

Movement Builds To Restore Pa. Medical Cuts

Pennsylvania State Representative Harold James (D-Phila) was joined by eight other Democratic state legislators and by Philadelphia City Council president John Street, in a Dec. 30 press conference in Philadelphia, to call upon Gov. Tom Ridge to restore his deadly cuts in the state medical assistance program, using the \$123-million surplus announced by Ridge's Budget Secretary on Dec. 11.

Representative James said that Gov. Ridge could use his executive powers to restore the medical cuts immediately. He said the alternative mechanism would be passage of a bill sponsored by Rep. John Myers (D-Phila), to restore eligibility for the 220,000 unemployed, working poor, and disabled persons who were cut off earlier this year. James has also introduced legislation to impose a 0.2% tax on security transfers.

Phil Valenti, state spokesman for Lyndon LaRouche and leader in the movement to impeach Ridge, stated: "If Gov. Ridge rejects the proposal, *knowing that his cuts have already resulted in deaths, injuries, and threats to the lives of innocent people*, he will likely have *condemned himself* to impeachment for Nazi crimes against humanity."

Among the state representatives in attendance at James' press conference were Rep. Dwight Evans, Democratic chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and Rep. Mark Cohen, chairman of the House Democratic Caucus. Representative Cohen pledged to sponsor hearings on the deadly impact of Ridge's cuts, if the Republicans refuse to do so.



EIRNS/Phil Valenti

Pennsylvania Rep. Harold James (podium), flanked by Democratic state legislators, including Reps. James Roebuck, John Myers, Babette Josephs, Mark Cohen, and LeAnna Washington.

Representative James' initiative was also supported by Bill George, president of the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO, Richard Benfer, president of Braddock Hospital in Allegheny County, Henry Nicholas of the Hospital Workers Union, and Ed Cloonan, president of the Independent State Store Union.

In the press conference, James cited the devastation already inflicted by Ridge's policies: "New evidence is continuously coming into my office about the casualty toll, and the devastating effects on people's lives, that have been wrought by this mean-spirited Act 35. . . . This includes testimony and evidence from forty-eight witnesses and sources, describing nine deaths and twenty life-threatening situations, directly and indirectly related to Gov. Ridge's medical

assistance and health care cuts."

Representative LeAnna Washington then discussed the case of Lolita Cunningham: "Lolita Cunningham became Philadelphia's first childhood heart transplant recipient in 1985, at the age of twelve. Despite all the obstacles of poverty and ill-health, she was determined to become a scientist. . . . [L]ike many of our working poor citizens, she received no health benefits at work. When she applied for state medical assistance five months ago, she was denied, despite the fact that her anti-rejection drugs alone cost \$600 a month. Lolita Cunningham stopped taking some of her drugs for lack of money. She collapsed at work Dec. 11, and died several hours later. She was only twenty-four years old."

Investigation of Bush Role in Crack Epidemic

Pennsylvania Black Caucus chairman Harold James, approved by the Law and Justice Committee on Dec. 4, and ratified in plenary session on Dec. 7. The full text follows:

"WHEREAS, a series of investigative reports published in the San Jose Mercury News, August 18-20, 1996, contained highly credible allegations concerning the

role of U.S. Government agencies, including the C.I.A. and the Dept. of Justice, through covert operations, in aiding and abetting the flow of drugs into the United States, including crack cocaine into the African-American communities of Los Angeles, as part of covert support for the Nicaraguan Contras in the 1980's; and,

"WHEREAS, these reports reaf-

firmed the conclusions of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Narcotics, Terrorism, and International Operations, also known as the 'Kerry Committee,' whose final report, dated December 1988, stated: 'On the basis of this evidence, it is clear that individuals who provided support for the Contras

Please turn to page 84