of arts professionals to fund exhibitions "of high artistic merit"—a criterion that calls for more than an "I know what I like" reaction.

At stake are awards of up to $250,000 for exhibition implementation and up

to $25,000 for exhibition planning, so, to the applicants, there's nothing theoretical, abstract or academic about the question at all.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the project's first sponsored exhibitions, and after a decade of funding innovative presentations, you'd think that the initiative knows all the possible answers to the question.

Nonetheless, the initiative asked it out loud to experts in curatorial work (who also have experience as gallery or museum directors, art historians or critics). They replied in 13 essays assembled as the book ***Questions of Practice: What Makes a Great Exhibition?***

Most museum-goers expect to have pleasurable experiences and learn something from exhibitions, and while many curators would agree that these are desirable outcomes, they state the purpose differently. Exhibitions are the point "where artists, their work, the arts institutions and many different publics intersect," notes Paula Marincola, the initiative's director, in her introduction to the essays.

Have the visual arts entered a new "period"? Innovative exhibitions will tell you and explain the direction it is taking (like the "Armory Show" of modern art in New York City in 1913). What is the relation of art to our world? Creative exhibitions lay it right out there (like the Documenta shows, held every five years in Kassel, Germany). They offer new interpretations of the works and may even reposition the discussions of the visual arts.

Clearly, there is no standard template for creating an exhibition. Curators bring their own experiences and concepts to a new project, thus assuring great variations in the results. Budget, space, lenders and the institution's mission add other variables. According to Marincola, *What Makes a Great Exhibition?* makes sense of individual approaches because it "clarifies and reflects on the structures, methods and conditions of exhibition practice."

The anthology comes with a card—a bookmark—that contains questions which Marincola compiled "to give the reader a more comprehensive sense of the underlying conceptual structure of the book," she says. "Some of them were actually posed to the writers, some are addressed to curatorial practice in a more general way."

A sampling: What is the relationship between artist and curator, or

the artist's work and the curatorial premise? Must a great show always be a watershed production? Does great work guarantee a great show? Can an exhibition "overflowing with bad works" be anything but bad? How do curators plan shows for viewers of varying degrees of interest, tolerance and art knowledge?

And further: Given the inexhaustible range and types of exhibitions, can they be compared one to another? The alternative spaces which were created yesterday to display contemporary art (such as coffee houses, supermarkets, book stores, abandoned warehouses, factory buildings)—are they relevant today? The art world, like much else, is globalized; what can and should be said of the nature of international group shows?

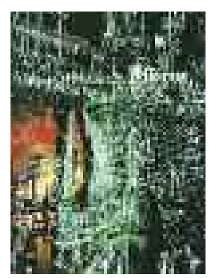
Finally, exhibitions are presented for only a specific period of time and then are gone. Can they be made less transient through catalogues and, increasingly, Web sites? The Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative has its own response to this question, since it also provides resources for its shows to produce lasting documents of what happened. It is only fair to do the same for curators—to establish a record of their thinking and practice. *What Makes a Great Exhibition?* is the result.

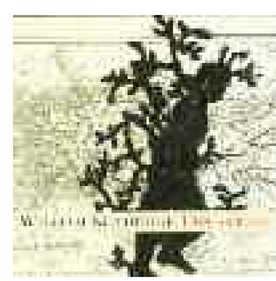
The book is being used in classes—for instance, at Arcadia University and the University of Pennsylvania, New York University and the Pratt Institute, the University of Chicago and the California College of the Arts. And it has gone into a second printing.

Through the initiative's Web site, www.philexin.org, you can access the University of Chicago Press, the book's U.S. distributor, to order a copy. The Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative is a program of the Philadelphia Center for Arts and Heritage, funded by Pew and administered by the University of the Arts.

Pollsters and those who follow the results of their surveys have been long accustomed to—and often astonished by—the timeliness and relevance of the Pew Research Center's public-opinion research.

