

# MAIN LINE SCHOOLS

## Lower Merion Green Council hosts legislators on global warming

By DAVID ROBINSON

In the Penn Valley Elementary School auditorium, the Lower Merion Green Council invited state Sen. Connie Williams (D-17), state Rep. Mike Gerber (D-148), state Rep. Daylin Leach (D-149) and state Rep. Kathy Manderino (D-194) to inform the community on Harrisburg's "green" efforts and what the Lower Merion community and residents need to do to stop global warming.

Joseph Mudd, co-founder of the Lower Merion Green Council, introduced the panel and reminded everyone in attendance that the most important ingredient to stop global warming is the will to create change.

Williams, who grew up in Parsippany, N.J., where the air was yellow from the refineries, remembered walking in the first Earth Day parade. She read from Laurie David's new book: *Stop Global Warming: The Solution Is You!* David is the wife of comic Larry David. She gained her own fame among environmentalists as the producer of the Al Gore film *An Inconvenient Truth*. Williams read a quote from Arriana Huffington: "Do your 10 percent 100 percent and God will do the other 90 percent."

### Mass transit and hybrids

Manderino (who serves Bala Cynwyd, Belmont Hills and part of Philadelphia) pointed out that all four members of the panel have a 100 percent voting record on the environment. She noted that lowering pollution and dependence on fossil fuels can be aided if more people carpool and increase their use of mass transportation, walking and bicycling.

Leach, who serves on the Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, enlightened the audience with the sobering fact that out of 253 members of the legislature, only 12 members have a 100 percent environmental voting record, and "four are sitting at this table." One of his current fights has been to change rulings regarding the state fleet of cars, so that legislators can obtain hybrid vehicles sooner. He also explained legislative efforts encourage green buildings and eliminate subsidization of infrastructure (streets and sewage) that encourage the destruction of green belts.

Gerber — the newest addition to the legislature — acknowledged that he has benefitted from the environmental work of Leach, Manderino and Williams. Gerber, who is subcommittee chairman for the

Energy Committee as part of the Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, and subcommittee chairman of Public Transportation in the Transportation Committee, spoke of working toward "wise use" in land development, as well as alternative fuel development, mass transit, green buildings, increased use of hybrid cars and energy saving appliances.

### Sidewalks to encourage walking

Among the many questions from the audience was how to install more sidewalks in Lower Merion to encourage walking and bicycling. Williams explained that sidewalks are a local issue and involve private property rights. She encouraged the student questioner to start a local petition. Gerber added that some state money has been allocated to help local governments create new sidewalks and recommended the Web site: [www.saferoutestoschools.org](http://www.saferoutestoschools.org).

### Solar

Leach noted that solar energy is not yet cost effective for most individuals, but he is trying to create benefits and incentives for those who do purchase and install solar panels. He added that environmental issues have a rough time in the Senate because of the coal lobby. Williams noted that a very easy first step is to install solar walkway lights outside homes. Leach reminded all that solar and other green technologies are at a breakthrough stage and they will provide an enormous economic opportunity for the state that takes the lead in supporting the industry to come.

Gerber noted that New Jersey does provide incentives for individuals to install solar panels. He also reminded the audience that energy rate caps are being removed and that in those counties where rate caps have come off, energy bills have doubled, so the economics of solar power may be changing.

### Coal power

Since Pennsylvania is currently third in the number of coal burning energy plants and currently emits 1 percent of the world's greenhouse gases, the group explained that they have succeeded in getting through a reduction in the mercury emissions. Williams noted that many state senators from coal producing areas are trying to limit future Department of Environmental Protection activity on "green" initiatives. She also explained that in the realities of a democracy, the wants and needs of coal



DAVID ROBINSON/MAINLINETIMES

Speaking at the Penn Valley Forum on Global Warming and local initiatives are (in front from left) state state Sen. Connie Williams (D-17); Glenn Rosazza, co-founder of the Lower Merion Green Council; state Rep. Kathy Manderino (D-194); (in back) Joseph Mudd, co-founder of the Lower Merion Green Council; state Rep. Michael Gerber (D-148); and state Rep. Daylin Leach (D-149).

producing counties cannot simply be ignored. Leach added the point that Wall Street is not ready to fund new plants based on unproven technology that would improve the quality of emissions. Addressing a question about alternative fuels, Gerber explained that corn and cellulose fuel are only a partial solution and that we must look to behavioral changes in drivers as well as technological solutions in hybrids and electric cars.

### Natural gas

Regarding increased use of natural gas, Williams said that public fear of transporting compressed natural gas to Philadelphia's refineries on the Delaware River is the main problem preventing increased use. She noted that Tokyo harbor has allowed the importation for years, but Philadelphia's neighborhoods have blocked increased shipments. Manderino added that the Philadelphia Gas Company says they are running at only 50 percent capacity because of public protests.

### Nuclear

Gerber explained that there are no new nuclear power initiatives in the Pennsylvania legislature because of the Three Mile Island incident. He added that he was against nuclear power when in college, but now he has changed his mind because of the greater threat of global

warming.

### Wind power

The bright spot in the conversation was Pennsylvania's commitment to wind energy. All spoke of driving to Harrisburg and seeing the wind farms of Somerset County. Gerber noted that an international manufacturer of wind turbines has located its headquarters in Philadelphia. He also said that one problem with wind is that the supply is uneven and, therefore, Pennsylvania must still depend on coal to provide continuous power generation demanded by the public.

### Acting 'green' at home

To practice "green" management in the home, the legislators reminded the audience of running dishwashers and laundry machines at night when the demand for energy is less. Gerber noted that he is working on initiatives to make "smart meters" available to homeowners, so they can see their power use and learn to change their habits. They urged everyone to change to fluorescent light bulbs as a first step.

For further information on the Green Council visit [www.greencouncil.lmsd-scitech.org](http://www.greencouncil.lmsd-scitech.org)

To see a broadcast of this forum, check the Web site [www.lmsd.org](http://www.lmsd.org) for dates.