

# LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

## COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA THE VOICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

### COUNTY PRIORITIES SPOTLIGHT: COUNTY PRIORITY ISSUES LEFT IN LIMBO AS STATE BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUE

As this Bulletin was published, FY 2024-2025 budget negotiations were ongoing.

Media reports have indicated a working target may be emerging for the FY 2024-2025 budget with a total spending amount likely to be slightly less than Governor Shapiro's \$48.3 billion proposal, although no final agreement has been released. Both chambers have moved vehicles for the FY 2024-2025 appropriations legislation through their respective chambers of origin, with both chambers not set to return until July 1, indicating the state budget will not be completed ahead as the new fiscal year begins. Updates follow below on the status of matters of particular importance to counties.

#### **Mental health funding**

As budget negotiators work to determine how to fund initiatives without a new revenue source, counties continue to strongly advocate for a \$250 million funding increase to county mental health services in the state budget as one of their top legislative priorities for 2024. This increase would directly address the critical need to invest in coordinated mental health services that can be used to address the highest needs in each community, including coordinating with schools, hospitals, providers, law enforcement and other complex needs not covered by other programs or services. A significant investment in county mental health services is needed to bolster and support the broader system and ensure other investments in mental health, including school-based and crisis services, foundational programs, prevention services, follow-up care and a workforce to support those parts of the system.

#### **Elections**

Another county budget priority is funding and resources for elections. Counties support efforts by the General Assembly and the Governor to include additional state funding in the budget to assist counties with their rising costs for operating elections and for the ability to increase and train elections staff. Additional funding for the Election Integrity Grant Program would allow for more grant funding to counties for election administration and security, though counties caution that administrative requirements tied to that funding, such as requiring pre-canvassing to continue without interruption on Election Day until complete, can diminish the value of these resources.

#### **911**

Additionally, while not a fiscal issue, counties urge quick action on updating provisions of the 911 statute to fit in line with NG911 standards, best practices and additional requirements. Specifically, counties are requesting the adoption of language contained in [HB 1854](#) (Rep. Jared Solomon, D-Philadelphia), which would clarify provisions related to GIS information, call routing and addressing and ensure caller personal information can be protected. This language is a product of multiple stakeholder discussions between

counties, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Association (PEMA), the Association Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) and the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Emergency Numbers Association (NENA).

Other priority issues on the table during June legislative and budget discussions include:

- \$15 million in one-time funding for renovation costs to bring existing buildings up to the required standards to serve as regional juvenile facilities to address counties' juvenile detention crisis priority.
- Consideration of SB 525 (Sen. Cris Dush, R-Cameron), which supports county Right-to-Know Law priorities, allow government agencies to petition the Office of Open Records (OOR) for relief from a requestor that the agency alleges is a vexatious requestor.
- \$2.5 million in state funding for county cybersecurity efforts, particularly around maintenance of funding following the federal state and local cybersecurity program.

Counties look forward to a prompt and successful completion of the state budget so they can continue to fulfill critical responsibilities to their residents who rely on the programs and services they provide in local communities that are supported by state funding. More information on counties' top 2024 legislative priorities can be found on the [Priorities webpage](#). Additional details of the budget will be posted on the Budget News [webpage](#) of the CCAP website as they become available.

---

## **FIRE AND EMS GRANT PROGRAM DISCUSSIONS ONGOING**

Throughout June, the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee held several informational meetings and working sessions on [HB 2407](#), sponsored by Rep. Jared Solomon (D-Philadelphia). House Bill 2407 would reauthorize and expand the Fire Company and EMS (FCEMS) Grant Program, which is set to expire June 30, 2024. On June 27, the House approved HB 2407 with a vote of **102-100**. The Senate passed [SB 1099](#), sponsored by Sen. Doug Mastriano (R-Franklin), earlier this month, which contained a slightly different proposal to reauthorize the grant program.

Currently, the FCEMS Grant Program provides roughly \$31.5 million in state funding to fire, rescue and EMS companies, and fire and EMS advocates have urged additional funding. To that end, Gov. Shapiro, in his FY 2024-2025 proposed budget, requested an additional \$30 million for this program to help these critical first responder entities. Proposals on the table include expansion of the current fire and EMS companies that are eligible for the grants as well as considerations for funding to hazardous material entities and special teams.

At the time this Bulletin was published goes to press, negotiations on specific program details and allocations are ongoing and are predicted to be finalized as part of the broader state budget picture.

