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LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA
THE VOICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

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CCAP PRESIDENT REFLECTS ON GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS AHEAD OF PRIORITIES ANNOUNCEMENT

At the start of my presidency, I am eager to carry on that thread of the collective voice through the mission and vision of CCAP. As the recognized leader for Pennsylvania county government, CCAP is the unifying voice of all Pennsylvania counties, providing leadership and support for excellence in county government.

Pennsylvania counties have a nearly 240-year history of partnership with the commonwealth in a wide variety of areas, including public safety, elections, human services, property and taxation, transportation, and many others. As the state and counties continue to face a wide variety of challenges and opportunities – both fiscal and programmatic – the county voice and county experience can be extremely valuable as policy is made in Harrisburg, but only if it is early enough to appreciate the details and how they fit into the big picture of service delivery. Counties cannot do it all alone, and we look forward to continuing to build on the many positive relationships with various governors, administrations, agencies, and General Assemblies we have had.

Counties will be announcing their 2025 legislative priorities on **January 29**. These priorities will reflect the most critical issues that counties across the commonwealth currently face. Achieving these priorities will assure that counties can continue to carry out the important services and functions that serve communities spanning all 67 counties in Pennsylvania.

As we begin 2025, my hope is to carry on and strengthen the trend of intergovernmental partnership, ensuring counties are invited to the table during decision-making processes

when seeking to change aspects of the state-county partnership. Counties stand at the ready to continue discussions with the legislature and Governor Shapiro on all issues important to counties, identifying ways to continue building the state-county partnership in these areas of critical service provision.

Sincerely,

Sherene Hess, Indiana County Commissioner, 2025 CCAP President

2025-2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION IS UNDERWAY

On January 7, the 2025-2026 legislative session began with the swearing-in of newly elected and re-elected members of the Senate and House of Representatives. While the days' events were mostly ceremonial in nature, both the Senate and House took several important actions to organize their respective chambers by setting each chambers' rules for this legislative session. Sen. Kim Ward (R-Westmoreland), a former Westmoreland County Commissioner and CCAP alum, was re-elected by members of the Senate to serve a second two-year term as President Pro Tempore of the Senate. In the House, Rep. Joanna McClinton (D-Philadelphia) was re-elected by members of the House to also serve a second two-year term as Speaker of the House of Representatives. Also of note, Sen. Wayne Langerholc (R-Cambria) was elected by the Republican Caucus to serve as Majority Whip this session following the resignation of former Sen. Ryan Aument (R-Lancaster), who resigned his seat earlier this month to become State Director for U.S. Senator Dave McCormick.

County governments are valuable partners for the state legislature and stand ready to work together with the General Assembly on policy issues that impact our shared constituents and the future of our state. Whether through administration of elections, the courts and corrections system, provision of human services to people in need in our communities, emergency management and 911 services, environmental and land use planning and protection of open space, maintenance of county bridges, or administration of the county property assessment rolls, counties directly impact Pennsylvanians' quality of life each and every day.

On behalf of CCAP, congratulations to all the newly elected and returning members as you begin this legislative session. Counties look forward to working with you in the year ahead to solve problems and enact sound legislative and policy solutions for our mutual constituents across Pennsylvania.

BID LIMITATIONS THRESHOLD UPDATE

The 2025 annual adjustments to the bid limit thresholds and telephonic quote thresholds under the County Code and Second Class County Code were published in the December 28, 2024, issue of the **Pennsylvania Bulletin**.

Act 86 of 2011 increased bid limit thresholds and telephonic quote thresholds under the County Code to \$18,500 and \$10,000, respectively, with an annual adjustment for inflation thereafter; the thresholds were increased to the same levels in the Second Class County Code under Act 89 of 2011. The state Department of Labor and Industry has advised that the consumer price index percentage change for the 12-month period ending September 30, 2024, is 2.4% and thus the bid limit thresholds and telephone quote thresholds that take effect January 1, 2025, will be \$23,800 and \$12,900, respectively.

OFFICE OF OPEN RECORDS RELEASES 2024 REPORT

Late last year, the Office of Open Records (OOR) released an **report** examining Right-to-Know Law (RTKL) practices across government agency websites. The report shed light on the significant administrative challenges agencies face, driven by a 272% increase in appeals to the OOR since the law's inception in 2009. The surge highlights the growing demand for public information and the strain it places on government resources, particularly at the county level.

The report revealed that nearly 50% of Agency Open Records Officers (AOROs) identified for-profit businesses as the primary source of RTKL requests, surpassing citizens and other groups. The commercial requests span a range of industries, including real estate, technology companies, and law and insurance firms.

AOROs expressed strong support for proposed reforms to the RTKL, noting that such changes could greatly benefit their agencies. Nearly 73% believe regulating vexatious would have a positive impact, while 81% support introducing labor fees for commercial requestors. These reforms would help address some of the challenges posed by the growing volume and complexity of RTKL requests.

The OOR report also offers a range of best practices for RTKL compliance, which government agencies are encouraged to adopt. AOROs proposed alternative reforms to enhance efficiency and fairness in the RTKL process. These recommendations aim to modernize the RTKL framework while preserving its core principle of transparency and public access.

The General Assembly has been actively working to address the RTKL issues raised by counties and other agencies, particularly regarding vexatious requesters and requests for commercial purposes. As the 2025-2026 legislative session begins, counties remain committed to pursuing RTKL reforms that uphold transparency and accountability while addressing these challenges.

IFO ISSUES 2024 IMPACT FEE ESTIMATES

On December 9, the Independent Fiscal Office (IFO) released estimates of shale gas impact fee collections for calendar year 2024, which producers will remit in April 2025. Based on production data and recent natural gas prices, the IFO is estimating that collections will be \$163.8 million, representing a \$15.8 million (-8.8%) decrease of collections over the prior year. The decrease is due in large part to a decrease in the number of new wells that pay the highest fee and help offset reduced collections from older wells. According to the IFO's analysis, the number of wells that will be drilled in 2024 is expected to have declined by 103 wells (-25%) from the prior year, which is the lowest number since 2007. The full **report** is available on the IFO website.

The exact effect on overall revenue collections – and therefore, on local government distributions, which will occur around July 1 – will not be known until after the April 1 collection deadline. Information on Act 13 payments will be available on the Public Utility Commission's (PUC) **website** in mid-June.

IFO RELEASES DECEMBER REVENUES

The IFO also released the monthly revenue **update** for December 2024, showing that General Fund collections for the month totaled \$3.77 billion, which was \$36 million (1.0%) less than the IFO's official estimate. The shortfall is in large part the result of delayed collections of \$30 million for licenses and fees, which are now expected to be deposited in January. December 2024 collections were \$74 million (2.0%) higher than during the same month of the previous year.

Year-to-date state revenues for FY 2024-2025 through the end of December continue to outperform the IFO's official estimate by \$83 million (0.4%) for a total of \$20.17 billion. Higher-than-expected receipts from the corporate net income tax continue to be the driving factor for year-to-date collections exceeding the IFO's estimate. Additionally, year-to-date collections are \$330 million (1.7%) higher compared to this time last year.

NACo ACCEPTING INTERIM POLICY RESOLUTIONS

The National Association of Counties (NACo) 2025 Legislative Conference will be held in person in Washington, D.C. March 1-4, 2025. During the conference, NACo's ten policy

steering committees will meet to consider adoption of interim policy resolutions that will guide NACo advocacy until the Annual Conference in July. NACo invites submissions for interim policy resolutions via email to resolutions@naco.org. Additional details are available on the NACo Legislative Conference [webpage](#).

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