

# LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

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

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## COUNTY PRIORITIES SPOTLIGHT: 911 REAUTHORIZATION

With only a handful of legislative session days remaining in the 2023-2024 legislative session, counties continue to advocate for passage of [HB 1854](#). This bill makes necessary updates to [Chapter 53](#) of Title 35, otherwise known as the 911 statute, that are critical as NextGen911 (NG911) continues to be implemented across the commonwealth.

Key provisions in HB 1854 include 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, among a number of other key provisions. The bill also extends the PEMA financial audit period for each Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) from every two years to every three years. HB 1854 is the product of more than a year of stakeholder discussions and while time is limited and more work needs to be done heading into 2025, enough scheduled session days remain this fall to advance this critical public safety legislation to Governor Shapiro's desk for approval before the session ends.

Counties maintain that time is of the essence and urge the General Assembly to act swiftly on HB 1854 and provide the updates necessary to bring the 911 statute up to date as NG911 and technologies continue to evolve.

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## FALL SESSION BEGINS AS SENATE RETURNS

On Monday, September 16, the Senate reconvened to commence its fall legislative session. Several critical proposals are expected to be on the agenda with transportation funding at the forefront, as both chambers have conducted public hearings advocating for increased funding. Counties are closely monitoring various legislative priorities this fall, including reforms to the Right-to-Know Law and updates to the next-generation 911 system.

During this session week, the House held a special election on Tuesday, which resulted in Democrats maintaining control of the chamber. Two candidates successfully filled the vacancies left by former Representatives Bullock and Kinsey in the 195th and 201st districts, respectively. Andre Carroll secured the seat in the 201st district, while Keith Harris won the seat in the 195th district.

In the Senate, several pieces of legislation with implications for counties passed this week. Of particular note are two bills introduced by Senator Baker (R-Luzerne) on Monday, which address recommendations from the Juvenile Justice Task Force Report. **Senate Bill 169** seeks to shorten the timeline for disposition hearings in juvenile cases, while **Senate Bill 170** addresses the expungement of juvenile criminal records, reducing the eligibility timeline for expungement in specific cases.

The Senate also passed **Senate Bill 173**, introduced by Senator Wayne Langerholc (R-Cambria), to create a Safe Exchange Zone Program. This initiative establishes a grant program to assist local municipalities in setting up designated areas for safe exchanges, aimed at individuals meeting for online transactions or custody exchanges. The program is designed to enhance safety by providing secure, public locations in close proximity to law enforcement, reducing the risk of potential threats in close proximity to law enforcement. Participation in the program will be voluntary, with approval required from local law enforcement agencies.

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## GOVERNOR SIGNS EXECUTIVE ORDER ESTABLISHING HOUSING ACTION PLAN

On September 12, Governor Shapiro signed an **executive order** directing the Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED) to address the commonwealth's housing shortage and enhance affordable housing options while tackling homelessness. This order mandates the creation of a Housing Action plan within DCED, developed in collaboration with the Department of Human services and other key agencies and stakeholders. The objective is to implement strategies that will increase and preserve the housing supply across the commonwealth.

The executive order took effect immediately, giving DCED one year to present a draft plan to the Governor. The Housing Action Plan will focus on several critical areas, including declining homeownership, rising housing costs, and homelessness. It will assess state-wide, regional, and local housing needs, and will include recommended strategic initiatives to be implemented over the next five years. This plan further aligns with the Pennsylvania's Ten-Year **Strategic Plan** for Economic Development, which underscores the importance of housing as a key factor in economic growth.

Counties play a pivotal role in addressing homelessness through the administration of the Homeless Assistance Program (HAP), a county-led initiative that provides essential services aimed at preventing homelessness. HAP offers a range of supports to help individuals access care, find refuge, and ultimately work toward self-sufficiency. As a top priority for counties, they are dedicated to collaborating closely with the state to ensure the success and sustainability of these efforts, strengthening the overall well-being and stability of communities across Pennsylvania.

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## IFO RELEASES COUNTY INCOME PATTERNS

The states Independent Fiscal Office (IFO) released its annual [research brief](#) on county income patterns. This research brief analyzes demographic and income trends in Pennsylvania counties from 2019 to 2022, focusing on per capita personal income growth and levels for 2022. During this period, the state's population declined slightly, with the most significant growth occurring in south-central counties like Cumberland, while the northern, central, and southwestern regions saw population contractions. Personal income growth varied, with Chester County experiencing the highest increase (8.8%) and Philadelphia County with the lowest (0.8%).

Counties with stronger population growth typically saw higher income gains. Social security and disability benefits accounted for a larger share of income with older populations, such as Forest and Cameron, while maintenance benefits were most prevalent in Philadelphia, Fayette, and Forest counties. Per capita personal income grew by an average of 5.5% per year statewide, with Chester and Montgomery counties leading in growth. For 2022, per capita income ranged from \$39,100 in Mifflin County to \$102,600 in Chester County, with the highest levels found in the Pittsburgh and Philadelphia metro regions, although cost of living is not factored into these figures.

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## LEGISLATIVE REPORT EXAMINES SOLAR DEVELOPMENT ON FARMLAND

The Center for Rural Pennsylvania recently published a legislative [report](#) focused on the impact of utility-scale solar development on Pennsylvania farmland. As the majority of solar energy projects in the commonwealth are sited on agricultural land, the report examines the economic, social and environmental effects of utility-scale solar development on farms, farming practices, and rural communities.

With the fall legislative session now underway, several proposals aligned with the report's recommendations await further action in both chambers. The House passed [HB 1842](#), a community solar bill introduced by Rep. Peter Schweyer (D-Lehigh) in March and is now awaiting consideration in the Senate Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee. Additionally, in 2023, the House approved [House Resolution 224](#), directing the Joint State Government Commission to produce a report on agrivoltaic farming in Pennsylvania.

More information about this report and other research and data offered by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania can be found [here](#).

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## DISASTER PREPAREDNESS WEBINAR FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

U.S. Senator Robert Casey's office, in collaboration with the National Weather Service, Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, is hosting a webinar to provide information on community preparedness and recovery natural disasters, with a focus on flooding. The webinar will cover key topics such as flood warning services, state disaster recovery programs, hazard mitigation funding, and the role of floodplain management in building resilient communities. This event is an important opportunity for community leaders and emergency planners to access valuable resources and insights to strengthen local disaster readiness.

Register for the webinar by using the [link](#) provided.

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