

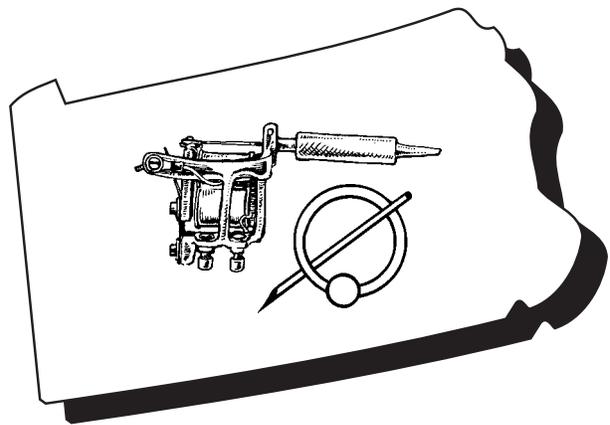
# Pennsylvania Coalition of Professional Tattooists & Body Piercers Newsletter

In  
Unity  
There  
Is  
Strength!

July/August 1998  
Volume 1, Issue 10

# I N S I D E !

- Coalition In The News•
- Keep Those Petitions Coming•
- The Evils of Tattooing Minors•



*Coalition Hotline:*

412•531•5319

<http://tattoopgh.com>

# Editor's Notes

- *First, my sincere apologies for omitting the following Professional Coalition Members from the list of active members at the last meeting: Steve Lemak, The Quillian; Stacy McCleaf, Chrome Garden Tattoo Studio; Chuck Feaser, Chuck's Tattooing; Bret Sheldon, The Netherworld Tattoo.*
- The petitions have been working wonderfully! To date we've collected over 2,400 petitions in support of the Coalition and our efforts. I'm sure there are more out there, so please, if you have a pile, mail them to me. Alexandra Matthews, from Senator Bell's office, has requested a copy of the signatures, so I'd like to have as many as possible before copying and mailing them. The official presentation, if there is one, would come during a public hearing. (More on this later.) My hope is that if the Senate Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee see enough opposition to HB 332, they'll let it die!
- Along those lines, following is a brief recap of our visit with Alexandra Matthews. Bob Stern (Philadelphia), Duke Miller (Pittsburgh) and myself met with Ms. Matthews on Monday, July 20, at Senator Bell's office in Harrisburg. She seemed genuinely interested in our concerns with this legislation and was able to provide us with some insight into how and why this legislation had been introduced. According to Matthews, Senator Bell's

office (and other Senatorial offices) has received a great deal of opposition to HB 332, but none in favor of it. This would lead the Committee to ignore the bill and let it die, BUT, and this is a very important BUT, favors and power politics might come into play, which would force the Committee to act on the legislation.

If that is the case, there could be a public hearing for HB 332. Senator Bell was quoted in a recent article as saying that a public hearing "may be pushed back until January." Matthews response to me when I questioned this was, "Senator Bell's reference to a hearing was assuming that the bill WOULD NOT move this session, but would probably be re-introduced NEXT session, which begins January 1st."

Matthews also stated that a good deal of this legislation was being fueled by parents (even congressional members), angered by a lack of age restrictions for body piercing. The solution seems simple, add body piercing (and any other body modification) to the existing tattoo age limit and be done with it. We've made arrangements for Ms. Matthews to visit a tattoo studio and get a first hand look at how the business is handled. Stay tuned as the congressional break nears its end.

- Finally, several articles profiling the Coalition and expressing OUR point of view have made the press. For the

most part, they've been very positive (see the *Pittsburgh Tribune Review* and *Outlaw Biker Tattoo Revue* articles reprinted in this issue). Several have even gone out over the AP wire, giving us national coverage. On the downside was a recent WPXI Channel 11 evening news piece that featured brief sound bites from your's truly Tom Assling - so they were a little off with the name, but the reporter was too interested in listening to herself - and Tony Urbanek (Inka Dinka Doo), whose comments were chopped beyond oblivion and played completely out of context! Hey, any press is good press - somebody said that once!

- Seems there's been a rash of problems for new studios trying to open in various townships or boroughs. Casey Edwards (Xtreme Tattoos) spent nearly three months waiting for South Greensburg Zoning Board to allow him to conduct business. Edwards eventually prevailed after a hearing, but three months without work can really take it's toll. More recently, a similar situation is brewing outside of Philadelphia (more on this one later) and a Western Pennsylvania official may have spoken too soon when he was quoted in a newspaper article as saying, "tattoo and motorcycle shops are undesirable." He then went on to explain how developers and other businesses have suffered because of these "undesirable" establishments.