---

## **GEOBOARD SET TO BE REAUTHORIZED AHEAD OF SUNSET**

During the final week of June, [SB 1138](#), sponsored by Sen. Lynda Schlegel Culver (R-Columbia), was unanimously reported by the House State Government Committee, advancing to the House floor.

This bill extends the sunset of the State Geospatial Coordinating Board (GeoBoard) by four years, as the board is set to sunset on June 30, 2024. The Board's primary objective is to offer advice and recommendations to the Governor and citizens on geospatial matters. It aims to establish uniform data standards, enhance coordination, and improve efficiency in geospatial policy and technology issues across federal and local government agencies. Counties support reauthorization of the GeoBoard, as geospatial data is critical in informing decisions related to 911 and emergency services, workforce development, and land management.

At the time the Bulletin was published, SB 1138 was slated to be considered for final passage on June 28, which would subsequently send the bill to the Governor's desk.

## STUDY PROPOSED TO INVESTIGATE COURT FUNDING

**House Resolution 416**, introduced by Rep. Dan Miller (D-Allegheny), was unanimously reported by the House Judiciary Committee on June 24. This resolution mandates the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) conduct a study and report to the General Assembly on the court system's reliance on fines for operational funding at both the state and local level. The report will also project future trends in this reliance and provide recommendations for legislative actions aimed at reducing or eliminating this dependency.

Recent trends indicate a significant reliance on increasing civil and criminal court fees, alongside Act 49 surcharges, to augment the judiciary's budget, which represents less than 1% of the state's total budget. Despite this small share, Act 49 fees have grown substantially, from \$28 million to \$85 million between 2016-17 and 2022-23, respectively. While the judiciary's budget is designated at the state level, it is essential as a primary funding source for counties local court systems. This rise has occurred amidst flat or declining revenue elsewhere, underscoring financial challenges in funding the court system. These financial dynamics raise concerns about the sustainability of funding sources and their potential impacts on access to justice and court operations in Pennsylvania.

The LBFC must submit the findings and recommendations of the report to the General Assembly no later than 18 months after the adoption of the resolution.

---

## DATA BREACH AMENDMENT SENT TO GOVERNOR

On June 26, the General Assembly sent Gov. Shapiro legislation to update the Breach of Personal Information Notification Act (BOPINA). Specifically, **SB 824**, sponsored by Sen. Tracy Pennycuik (R-Montgomery), would require notice to the Attorney General when notification of the breach of the security of the system is sent to more than 500 affected individuals. Further, the bill would require an entity subject to a breach provide notification and access to an individual of independent credit report monitoring services at no cost for one year. This revision further builds upon BOPINA updates from **Act 151 of 2022**, which defined parameters around notification when breach of security of a data system is determined to have occurred.

---

## CCAP SUPPORT FOR FEDERAL SPECTRUM AND NATIONAL DEFENSE ACT

Pennsylvania counties recently expressed support for **S.4307**, the Spectrum and National Security Act of 2024, introduced by Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA). The bill contains several key priorities for counties, including funding for the Affordable Connectivity Program and Next Generation-911 Implementation Grants.

This legislation is urgently needed to improve county emergency services technology and to provide more affordable broadband for Pennsylvania residents. The Affordable Connectivity Program is a critical program for Pennsylvania that provides important support to households who would otherwise be unable to afford internet subscriptions. This program serves nearly 800,000 Pennsylvania households and has provided nearly \$455 million in funding to the commonwealth, saving residents \$22 million per month on their internet bills. The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority has undertaken significant work in planning and implementing federal funding to Pennsylvania; however, our statewide plans depend on sustainable access to affordable broadband.

Furthermore, Pennsylvania counties, in coordination with the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA), are in the middle of transitioning Pennsylvania's 911 system to the NG911 system, with an anticipated completion of the transition later this fall. The NG911 implementation grants in this legislation would be immensely helpful to Pennsylvania as counties and their state partners at PEMA operate a sophisticated and modern 911 communications system that serves more than 13 million Pennsylvanians. County 911 centers operate around the clock and are staffed with highly trained

professionals who are the “first of the first responders” and guide callers through what may be the worst moment of their lives. Supporting NG911 implementation is critical to the public safety of our commonwealth.

S. 4307 is currently under consideration by the Senate Commerce, Science, and Technology Committee. A planned mark-up that would move the legislation forward has been rescheduled for a later date, making it unclear what the timeline for consideration will be for this critical legislation.

---

[Other CCAP Publications](#)

CCAP | PO Box 60769 | Harrisburg, PA 17106-0769 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!