

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA
THE VOICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

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COUNTY PRIORITIES SPOTLIGHT: ELECTIONS PUBLIC INFORMATION TOOLKIT RELEASED

Counties, as the entity responsible for the administration of Pennsylvania's elections, want to ensure the public has accurate information on voter dates and deadlines, how and where to vote and the logistics behind absentee and mail-in ballots.

CCAP, in conjunction with Penn State Extension and Penn State's Center for Economic and Community Development, developed a package of materials to be used by counties to help inform and engage the public in the process of elections. The topics included in the packet focus on election administration, security, information for first time voters, poll workers and primary elections. Items in the toolkit include:

- **Pennsylvania Election Process: A Quick Guide for Citizens** – An overview document which contains important election information including dates, processes and tips on voting
- **Social Media Content** - Downloadable GIFs, infographics and story slides for social media and public engagement
- **Print Infographics** – Downloadable print infographics for government offices

This content has been reviewed by the Pennsylvania Department of State and can be leveraged by all government entities in helping share accurate information on elections in Pennsylvania.

CCAP ANNUAL RESOLUTIONS AND PLATFORM REVISION

This week, CCAP closed out its 138th Annual Conference and Trade Show in Adams County from August 4 through August 7. During the conference's business meeting on August 6, CCAP members had the opportunity to lend their voice to the Association's policy-setting process, voting on and approving 14 **resolutions** amending the *Pennsylvania County Platform*, the Association's cumulative policy statement. CCAP members also went through the four-year review to assure policy positions stay up to date. This is the final phase of CCAP's annual **policy-setting process**, the culmination of the work of the ten policy committees comprising more than 175 CCAP members that

reviewed the platform and proposed and reviewed resolutions throughout the Spring and early Summer.

The adopted resolutions amend the *Pennsylvania County Platform*, the Association's cumulative policy statement. The resolutions and the updated *Platform* are available on the [Policy](#) page of the CCAP website

Policy committees will meet throughout the fall to develop their work plans and propose priorities for the coming year, and members will vote on CCAP's 2025 priorities at their Fall Conference in November.

FEDERAL NEXT GEN 911 REGULATIONS RELEASED

On July 18, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted a new framework to streamline the transition to Next Generation 911 (NG911). This initiative is designed to create detailed rules and guidelines for the nationwide rollout of NG911, with the goal of significantly improving emergency response capabilities throughout the country.

Under this new framework, state and local 911 authorities are transitioning from a legacy circuit switched 911 network to Internet Protocol (IP)-based networks. These new networks will support advanced 911 capabilities, including text, video, and data communication. Additionally, the FCC's new rule requires phone and internet companies to deploy NG911 core services within six to twelve months of receiving a request from a local 911 center. Phone companies are further required to adjust 911 calls for compatibility with NG911 and direct them to new destination points on IP networks facilitated by 911 authorities. This comprehensive approach is set to streamline and modernize emergency communications at the county level. This framework would become effective 60 days following its publication in the Federal Register.

More information on the Report and Order can be found on the FCC [website](#).

ACTION NEEDED TO REAUTHORIZE FEDERAL BROADBAND AFFORDABILITY PROGRAM

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which provided for funding for affordable, high-speed internet to nearly 800,000 households in Pennsylvania and 23 million nationwide, expired in May of 2024 and has yet to receive additional congressional funding. While Congress has proposed multiple pieces of legislation to fund the ACP, including the Affordable Connectivity Program Extension Act of 2024 ([H.R. 6929/S. 3565](#)) and the Secure and Affordable Broadband Expansion Act ([S. 4317](#)), action is needed to extend funding for this program. ACP is a critical program for Pennsylvania that provides significant support to households who would otherwise be unable to afford internet subscriptions. This program has provided nearly \$455 million in funding to Pennsylvania, saving eligible Pennsylvanians \$22 million per month on their internet bills.

To be eligible for ACP, program participants must satisfy one of the below qualifications:

- Enrollment in certain assistance programs such as SNAP, Medicaid, federal public housing assistance;
- Have a household income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines; or
- Are enrolled in an internet service provider's low-income plan.

Counties are urged to contact their U.S. Representatives and Senators during the August recess to request additional funding for this critical broadband access program for millions of Americans. Broadband access and development remains a **key priority** for Pennsylvania counties and the ACP is one part of the larger overall funding package to ensure all Commonwealth residents have secure, affordable and reliable access to internet.

Further information on the status of ACP funding and additional outreach tools and resources can be found on NACo's [website](#).

DEP OVERHAULS PERMITTING PROCESS VIA SPEED PROGRAM

[Act 54 of 2024](#) included a new initiative, comprised of elements of SB 350, that makes significant changes to the permitting process for land, air and water-related permits required by the Department of Environmental Protection and county conservation districts. Central to this effort is the Streamlining Permits for Economic Expansion and Development (SPEED) Program, which aims to enhance the Department of Environmental Protection's

ongoing efforts to modernize permits and accelerate the permitting process.

This initiative allows permit applicants to utilize DEP-verified qualified contractors to conduct expedited initial reviews of certain types of permit applications required either by DEP or by county conservation districts. Applicants will be able to track their permit status online through the Permit Application Tracking System, where they can view processing times, review dates, and estimated time remaining for each phase. The eligible permit types under this program include air quality plan approvals (Sec. 127), earth disturbance permits (Sec. 102), individual water obstruction and encroachment permits (Sec. 105), and dam safety permits (Sec.105). Payback guidelines will remain in effect for SPEED permits, ensuring a money-back guarantee that refunds permit application fees if the responsible agency fails to take on an application within a predetermined time frame. County conservation districts, as a “permitting entity”, will be required to meet the same standards as the department under the new program as outlined in Act 54.

REPORT RELEASED ON NATURAL GAS TAX STRUCTURES

The Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) recently released a [report](#) examining natural gas tax structures. The study, authorized under HR 131 of 2023, directed the LBFC to compare natural gas extraction tax structures among top producing states. LBFC used data published by the United States Energy Information Administration, as well as state regulations and statutes detailing the calculation of fees and taxes on natural gas drilling.

In descending order, the top five natural gas-producing states identified in the study were Texas, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, West Virginia, and New Mexico. Over the last 10 years, Pennsylvania’s current tax structure averaged \$212 million in impact fees annually, totaling \$1.10 billion between 2013 and 2023.

The study also included a comparison of the natural gas industry’s competitive business climates across these five states.

Unlike other top-producing states’ tax on gas extracted and sold, Pennsylvania implements an impact fee on the initial drilling of each well; this practice was created in response to the growth of unconventional drilling and its effects on local communities. Further, Pennsylvania’s counties and local governments receive 60% of this revenue based on the number or percentage of wells located in each county or municipality—unlike in other top-producing states, where little to no revenue from natural gas is provided directly to local governments.

The full report, highlights and a presentation on the study findings can be found on the LBFC [website](#).

CCAP COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS OPEN

CCAP members interested in influencing Association policy can apply for a policy committee appointment. These committees address various county government issues and allow members to contribute to state and federal policy discussions. For more details and to apply, CCAP members can complete the [Committee Interest Form](#) on our website.

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