

Pennsylvania State Board of Speech-Language and Hearing Administrators Newsletter

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Act 25 Strengthens Consumer Protection

On July 17 **Governor Edward G. Rendell** signed Act 25 into law, which is a major legislative accomplishment for the Bureau for Professional and Occupational Affairs and its boards. This law raises the maximum fine the board imposes for violations of the licensing laws or regulations from \$1,000 to \$10,000, as well as authorizing the licensing boards to impose the costs of investigation. Furthermore, the act provides privilege protection to Department of State investigative files, as well as confidentiality requirements.



At the signing of SB 142, Governor Rendell, center, is joined by (pictured from left to right) Sen. Tomlinson, Commissioner Merenda, Director Biggica and Rep. McGeehan.

"This is an important law because the new maximum fine acts as a very strong deterrent to unlawful activity by licensees, which in turn will enable us to more effectively protect the health, safety and welfare of every consumer in the commonwealth," **Commissioner Basil L. Merenda** said.

Act 25 will affect all 29 boards where professionals range from physicians and cosmetologists to accountants and funeral directors. The law, which was passed in the legislature as Senate Bill 142, will go into effect 60 days after its enactment. At that time, prosecutors will be able to recommend to the respective licensing board to impose the maximum fine if the violation is egregious.

Mobilizing board members to reach across party lines to contact senators and representatives was also key in the

enactment of this bill. The board members explained, from their viewpoint, why this legislation needed to be passed to effectively carry out Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs' and each board's mission.

Future plans for legislation include proposals to create a statutory obligation for a licensee to cooperate with investigators and prosecutors in disciplinary matters and authorizing the boards' authority to expunge a disciplinary history of a license for minor violations such as failure to complete the continuing education requirement.

Meet Our New Board Member

Jeane Violon Singer, Ph.D., of Centre County obtained her B.S. in Communication Disorders from SUNY at Buffalo, an M.S. in Audiology from Ithaca College and Ph.D. in Audiology from Penn State University. In 1977 she started Audiological & Hearing Aid Service Inc. in Altoona, specializing in hearing aids, differential diagnosis and vestibular evaluations.

Singer established satellite offices at the Clearfield and Philipsburg hospitals and was the staff audiologist at the Altoona Hospital from 1983 until 2008. She has served on the board and as president of the Pennsylvania Academy of Audiology and the Rotary Club of Altoona. She is on the board of Easter Seals of Central PA and the State Theatre of State College. Singer has also served as an expert witness for the commonwealth and a consultant for Highmark Blue Shield.

Singer is a member of American Speech Language & Hearing Association, American Academy of Audiology, Pennsylvania Academy of Audiology and the Academy of Doctors of Audiology. In 2008 she retired and now lives in State College with her husband, Richard, a professor at Penn State, and son Scott, a PSU freshman.

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