But **Andrew Kohut**, the center's president, has brought even more immediacy to the analysis of a truly tumultuous series of campaign pri-



Catalogues supported by the initiative help preserve the memory, and significance, of exhibitions.

maries and caucuses. Since January, he has been writing a column for the online *New York Times*, in which he applies his decades of expertise in statistics assessment to the evolving election campaign.

Talk about moving targets: His column on January 31 appeared after six states had chosen delegates. "So far," he noted, "the 2008 primaries and caucuses have been anything but predictable—comebacks, fallbacks, not to mention surprised pollsters. But a closer look reveals some common themes that have emerged, despite a still-forming consensus about nominees.

"First, this election matters to voters, particularly to Democrats and young people." He went on to describe how race, gender and age factored into voters' decisions, as did their status as independents or their feelings on some issues, such as the economy and immigration.

Of course, his conclusions quickly became common knowledge. Even more quickly, it was fodder for online readers; sometimes well more than 100 of them replied to a column. "Sound analysis (despite a few minor flaws) and very carefully worded as well to summarize accurately a mass of data," said Bob about the January 31 entry.

Meanwhile, Nathan dissented: "The author of this post is obviously not a young voter. We honestly don't think in terms of race and gender like your generation did and still does.

"We're sick of a two-party system, and, believe it or not, we look at what a candidate stands for more than their demographics. A lot of us pity those of you who put so much emphasis on race and gender. It's sad to see."

Of course, it was the survey respondents, at least in the more responsible polls, who were dictating the direction of the results.

A week later, Kohut was commenting on the results of Super Tuesday, when 24 states held primaries or caucuses. In terms of numbers, he noted, the day amounted to "a national election," and he went on to identify the emerging voting patterns: "Race, class, gender, age and party identification continued to be the most important factor in determining a voter's support."

The commentators weighed in again. Nathan seemed to have mellowed: "I think that there is considerable validity to the analysis in the article," he said, while going on to critique some of Kohut's details.

Bee, however, took up the cudgel: "You guys are just looking for a way to divide the electorate. Another stupid reporting that is not worthy of paying attention to."

Steve advised giving the column a second look: "If you re-read this opinion piece, one can only conclude that there is so much conflicting data that there are no distinct trends. Polls and pundits have been so wrong so often so far that they are not worth paying attention to in this race."

In the January 10 print version of *The New York Times*, in fact, Kohut addressed the issue of the off-base predictions of the Democratic race in New Hampshire: Pollsters have, and always had, difficulty in reaching poorer and less well-educated voters.

As the campaign becomes evermore nuanced, you can follow Kohut's analyses and commentary at http://campaignstops.blogs.nytimes.com or at http://people-press.org, the center's site.

2006 might be remembered for a number of things, but for a certain band of scholars and bibliophiles, it marks an important year of access—when the ***English Short-Title Catalogue*** was made available free on the Web.

Most people would consider the *ESTC* an esoteric venture, but within its circle it is a major achievement. It is a bibliography of printed material: books, pamphlets, newspapers, serials, advertisements, broadside ballads, election handbills and various ephemera.

The *ESTC* begins in 1473 (when letterpress printing began in the British Isles) and ends in 1800. It lists items printed in any language in Great Britain and North America and items printed in English anywhere else in the world. It contains more than 460,000 entries from the British Library and some 2,000 other libraries and is updated daily.

Compilation began in the 1970s, with the goal of covering 1701 through 1800 (*E* in *ESTC* then stood for "Eighteenth Century"). That initiative (with a machine-readable text) was completed in the early 1980s; Pew lent support in that decade.

As any good archivist knows, however, one good thing leads to another. The database was extended back in time, and it incorporated hardbound short-title catalogues of years prior to 1701. And access followed the march of technology. The *ESTC* was put on CD-ROMs in the late 1990s and then on the Internet. It was available through paid subscription until two years ago, when access was granted to all. The database can be found at http://estc.bl.uk.

With free Web access, says Henry L. Snyder, Ph.D., "the *ESTC* not only realizes the vision projected for it by its creators but far exceeds it."