## IMPORTANT NOTICES

- ☞ Please send ALL completed petitions to Tim Azinger as soon as possible. PO Box 502, Carnegie, PA 15106.
- ☞ The next Coalition meeting will be held in conjunction with Meeting of the Marked on Sunday, November 1, 1998 @ 10 AM in the Jr. Grand Ballroom of the Pittsburgh Greentree Marriott. Please RSVP by Wednesday, October 28th, at 412-531-5319.

## IMPORTANT NOTICES

## Bill Status

The status of all legislation remains unchanged due to the Congressional summer recess.

- HB 332 (*Passed in House & Forwarded to Senate Professional Licensure Committee*)
- HB 950 (*in Health and Human Services Committee*)
- HB 2034 (*Judiciary Committee*)
- SB 847 (*Appropriations Committee*)

# Minors, Tattooing & You!

I'm writing this letter in response to an incident that happened at our shop recently. A girl came in for a tattoo and picked out a nice, big piece of tribal for her lower back. When we asked her for I.D., she said she didn't have any. She went on to say that she just turned 18 two days ago, but questioned us as to why we needed to see I.D. when two months earlier, she received a tattoo at another shop and they never bothered to ask her age.

I can't believe that a "professional" shop would show total disregard for: 1.) the law; 2.) the customer; 3.) everything that the coalition is fighting for. Do you know what kind of repercussions that might have had on our business?

I guess money outweighs being able to keep our right

to give and get tattooed - or maybe it was just blatant stupidity.

I know that this shop is aware of House Bill 332 and I believe they are on the mailing list, so there is no excuse for that type of disrespect for the art of tattooing. I guess that fines and jail time for tattooing a minor doesn't scare them. It's shops like this that are going to help PASS House Bill 332 and ruin the respectable, quality shops that care about tattoos and the people who wear them.

If you're one of those places that thinks you'll just go underground if the bill passes, let me go on record by saying that I will be the first one in line to turn you in.

Thank you.

*Brian Corley, Iron City Ink (Pittsburgh)*



## Professional Tattooist Coalition Sets Out to Fight Legislation

By Mike Seate  
TRIBUNE-REVIEW

As a former underground comic book artist, Brian Corley thought applying his creative skills to tattooing would be as easy as learning to draw on skin instead of paper.

Before that happened, Corley, 32 - who is now established in the trade at Oakland's Hellion House tattoo and piercing shop - spent nearly two years not tattooing, but cleaning piercing and tattoo equipment.

"Nobody's going to let you near a customer until you know all the proper sterilization techniques," Corley said.

Which leaves Corley wondering why his shop and nearly two dozen other tattoo and piercing businesses in the Pittsburgh area are facing massive changes in the way they do business.

Last July, Hellion House joined 75 other shops in the Pennsylvania Coalition of Professional Tattooists & Body Piercers, a group formed specifically to fight a piece of legislation introduced by Anthony DeLuca, a Penn Hills Democrat who wants to clean up the state's

burgeoning tattoo and piercing industry.

DeLuca, who was away on vacation at the time of this article, could not be reached for comment. However, House Bill 332, which awaits final consideration before the Senate Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee, would require tattoo and piercing practitioners to be licensed and regulated by the state.

Under the bill, artists would be charged a licensing fee and would operate under state-established guidelines of safety and cleanliness.

Currently, anyone who purchases tattoo equipment - complete starter kits cost as little as \$600 and require little artistic skill - can go into business.

But coalition president Tim Azinger of Carnegie said DeLuca's bill - which passed its initial House vote overwhelmingly in April - wouldn't affect procedures used by artists like himself and Corley, who already work in clean, well-maintained parlors.

Azinger has collected nearly 3,000 signatures on a petition he plans to present to state lawmakers in opposition to the bill.

He and other tattoo artists fear that DeLuca's bill would create unnecessary paperwork and licensing costs for legitimate tattoo and piercing shops, while "underground" parlors who ply their trade in basements, kitchens and at weekend carnivals would continue their often unsanitary work unhindered.

"Not being clean will ruin your reputation and nobody wants to go around infecting their customers. Anybody who is serious about the business will already be using surgical sterilization equipment and new needles with every tattoo and piercing," said Azinger, 29, a clean-cut cable television executive turned tattooist.

Azinger's group also objects to language in DeLuca's legislation that would make it illegal to tattoo on faces. The bill also requires tattoo artists to disclose their medical records - something Azinger said is not required of barbers, beauticians or others who have physical contact with customers.

Azinger's passionate involvement in the body-modification arts led to his hosting Pittsburgh's annual

Meeting of the Marked tattoo conventions. He recently completed an 18-month tattooing apprenticeship under Bill "Animal" Kohlmeyer at Animal's American Tattoo Emporium in Carnegie.

And because of DeLuca's bill, Azinger can add industry lobbying to his overbooked schedule.

