

## April 13, 2007 Governor Rendell, Senators Specter & Casey Announce Agreement to Save Willow Grove

For Immediate Release

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### GOVERNOR RENDELL, SENATORS SPECTER & CASEY ANNOUNCE AGREEMENT TO SAVE WILLOW GROVE JOINT INTERAGENCY BASE WILL BE UNDER STATE JURISDICTION

Harrisburg - Governor Edward G. Rendell, Senator Arlen Specter and Senator Robert Casey today announced that the U.S. Air Force has agreed in principle to support Governor Rendell's plan to establish a joint interagency base at Willow Grove under the state's control.

"This is a significant and historic development for Willow Grove and for the commonwealth," Governor Rendell said. "I am delighted that the Air Force has agreed to partner with Pennsylvania to save the core capabilities of the Willow Grove installation, and I want to thank the Air Force for its support of this effort.

"With its key strategic location, excellent airfield, and existing facilities, it was vitally important that Willow Grove be maintained to support national defense, homeland security, emergency preparedness and other government missions."

The installation will be leased to the state and eventually transferred to state ownership. It will continue to support military operations, including flight operations, for the Pennsylvania National Guard, Army Reserve and other units, as well as additional government agencies.

"The idea of abandoning the airfield at Willow Grove made no sense to me or to members of our Congressional delegation. The continued operation of the airfield at Willow Grove means that this installation will remain an asset for the safety and security of Pennsylvania's people and the entire region," Governor Rendell added.

"In particular, I must thank Congressman John Murtha for his efforts to make this plan a reality.

Coupled with the outstanding support of Congresswoman Allyson Schwartz and senators Arlen Specter and Robert Casey, we worked together to reach this important milestone," Rendell noted. The effort to earn Air Force support for this project was spearheaded by U.S. Representative John Murtha of Johnstown, who represents Pennsylvania's 12th Congressional District.

"After speaking with Governor Rendell and Adjutant General Jessica Wright, I became convinced of the need to maintain the existing Willow Grove property as a hub for our defense and homeland security needs," Murtha said. "I'm pleased

that we were able to bring about a positive outcome for the commonwealth and the Air National Guard."

U.S. Representative Allyson Schwartz, whose 13th Congressional District includes the Willow Grove installation, praised the decision of the Air Force and the efforts of the Governor and Congressional delegation.

"This plan means that Willow Grove will continue to support our national defense and homeland security needs well into the future," Schwartz said. "The Air Force decision to support Pennsylvania's plan recognizes the importance of maintaining these capabilities. I have long supported the effort to maintain the military functions at Willow Grove and this is a major step in that direction."

Senators Specter and Casey recently wrote jointly to Air Force Secretary Michael Wynne to endorse the concept of maintaining essential military capabilities at Willow Grove. "I am pleased by Secretary Wynne's prompt and positive response to the letter that Senator Casey and I sent last month," Specter said. "Willow Grove represents a key strategic location in proximity to Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and New York, and I have always believed that we should consider all that Willow Grove has to offer as a national and homeland security asset prior to abandoning it as a resource."

"I want to thank Secretary Wynne, Governor Rendell, and the Congressional delegation, in particular Congressman Murtha, for their lengthy work on this issue," Casey said. "Maintaining operations at Willow Grove will provide a great security and economic benefit for the region and the entire commonwealth."

Current plans are that the Navy will leave Willow Grove in 2011. Under the Pennsylvania plan that has earned support from the Air Force, the Navy will transfer the installation to the Air Force for continued military purposes and the Air Force will in turn lease it to the state.

"The Willow Grove of the future will function in much the same way as Fort Indiantown Gap as an installation under state jurisdiction with operations by federal government agencies and National Guard and reserve military units," Governor Rendell concluded.