Snyder, now an emeritus professor of history at the University of California at Riverside, directed the North American part of the project from its start. Last November, he received a National Humanities Medal for his role in preserving the written word in this and other endeavors. He is credited with changing how scholarship is done.

"When I started, I spent most of my time looking for this stuff," he told a southern California newspaper of the material in the *ESTC*. "Now, I spend my time reading it."

What to Do With These Old Houses

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Carter's Grove Plantation, put to good re-use.

Mount Vernon, the House of Seven Gables, Hearst Castle: We have read about these historic houses, and maybe even visited them. Most likely, we have also been to one of the other historic houses in America—there may be as many as 15,000, more than four for every county in the country.

Some thrive, but many are barely solvent, scarcely surviving in upkeep or relevance. The following articles describe how some redefined their role in the community—and thus stayed true to their mission and purpose.

A MODEL FOR HISTORIC HOUSE MUSEUMS

By Marian Godfrey and Barbara Silberman

When Carter's Grove Plantation, an 18th-century Virginia mansion that had been owned by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation for almost 40 years, was acquired by an Internet entrepreneur, the sale might have been interpreted as just another takeover by dot-com money.

In fact, however, the change of ownership was exemplary of a successful new strategy within the preservation movement: the return of some historic house museums to productive private use as a way to ensure the buildings' long-term viability.

Historic houses and buildings like Carter's Grove are a vital part of America's communities. They are the tangible reminders of our history.

The problem is that, now, many of their caretakers are struggling to attract visitors, maintain the properties and make ends meet.

Until now, historic buildings have been preserved strictly for the buildings' sake. But that has led to a troubling surplus of sites that are underused and hopelessly disconnected from their communities.

With modern competition from amusement parks, aquariums and interactive diversions, historic houses run by nonprofit organizations purely as museums face uncertain futures. These monuments need to be "repurposed" to be revitalized.

The time has come to think outside the house-tour box and consider new paradigms to preserve historic buildings. Colonial Williamsburg, which in 2003 had closed Carter's Grove to the public because it was no longer financially sustainable, reassessed the plantation's needs in a way that should serve as a model for other historic house museums across the nation.

The process was a holistic one that sorted out the best uses for the buildings and the grounds and applied an innovative and responsible approach to preservation. Its buyer, Halsey Minor, who founded an Internet publishing company, purchased the mansion and 400-acre property for $15.3 million, intending to use the site as a residence and a center for a thoroughbred-horse breeding program.

He also agreed to a conservation easement that will prohibit commercial and residential development and preserve the mansion and archaeological sites on the property. Colonial Williamsburg, in turn, will use the proceeds of the sale for its educational programs, including expansion of the DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum.

Although some historic houses, like Mount Vernon or Monticello, have achieved revered status, the significance of most is far more modest. They are the mansions, plantations, cottages and vacation retreats of our earliest settlers, lovingly protected by local people who care about our nation's rich past.

And they are worth saving. Preservation is important—vital, in fact—if we as a nation are to retain authentic examples of history, culture and place. Preservationists are realizing that these historic structures can be used for other purposes while maintaining their significance and structure and, in most cases, some public access.

In Philadelphia, the **Living Legacy Alternative Stewardship Project**, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts and the William Penn Foundation, is helping foster the idea of alternative uses such as office space, art centers and nature sites, keeping long-term preservation the priority.

In her book *New Solutions for House Museums*, preservation consultant Donna Ann Harris documents how a dozen sites in the United States and Canada were converted into community-centered spaces like art galleries, bed-and-breakfasts and conference buildings, used and appreciated by the public daily.

As more communities recognize the perilous future facing their historic house museums, more are joining the conversation of conversion, hoping to discover innovative ways to improve the interpretation, accessibility and community involvement of their significant buildings.

This piece is slightly condensed from its appearance on the opinion page of The *(Norfolk, Va.)* Virginian-Pilot & The Ledger-Star *in January. Marian Godfrey is managing director of the Culture program at Pew. Barbara Silberman is a principal at Heritage Partners Consulting and consultant to the Living Legacy Alternative Stewardship Project.*

HOUSES, HISTORIES AND THE FUTURE
By Tanya Barrientos

On the second floor of historic Mill Grove estate, the first American home of the naturalist and painter John James Audubon, which is set in bucolic eastern Pennsylvania, two pre-teens are paying little attention to history.

