

# Keystone Corruption

A Pennsylvania Insider's View of a State Gone Wrong

**Brad Bumsted**

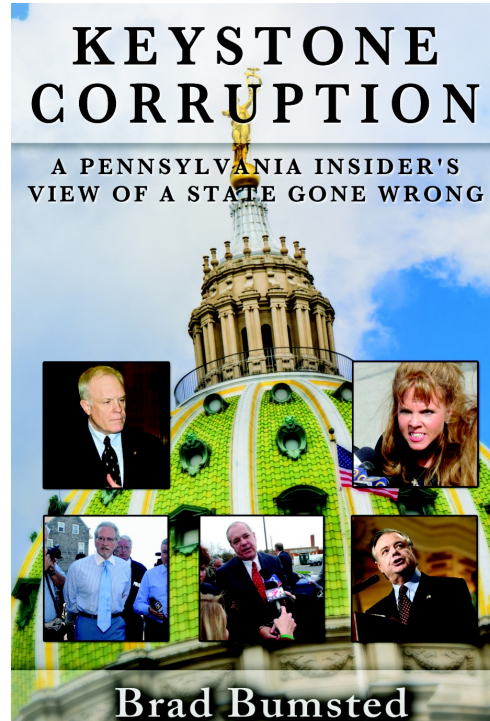
## Prologue

### G. Terry Madonna

Pennsylvania has long been the home of political chicanery. In *Keystone Corruption*, veteran journalist Brad Bumsted writes succinctly and superbly about the major political corruption cases that unfolded in the 20th and early 21st centuries, with an emphasis on those officials in state government that used state resources for personal or political gain. Much of the volume is devoted to the series of prosecutions, brought by the state's attorney general, often referred to as "Bonusgate," a generic but limiting term that describes the awarding of state-paid bonuses to legislative employees for their political work using state resources.

What led to the largest number of prosecutions for public corruption in the state's history can be traced to several important changes in the political environment. The first and the most systemic was the decline of county political organizations and the courthouse gangs that dominated state politics since the end of the Civil War. These local organizations dictated the choice of legislative candidates, raised the resources to fund the campaigns, and managed all aspects of the campaigns. By the 1980s, these organizations had atrophied to the extent that the functions of those campaigns were slowly transferred to the leaders of the legislative caucuses.

Entering the new millennium, full-service campaign operations in some cases became an integral part of the caucus legislative campaign committees and their leaders. What especially motivated the transition was the evolution of the part-time legislature starting in the 1970s to a full-time one,



with rising salaries, pensions, health care benefits, and a huge growth in legislative staff.

One important event that occurred in 2005 was pivotal in the expansion in the use of state resources in legislative elections. In July 2005, the legislature voted to increase its salaries by 16 to 54 percent. The public reaction was immediate and visceral. In the following year's legislative elections, 54 incumbent members of the legislature retired or were defeated. The top two Senate leaders and the number-two Democratic leader in the House lost their seats.

Trial testimony indicated that legislative leaders, concerned about subsequent defeats for themselves or House colleagues in 2006, doubled down in the use of the state resources they devoted to their campaigns after ramping up in the two previous cycles. Newspaper accounts of the extensive use of legislative staffers in campaigns led to the state's Attorney General launching an investigation and convening grand juries that led to the prosecutions.

Brad Bumsted is an awarding-winning reporter who has covered Pennsylvania government and politics for more than 30 years, early in his career for several state newspapers and Gannett News Service. Currently he is the state capitol reporter for *The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* and has covered most of Pennsylvania's high-profile corruption trials in recent years. In 2004, he co-authored *Murder Is the Charge* with attorney William Costopoulos, a true account covering the investigation and eventual acquittal of a former mayor of York, Pennsylvania, who had been charged with murder while serving on the city's police force during the infamous race riots in 1969. Brad Bumsted also appears on many Pennsylvania television and radio programs where he is a much sought-after commentator.