

Specter, Rendell make nice, sort of

The mayor was upset with the senator over his opposition to a bill that would have brought aid.

By Amy S. Rosenberg
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Not one to hold a grudge, at least in public, Mayor Rendell yesterday appeared with U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter at a news conference in which Specter promised to introduce legislation that would revive portions of President Clinton's busted jobs bill.

Just a few days ago, Rendell had blasted Specter and the other Republicans who successfully prevented the \$16.3 billion bill from reaching a vote in the Senate, where it had majority support.

The death of the stimulus bill meant a loss to the city of as much as \$70 million, and possibly as much as \$40 million to SEPTA.

The Rendell administration had anticipated that the money would create thousands of summer jobs for teenagers, have built or rehabbed 500 homes, repaired 800 others, modernized 200 public housing units and built a bus depot, among other projects. Immunization, Head Start and HealthyStart programs would also have received a boost.

But yesterday, Rendell and Specter did their awkward dance of public reconciliation, with Specter scrambling to assert himself again as an independent, moderate Republican who would stand up to the leadership and forge a compromise he hoped would be worth \$9.7 billion.

As for the mayor, Rendell said he was not going to stand on ceremony and would take what he could get.

"We may be a person who's dying of thirst and we could use four or five gallons of water," he said. "But if you're going to give us two gallons of water, we're not going to complain."

When it was over, however, Rendell was asked if he had been, as it appeared, rolling his eyes at much of what he was hearing. He smiled. "Some of it," he said. "But my job is to get money for the city of Philadelphia."

And so from somewhere in the wonderland of politics, yesterday's featured performance was the Ed and Arlen show, brought to you live from behind the National Park Service podium, underneath the Benjamin West painting of James Hamilton in the Long Room, upstairs at Independence Hall.

Specter defended his actions, contending that the procedural bickering was started by a Democratic attempt to stifle amendments. But he conceded that Washington "looks terrible."



Associated Press AMY S. ROSENBERG

Mayor Rendell listens to Sen. Arlen Specter explain his reasons for opposing President Clinton's economic-stimulus bill. Specter said he had come up with a compromise that would cost taxpayers less

"People don't really care about what happens inside the Beltway, and I can understand why," he said. "The ferocious infighting on this bill has been of historic proportions, but Sen. (Robert) Byrd (of West Virginia) started the matter."

Specter said he and other Republicans could not be expected to just "rubber stamp" the President's bill, adding that he was somewhat miffed that Clinton chose to make an appearance in Pittsburgh last week while Specter was away in Africa and that Vice President Gore invited him to another Pittsburgh event a few days later when he couldn't possibly make the flight connections.

Specter denied that he had knuckled under pressure from Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole of Kansas, engineer of the collapse of the stimulus package.

He went on to invoke a long history of working with Rendell — both of them are former district attorneys — and of lobbying for aid to Philadelphia, and even brought up the

fact that the Specters and Rendells are neighbors.

Specter: "We've worked together a long time since the summer of '67 when I gave the mayor his first job."

Rendell, laughing, corrected him: "Summer of '66."

"Summer of '66," Specter said. "So we want to continue to work together, for the city. We have very different backgrounds. The mayor lives five doors away from me, as you turn up Warden Drive, you come to his house, then to my house. Mine's the one without the mortgage."

Specter then turned the floor over to Rendell, who thanked Specter and then — probably he couldn't help himself — blurted out this somewhat biting remark: "Let me point out that I did not grow up in Kansas though — very relevant."

Dole and Specter both grew up in Russell, Kan.

Specter said that he had informed Dole of his intention to introduce a compromise bill and did not get a warm response. "He said to me, 'Arlen, your ideas are not shared by 39

other Republicans.'"

Specter said that he could not predict the response the bill would get, and that he was attempting to gather a group of moderate Republicans to support it. Specter said his bill would attempt to pay for the package with budget offsets, funds already appropriated in the budget.

And, unlike many of the Republicans, he said he did not believe the elements of the stimulus plan were politically motivated spending, commonly referred to as "pork."

"Is it pork?" he said. "No. Why? Because it involves summer jobs, which are very important. It involves mass transit. It involves immunization, small businesses. The difference here, is that there are funds available in existing programs."

Rendell called Specter's planned initiative "a good positive step that I think will raise the morale of the American people in general, and specifically the American people who happen to live in cities."

The guy's unbelievable! How does he look in
the mirror??

Been meaning to see you for weeks + just love +
Passover really so I visited in this year + then I
was sick for a couple of weeks - nothing serious. Took
some infection the Dr thought. But it had me
"sponged out". Feeling much better, but tired, so
hopefully will soon improve.

Everyone else is okay

Love
Lena