

# LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA  
THE VOICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

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## COUNTY PRIORITIES SPOTLIGHT: 911 REAUTHORIZATION UPDATE

On October 8, the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee advanced [HB 1304](#) as amended for consideration by the full Senate. Specifically, the amendment added the updated 911 reauthorization language contained in [HB 1854](#), which includes necessary Right-to-Know Law updates for NG911, updated penalties for misuse of the 911 system, and service outage reporting requirements for communications service providers. The bill also extends the PEMA financial audit period for each Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) from every two years to every three years.

Should the full Senate approve the amended bill during the final week of voting session the week of October 21, it would need to return to the House for a concurrence vote before being sent to the Governor's desk for his signature. Counties maintain that time is of the essence, urging the General Assembly to act swiftly on HB 1304 as amended, providing the updates necessary to bring the 911 statute up to date as NG911 and technologies continue to evolve.

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## STATUTORY CAP REFORM ADVANCES

On October 8, [SB 1300](#), introduced by Sen. Wayne Langerholc (R-Cambria), advanced out of the Senate and has now been referred to the House Judiciary Committee for consideration. SB 1300 addresses concerns raised by the *Freilich v. SEPTA* case currently before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, which covers caps on damages in lawsuits against state and local governments, particularly in cases involving catastrophic accidents.

Currently, damages in these cases, related to severe injury, death or disfigurement, are capped at \$250,000, which a 2022 [report](#) from the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) noted would be \$1.04 million if adjusted for inflation. SB 1300 addresses these concerns by increasing the cap to \$1 million for cases arising from such incidents. By raising the cap, the bill seeks to provide a more equitable solution for the most serious

cases, while still preventing undue financial strain on public agencies. Further, this would provide a legislative solution rather than relying on the courts to do so.

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## PTSI BENEFITS BILL PASSES SENATE

On October 8, the Senate Rules and Executive Nominations Committee reported as amended **SB 365**, which would expand workers' compensation benefits to include post-traumatic stress injury (PTSI) for first responders. While the underlying bill is nearly identical to its companion bill **HB 1632**, SB 365 introduces amendments that provide important clarifications to the language. The amendments clarify that the definition of "peace officers" is limited to those responding to emergency calls. It further stipulates that first responders must demonstrate that their injury resulted from exposure to a qualifying traumatic event and that it was sustained in the course and scope of their employment. Furthermore, SB 365 would limit the benefits for PTSI to no more than two years.

The Senate approved SB 365 **unanimously** on October 9. It is set to be considered by the House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee the week of October 21.

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## JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM BILLS SIGNED INTO LAW

Governor Shapiro signed into law two bills aimed at implementing key recommendations from the Juvenile Justice Task Force **Report**. Both bills, introduced by Sen. Lisa Baker (R-Luzerne), target aspects of Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system, focusing on expungement of juvenile records and the timeline for disposition hearings.

**Senate Bill 169** shortens the timeline for county officials to hold disposition hearings in juvenile cases to at least every nine months to every three months to ensure that juveniles are receiving the necessary services and treatments outlined in their disposition orders. **Senate Bill 170** streamlines the process for expunging juvenile records, shortening the eligibility timeline for expungement from five to two years for certain misdemeanor offenders.

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## HOUSE HEARING ON FOSTER CHILDREN BENEFITS

On October 8, the House Children and Youth Committee held an informational hearing on **HB 2617**, introduced by Rep. Rick Krajewski (D-Philadelphia), which proposes new requirements regarding the preservation of social security benefits for youth in the care of county child welfare agencies. This legislation mandates that county agencies screen foster children within 60 days of placement and annually thereafter, to determine their eligibility for social security, supplemental security income, veterans, or other federal and state benefits. If children are deemed eligible, county agencies would be responsible for applying for and managing these benefits on their behalf.

Counties informed the committee that while the initiative aims to provide financial support for foster children, it also presents significant challenges and costs for counties. Larger counties may have the ability to contract with specialized entities to conduct eligibility assessment, submit applications, and handle appeals. However, most counties do not have access to entities with the necessary expertise to manage these tasks.

Given the complexity and the specialized nature of benefit applications and management, counties recommend the establishment of a statewide fiduciary entity. This entity would be responsible for assessing eligibility, managing applications, handling appeals, and maintaining accounts for social security benefits. County child welfare staff are not trained for this type of work, nor do they have the capacity, given existing workforce challenges and the increasing number of referrals.

Currently, HB 2617 is under review by the House Children and Youth Committee.

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## IFO RELEASES SEPTEMBER REVENUE UPDATE

The State's Independent Fiscal Office (IFO) released the monthly revenue **update** for September. General Fund collections were \$4.16 billion for the month, which is \$38 million (0.9%) more than the IFO's estimate. This was primarily attributed to increased personal income tax withholding and stable consumer spending, despite some fluctuations in corporate tax revenues and inheritance taxes.

September collections were \$105 million (2.6%) higher than collections for September 2023. Year-to-date revenues for FY 2024-2025 reached \$10.09 billion, which is \$199 million (2%) higher than expected. The increases can be largely attributed to robust performance in real estate transfer taxes, which offset declines in corporate income and inheritance taxes. The state is generally performing better than expected in terms of overall revenues for FY 2024-2025, with notable increases in personal income tax collections and strong performance in realty transfer taxes.

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## NACo AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM OUTREACH

In May of 2024, the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) ran out of funds due to the absence of further congressional appropriations, leading to the program's expiration on June 1, 2024.

The ACP was introduced by the Federal Communications Commission in 2021, as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The program replaced the Emergency Broadband Benefit, which was established under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The ACP had over 23 million enrolled households to date, including nearly 800,000 households in Pennsylvania; however, Congress failed to re-appropriate the program as funds from the one-time appropriation dwindled early in 2024.

In response to the program's expiration, multiple legislative proposals have been introduced in Congress, including the Affordable Connectivity Program Extension Act of 2024 (H.R. 6929/ S. 3565) and the Secure and Affordable Broadband Expansion Act (S. 4317). Over the last few months, The National Association of Counties (NACo) has been aggressively advocating for the passage of the bipartisan legislation for the authorization and appropriation of new funding to ensure the program's continuation.

To bolster advocacy efforts for a legislative solution to fund the Affordable Connectivity Program, NACo is actively gathering compelling stories from counties about the real-world impact the program's expiration has had on households that have lost this vital benefit. To contribute a story, counties can complete this brief [form](#). For further details and to explore the issue in depth, visit NACo policy brief on their [website](#).

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## NACo BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WEBINAR

NACo, in partnership with The Pew Charitable Trust and the MacArthur Foundation, is hosting a webinar focused on state funding for county behavioral health crisis services.

During this session, speakers will highlight state-funded initiatives that enhance behavioral health crisis services at the county level. Two counties that have successfully leveraged state funding to improve their crisis response systems will share their experiences, offering valuable lessons and insights. This webinar aims to uncover new opportunities for strengthening local behavioral health services.

The webinar is scheduled for Tuesday, October 22, from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. Registration is available on the NACo [website](#).

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## CCAP FALL CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES

The 2024 CCAP Fall [conference](#) will be held at The Hotel Hershey in Dauphin County on November 24-26, 2024. The CCAP policy committees have met to develop their work plans and determine what issues should be advanced as part of the Association's 2025 county legislative priorities list. During the business meeting at the conference CCAP members will vote, both in person and virtually, on the 2025 county legislative priorities during the business meeting of the conference, in addition to consideration of the Association's 2025 action plan and other association business. Information on the voting matters will be emailed to the CCAP membership in advance of the conference.

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