Since learning of the bill, Azinger has organized letter-writing campaigns to state legislators, compiled newsletters for his group and helped organize road trips to regional committee meetings.

"There are still people who fear that tattoo shops will bring prostitutes and crime to their neighborhoods and there are lawmakers whose kids are getting or thinking of getting tattooed and this is a way to discourage them and appeal to their constituents, but that's not what tattooing is about," he said.

Azinger said the ultrasonic autoclave utilized to sterilize equipment at Animal's and other legitimate tattoo shops is the same device used by dentists. Latex surgical gloves are also an everyday part of a modern tattoo shop. Used

*Continued On Page 4*

# Here Comes Trouble: House Bill 332

*(Reprinted from Tattoo Revue #69)*

On April 29th, the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania passed House Bill 332. This bill, entitled The Tattoo, Body Piercing, and Corrective Cosmetic Artists Act, is an attempt to regulate and central ail aspects of the tattoo and piercing industry in Pennsylvania. While the majority of the bill promotes standards and practices which have become second nature to all in the business, it also calls for new restrictions and provisions which can only be described as unconstitutional.

The Pennsylvania Coalition of Professional Tattooists & Body Piercers, headed by President Tim Azinger, has been attempting to educate the public about the potential dangers this bill can pose should it be made law. By circulating newsletters, keeping an accurate and informative website up and running with the help of Vice President Drake Cox, and distributing mass mailings to tattoo shops all over the state, the Coalition hopes to nip this bill in it's proverbial bud. Says Tim, "We hope to ask tattoo shops all over the state to donate money to hire a lobbyist and have this bill repealed." However, when over 150 tattoo and piercing shops were asked to attend a meeting held just three days prior to the bill being passed, less than 40 attended.

A passage from the Coalition's August 97 newsletter outlines their 3 main concerns with the bill: "...health department codes, legislation and regulation/ licensing - all of which have distinct purposes." Tattooists and piercers are all for strict legislation dealing with sterilization and safety, however, only **2 paragraphs** in the 14 page bill deal with those particular topics. The rest of the bill suggests provisions which violate any American's civil rights.

One clause deems that all tattooists, piercers, etc. would have to provide a notarized statement from a physician to prove they have been examined and their blood has been screened for infectious diseases. However, no doctors or dentists are required to undergo this test!

The PA State Medical Board would develop and administer tests for licensing and standards - without involving tattooists or piercers in the creation of those tests. Furthermore, registration and licensing fees would be imposed for permanent and temporary establishments, meaning artists who work conventions will have to file for separate licenses, and the law would also demand fees from apprentices as well.

In addition, anyone suspected of being a risk to public health due to alcohol or drug use, reason of illness either mental or physical, or having previously been conviction of a felonious act involving narcotics, will be denied the right to practice their trade. Also, maintaining, a

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# Legislative Fight

*Continued From Page 3*

needles are disposed of in medical waste containers, Corley said.

"I studied the (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) handbook and learned how to sterilize everything in the shop before I even got to touch a tattoo needle," Azinger said.

But Allegheny County Health Department spokesman Dave Zazac said self-taught sterilization techniques are not always thorough enough.

Although rare, complaints of infections occasionally reach his office, Zazac said.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have not yet recorded a case of hepatitis B or AIDS transmitted through tattooing, Zazac said - still, there are public health concerns in an industry where blood-borne diseases could spread between customer and artist.

The county health department has officially registered its support for DeLuca's proposal, a measure Zazac said would help enforce universal standards throughout the body decorations industry.

"There are about 21 known tattoo and piercing shops in Allegheny County and possibly many more that exist otherwise. Licensing will allow official oversights and will ensure proper aseptic techniques will be followed through inspections," Zazac said.

Zazac said the county health department is prepared to forward a proposal to its board of health allowing the monitoring of tattoo and piercing shops should the bill pass.

But before that happens, the contentious issue will be debated at a public hearing, said state Sen. Clarence Bell, a Delaware County Republican who chairs the Senate consumer protection committee.

Bell said a public hearing on the bill may be pushed back on the legislative agenda until January.

Meanwhile Bell's committee continues to hear arguments on both sides of the regulation issue.

Among the cases cited was a Delaware County tattoo parlor that attracted health department scrutiny because of pets living on the premises. And there's still the sticky question of whether facial tattoos should be legal.

"There's so much to consider with an issue this controversial. For something like this, we need specialists to come in and determine what's going on," Bell explained.

Azinger, who recently met with Bell's assistant Alexis Matthews to discuss his group's position, modeled his Coalition of Professional Tattooists and Body Piercers on a similar group that fought regulatory legislation in Maryland last year.

In October, a similar set of regulations was signed into law in Ohio. The Ohio Department of Health is arranging to implement the new rules in that state's estimated 250 tattoo parlors and piercing shops.

