

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 4, 2004

The Honorable James Wehrle
Mayor of Punxsutawney
Town Hall
102 West Mahoning Street
Punxsutawney, PA 15767

Dear Mayor Wehrle:

As I write this, it has been warm with occasional spring showers in New York for a week. From what I understand from www.weather.com, it has been warm with occasional showers in Punxsutawney as well. I think it's safe to say that spring has sprung across the Northeast, despite Punxsutawney Phil's prediction on Groundhog Day of six more weeks of winter.

I write today because – as you undoubtedly are aware – Punxsutawney Phil is not the only groundhog in the winter-prognosticating game. In New York City, we are very proud of Staten Island Chuck (no relation), who this year correctly predicted a short winter from his home at the Staten Island Zoo. In fact, Staten Island Chuck's predictions are correct 87% of the time.

In contrast, experts agree that Punxsutawney Phil gets it right only about 3 of every 10 years. In a 2003 profile, the *Chicago Tribune* found Punxsutawney Phil is correct 39 percent of the time. In 2002, the *Raleigh News and Observer* placed the success rate at 25% and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* said it was 36%. And according to the book Extraordinary Origins of Everyday Things, Phil's accuracy observed over a 60-year period is a disappointing 28 percent.

With Staten Island Chuck predicting correctly approximately 90% of the time and Punxsutawney Phil getting it right only 30% of the time, most years – about 6 out of 10 – Chuck is right and Phil is wrong. But this isn't about whether Punxsutawney Phil sees his own shadow, it's about whether he should be overshadowed by Staten Island's clearly superior groundhog. Predicting the end of winter is a lot like baseball – the statistics don't lie. The bottom line is that Punxsutawney Phil out-predicts Staten Island Chuck about as often as the Pirates beat the Yankees in the World Series.

I therefore respectfully request that Punxsutawney Phil relinquish his crown and his unofficial title as "the" Groundhog Day groundhog to the Staten Island Chuck. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator