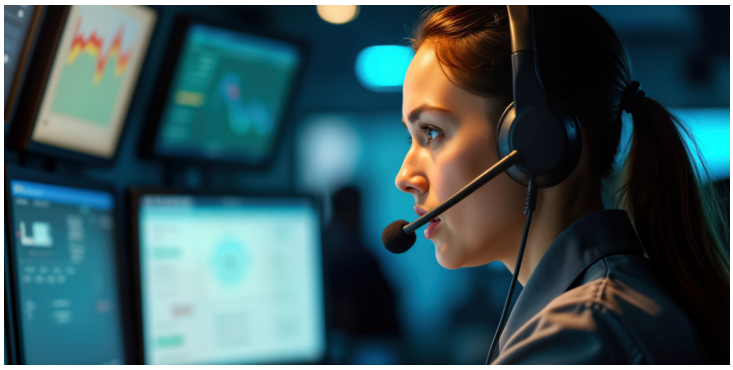
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS Association of Pennsylvania

2026 COUNTY GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

911 Funding and Statute Updates



Counties are proud to provide one of the key functions in public safety—the operation of the 911 call-taking and dispatch system. As technologies continue to evolve and funding streams no longer align with current realities, counties need to be able to rely on consistent and sustainable funding to maintain their responsibility as the first line of emergency response.In Pennsylvania, the 911 system is built around county-based Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) staffed by highly trained telecommunicators. Providing reliable 911 service requires personnel, facilities, and advanced technology operating 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to ensure emergency calls are answered promptly and first responders receive critical information to act quickly. Counties continue to work closely with the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA), the General Assembly, emergency management professionals, and industry partners to strengthen Pennsylvania's Next Generation 911 (NG911) system. Key efforts focus on investing in shared infrastructure, statewide network connectivity, accurate GIS data, and stronger regional coordination to improve system availability, reliability, and continuity. **A modern, interconnected 911 system is essential to effectively respond to large-scale emergencies and keep pace with evolving emergency communications technology.**

THE FACTS

- Through the statewide Next Generation 911 (NG911) system, **highly trained telecommunicators serve as the first responders,** providing medical triage and critical guidance while dispatching police, fire, and EMS.
- Pennsylvania's 911 system is primarily funded through two sources:
  - **911 surcharge:** a flat $1.95 fee applied monthly to phone bills or at the point of sale for prepaid devices.
  - **County property taxes:** costs not covered by the surcharge are paid from county general funds supported by property taxes.
- **In 2024, Pennsylvania PSAPs handled 13.9 million calls,** increasing operational strain amid fluctuating staffing levels and ongoing recruitment and retention challenges.
- The $1.95 surcharge, set in 2023 and extended through 2028 under Act 45 of 2025, generated $380 million in 2025, covering approximately 80% of statewide 911 system costs.
- Compared nationally, Pennsylvania's surcharge is average but covers a significant share of operating costs; other states rely on higher fees, percentage-based charges, or state General Fund support.
- Counties continue to manage costs and make targeted investments in system improvements, regionalization, consolidation, and NG911 technologies; however, **additional statutory updates are needed** to keep pace with evolving federal and state requirements.

COUNTIES SUPPORT

- **Increasing the 911 surcharge to $2.20** through the next reauthorization to better align revenues with the increasing cost of NG911.
- Continued strategic planning and investment for evolving technologies and GIS data to properly support and maintain NG911.
- Opportunities for system and funding consolidation, including regional resource sharing and collaboration to guarantee system and service continuity.
- Discussion among policymakers and stakeholders to ensure any increase accounts for 1) the landscape of applications, devices, sensors, and services capable of contacting 911; and 2) the ability to accurately assess and collect 911 surcharge revenue on these rapidly evolving consumer communications technologies.

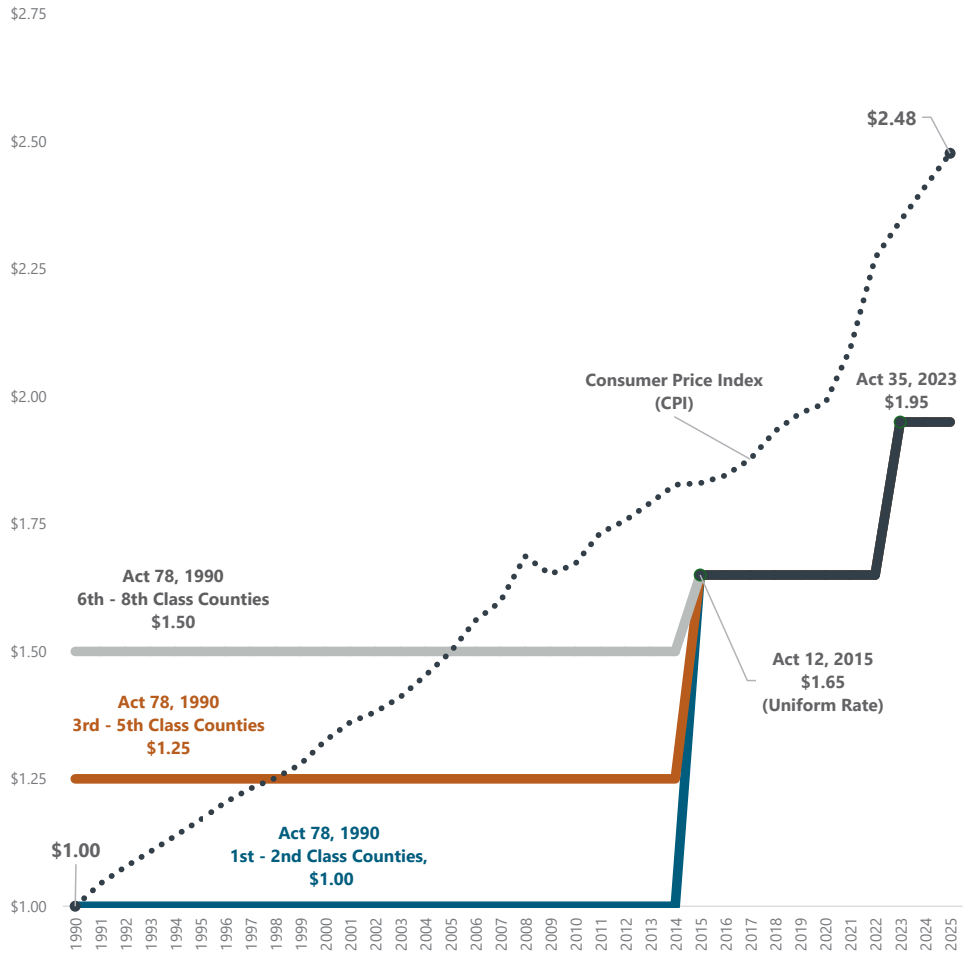
THE BIG PICTURE

Achieving this priority will guarantee fast, dependable access to 911 services for residents and visitors across Pennsylvania, anywhere, anytime, ensuring emergencies receive immediate and effective response.

continued >

911 Funding and Statute Updates *(continued)*

E-911 Monthly Surcharge Rates, 1990 to 2025



Act 79, 1990, Act 12, 2015, and Act 35 2023 and the Consumer Price Index, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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