They've already peered into the small room across the hall—Audubon's bedchamber—to see the period furniture, the artist's sketches and the taxidermy bird specimens perched on shelves and dangling from the ceiling by string. Now they're coloring at a large table in another room that makes no attempt whatsoever at being historically accurate. And director Jean Bochnowski couldn't be happier.

"This is exactly how we want the house to be used," Bochnowski says. In fact, if everything goes according to plan, the interior of this historic house museum will be transformed into a well-equipped arts center, with Audubon's famous paintings on display next door at a state-of-the-art museum inside the renovated barn.

"We live in a different world these days," Bochnowski says. "People are used to interacting with their environment, and leading visitors on a look-but-don't-touch house tour simply doesn't work anymore."

That's been clear to many preservation experts for some time now—at least since 1999, when Barbara Silberman, a specialist in historic sites and museums, first uttered the controversial statement—"there are too many historic house museums"—at a national conference of the American Association for State and Local History.

"The notion bordered on radical at the time," Silberman says, "because people tend to think responsible preservation is synonymous with creating house museums. But the painful truth is that historic homes used strictly as museums in towns and cities across America are in peril."

Struggling with unrelenting maintenance costs, dwindling funds, sagging visitor attendance and an aging cadre of staff and volunteers, they are facing an uncertain future. And experts have come to believe that changing the way they are used in the future may be the only way to protect their pasts.

"Americans love to save old buildings," says James Vaughan, the National Trust for Historic Preservation's vice president for stewardship of historic sites. "But a lot of them are not nationally significant enough to draw the sort of attendance to make them financially sustainable."

Of course, Vaughan and other preservation professionals believe saving historical architecture from the wrecking ball is critical.

"They are tangible reminders of the past traditions and culture of our country," he says. These small gems tell the often-overlooked story of domestic history. They are the childhood homes of politicians. The stately houses of industrial magnates. The mansions, plantations, cottages and vacation retreats of people who made a mark. Each lovingly protected by people who truly care—but, more often, sorely disconnected from the beating heart of the community.

Since America's bicentennial, there's been an explosion of historic house museums. A few are nationally significant. But, Vaughan notes, "most are local in interest and aren't going to survive by attracting tourists from across the country."

Which means they may not survive at all.

The problem is national in scope. But in historic centers such as Philadelphia, it's particularly acute—prompting the **Living Legacy Alternative Stewardship Project**, sponsored by the William Penn Foundation and Pew. In 2000, Pew's Heritage Philadelphia Program discovered more than 300 historic house museums in the Philadelphia region alone. Fewer than 10 percent of those have endowments of any size, and more than 80 percent are facing preservation and maintenance costs of about $1 million each, while their operating budgets average only $100,000.

If nothing changes within the next decade, the research suggests, dozens will be left with no caretakers, no money and no plans for rescue.

Change is already happening elsewhere, with varying results.

The sale of Carter's Grove Plantation by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation [see preceding opinion piece] actually won support from preservation organizations as respected as the National Trust for Historic Preservation and APVA Preservation Virginia—mainly because Williamsburg vowed to sell only to a private buyer

The Olana Partnership

The Olana Partnership successfully intensified the presentation of Frederic Church's art and its significance at Olana, his home.

who would preserve the estate and not use it for residential or commercial development.

In 2000, the boyhood home of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee in Alexandria, Va., was sold to a local couple as a private residence. But in New York's historic Hudson River Valley, a 19th-century country estate called Montgomery Place has been closed down indefinitely until the group maintaining it can figure out what to do: Transform it into a bed-and-breakfast? a community center? a wedding venue?

These are the questions coming up in conversations across the nation.

Proponents call such ideas "alternative stewardship." They say that embracing the possibility of establishing management partnerships, leasing the property or even selling to a private entity is necessary in a world where house museums are forced to compete with theme parks and all sorts of high-tech leisure-time activities. Over the long term, the thinking goes, historic buildings are better served if they can serve the public. In fact, being creative is the responsible thing to do.

But do the organizations have the leadership and knowledge to take action?

While some museum boards, trustees and other stakeholders may clearly see what is not working, the prospect of maneuvering a dramatic change can be daunting.

"People are emotionally attached to these houses," says preservation consultant Donna Ann Harris. "If somebody has worked at the site for 30 years, the thought of changing everything might feel like the rug is being pulled out from under them."

To help offset that fear, Mill Grove director Bochnowski and the site's board of trustees volunteered to participate in the Living Legacy project. They took part in the complex process of considering new uses and ultimately were reinvigorated by the change.

Owned by Philadelphia's suburban Montgomery County government and managed by the National Audubon Society, Mill Grove (see photos, right) is an 18th-century, fieldstone farmhouse perched on a leafy bluff overlooking the Perkiomen Creek. The 175-acre estate includes the main house, a barn and five miles of walking trails. But the house's interior has not been historically accurate for at least 40 years, and the cost of meticulously restoring the 1765 structure would be astronomical.

As part of the project, Bochnowski and board members spent some five months visiting other historical house museums, learning the administrative details of alternative stewardship and weighing their options.

"The tours convinced us we didn't want to be a museum anymore, where people just walk in and stand passively," Bochnowski says. "We agreed that, given John Audubon's role as a conservationist, the interior of the house wasn't as important as the exterior. Especially since there's something about how Mill Grove sits in this environment that touches people, there's a majesty about it."

One part of the historic Mill Grove home that visitors insist on seeing, she says, is the re-creation of Audubon's bedroom. After that, their attention wanes.

"So we decided we'd keep the bedroom as it is and turn the rest of the house into an art center," she says. "We want it to be a vibrant place with art classes, visiting exhibitions, an artist in residence. We think it speaks to Audubon's legacy. Learning about nature through art."

Plans call for the original Audubon drawings and paintings owned by the center, and currently displayed inside the house, to be permanently moved next door to a three-story barn that will be remodeled into a climate-controlled museum, tying the art into a larger story of nature conservancy.

"We have a sense that this plan would make John happy," she says.

A handful of other historic house museums have already made successful transitions to new uses. The 1800 House, owned and operated by the Nantucket Historical Association, is one. Shuttered since 1997, it was reopened in 2005 as a "lifelong-learning" center, where 18th- and 19th-century crafts such as furniture-making, embroidery and scrimshaw are taught.

Sometimes a resurrection doesn't require an extreme makeover, just a correction in vision.

"I like to point to Olana as an example of a house museum that beat the odds," says Sara Johns Griffen, president of the Olana Partnership, the nonprofit arm of the Olana State Historical Society in Hudson, N.Y., which owns and operates the historic home of Frederic E. Church, the 19th-century landscape painter who was instrumental in the Hudson River School art movement.

Instead of revamping the elaborate Persian-style mansion into a hotel or community center, Griffen says, the board agreed to expand the house's interpretation. "We decided to use Olana to tell the story of Frederic Church and the wider story of American painting." Now, Griffen says, the house sponsors visiting art exhibitions and educational programs while still functioning primarily as a historical museum.

"The first obligation of responsible stewardship is to protect the site," she says. "And if you can do that while giving it a wider public purpose, why not?" T

Tanya Barrientos, a 2001 Pew Fellow in the Arts, was a freelancer when she wrote this piece for Pew. A former columnist at The Philadelphia Inquirer, *she is now a development writer at the National Constitution Center.*

The John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove has found a contemporary way to speak to the naturalist's legacy.

From the top: As it stands now. As seen by Thomas Birch, c. 1830. As experienced today by children making corn-husk dolls during one of the historic house's many special events.

Photos courtesy of the John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove.

Voting should be convenient and accurate. Electionline.org is watching, reporting and proposing reforms.

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