In Maryland, the tattoo lobby helped defeat regulations introduced after a 13-year-old received one of the permanent markings at a carnival, said veteran artist "Tux" Vogel. But the city of Baltimore and Vogel's native Anne Arundel County, with some 100 tattoo parlors between them, already enforces a limited number of industry regulations.

Vogel said an explosive growth of new tattoo and piercing practitioners and customers spurred the health department to adopt rules governing the once-unregulated industry.

Locally, DeLuca drafted his bill after residents of Blawnox complained that a tattoo parlor was set to open near a school bus stop. But Azinger contends that parents often allow their youngsters to get the body marks.

"Very often we have parents come in and get angry if we won't pierce their toddler or let their 13-year-old have a tattoo they've been crying for. That's just bad parenting," he said.

And though Vogel remains a fierce critic of Maryland's legislation, he said the licensing of tattoo shops in the Baltimore area has resulted in some industrywide benefits.

"The (government) still can't do much to regulate the thousands of people who still buy tattooing kits from magazines and give people bad tattoos in their houses, but they require anybody looking to open a shop to have at least 600 hours of apprenticeship under an established artist and that's good," he said.

Vogel still rankles at the idea of legislators - unfamiliar with what could be described as the new tribalism and heavy metal art of tattooing - creating legislation for the industry.

"The guys who are writing these laws don't know anything about what we do or how we operate our businesses. The bottom line is you just have to be responsible and run your business in a professional way.

"If you want to do this for a career, you wouldn't want to get your customers sick or hurt your business, and that's not something that needs to be legislated," Vogel said.

# Here Comes Trouble

*Continued From Page 4*

relationship with, assisting, or advising anyone accused of any of the above, will be denied registration as well.

Interwoven between all these provisions is the phrase *not limited to*, meaning the legislation can be changed or modified at any time, which has Joe Johns of Wizard's World of Tattoos in definite opposition of the bill. "We need to be regulated for safety, not legislated out of business," he says. The issue of the bill preventing those with prior convictions also doesn't sit well with Joe. "What they are saying is, if someone has a prior history of alcoholism, or a prior felony conviction, you can't turn your life around and try to make a living as a tattooist or piercer. They're targeting our industry." An industry which, according to recent reports, is the sixth largest in the state of Pennsylvania; all the more reason to believe the legislators are imposing these provisions to make money,

A similar law has already been passed and is in effect in the state of Ohio. With Bill 332 just waiting to be passed, we can unfortunately expect legislation like this to be proposed all over the country. The way people tattoo and pierce in America could completely change - as could the people who do the tattooing and piercing. So don't just sit on your asses, find out what your local government has planned for this industry!

**International Guest Artists**  
 Denise Watt (Canada)  
 Zoe Thorne (Berlin)  
 Corinne Dubosque (France)  
 Trina Weber (Denmark)  
 Theresa Gordon (England)

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## COALITION MEETING REMINDER

Sunday, November 1st, 1998 @ 10:00 AM

Pittsburgh Greentree Marriott, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

(In Conjunction With Meeting of the Marked 1998)

# COALITION CLASSIFIEDS

Welcome to the Coalition Classifieds! Ads may be purchased under the following guidelines: Price is \$10 for one (1) issue, \$20 for three (3) issues. Ad size is one (1) column inch which translates to five (5) lines of typeset characters. The Editor reserves the right to edit copy to conform to space constraints. All ad copy should be typed or printed and should be mailed along with payment (check or money order payable to **Pennsylvania Coalition**) to: Pennsylvania Coalition, PO Box 502, Carnegie, PA 15106. Please indicate the number of insertions and include your phone number. Please call for pricing on larger ads. **412-531-5319**

**FOR SALE:** One (1) Branson Ultra Sonic Cleaner, Model 1210 (\$100). Call The Quillian @ 610-770-7587.

**WANTED:** Experienced Tattoo Artist for late nights and weekends. Must have exceptional customer skills in shop and on the phone! Self-motivated, go-getter, no mamma's boys, no time to babysit. References and portfolio a must! **Contact Duke at Cool Tats for Cool Cats, 724-864-7585.**

## SPECIAL NOTICE!

6th Annual

# Meeting of the Marked

*Celebrating the Art of Tattoo Since 1993*

## Special Awards Ceremony

Thursday, October 29th, 7:00 PM

Cahoot's, Marriott Nightclub, Pittsburgh

As part of this year's Meeting of the Marked, we'll be making a special presentation to Hank Savini, Pittsburgh's oldest living tattoo artist! We'd like everyone to be present to honor Mr. Savini!

If anyone has any photos, business cards, newspaper clippings, personal stories, etc., from Mr. Savini that you'd like to share, please contact Tim at 412-531-5319!

We'll also be presenting a few other special awards during the evening.