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# LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA  
THE VOICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

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## COUNTY PRIORITIES SPOTLIGHT: SENATE PASSES ADDITIONAL BUDGET BILLS

The state Senate returned to session on August 30 to consider several pieces of legislation that would provide additional implementation details for the FY 2023-2024 state budget. As noted in prior issues of the *Bulletin*, the Governor signed HB 611, the general appropriations bill for the fiscal year, in early August. However, the General Assembly and Governor have not completed work on what are known as the Code bills, those pieces of legislation that provide authorizing language for how certain funding in the budget is to be used.

The Senate considered two different Fiscal Code bills, **HB 1300** (Rep. Thomas Mehaffie, R-Dauphin) and **SB 757** (Sen. Patrick Stefano, R-Fayette). Among the provisions of HB 1300, which was approved by a vote of 29-18, was a clause confirming that counties will see a \$20 million increase in mental health base funds this fiscal year, and that those funds must be used for mental health services. Senate Bill 757, approved by a vote of 28-19, contains language related to education funding and the Lifeline Scholarship program, which became a point of debate during the passage of the original budget bills earlier this summer.

However, neither bill included language specifying how the \$100 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars, repurposed from adult mental health to school mental health under HB 611, nor the \$7.5 million in new funding for indigent defense, are to be spent, so additional legislation will be needed before those dollars can be used.

While both HB 1300 and SB 757 now move to the House for further consideration, it is unclear what action the House may take on either bill or any remaining budget language needed upon their return later this month. CCAP will continue to monitor and post updates on any further budget movement on the Budget News [webpage](#).

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## GENERAL ASSEMBLY SET TO RETURN LATER THIS MONTH

The legislative summer recess is coming to an end, as both the Senate and the House are scheduled to return to voting session on September 18 and 26, respectively. As Pennsylvania approaches the halfway point of this two-year session, several bills and topics important to counties remain before the General Assembly.

Among these is a bill that would provide options for counties to meet legal advertising requirements, including the use of a government entity's publicly available website.

**Senate Bill 231**, sponsored by Sen. John DiSanto (R-Dauphin), would allow counties to create a consistent and reliable place to post their advertisements, while also allowing for modernization, efficiency and cost savings that fits the changing way people look for and receive information. Senate Bill 231 currently sits in the Senate Local Government Committee for consideration.

Also in the Senate Local Government Committee is **HB 298**, sponsored by Rep. Patrick Harkins (D-Erie), which would amend the County Pension Law to permit counties to grant COLAs to their retirees up to, but no more than, the applicable CPI adjustment. While current law allows a county to approve a COLA at the CPI rate, the legislation would offer counties additional flexibility to offer a COLA adjustment that is prudent for their pension system, without having to keep it in line with the CPI rate. Counties would maintain the option on whether to offer a COLA, as they currently have, at the discretion of the County Pension Board.

With more than 1,500 bills introduced in the House and more than 800 in the Senate, CCAP will continue to provide updates during the fall session on legislation important to counties through the **Legislative Bulletin**, member notes and calls to action.

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## SENATE COMMITTEE CONSIDERS MOVING PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY IN 2024

On August 30, the Senate State Government Committee held a voting meeting to consider **SB 224**, sponsored by Sen. David Argall (R-Schuylkill). The bill would amend the Election Code to move the primary in a presidential election year to the third Tuesday of March. The bill was amended in committee to move only the 2024 election, to March 19 instead of the fourth Tuesday of April. However, committee discussion indicated there may be consideration of other dates for the 2024 primary as the bill moves forward. The bill now sits before the full Senate for further consideration. In the House, State Government Committee Chairman Rep. Scott Conklin (D-Centre) indicated his desire to consider both SB 224 as well as **HB 1634**, sponsored by Rep. Malcolm Kenyatta (D-Philadelphia), which would move the primary date to April 2.

While counties do not have a position on whether the presidential primary election should be moved, or to what date, counties note that the logistical window to properly plan and implement changes for the spring of 2024 – such as moving thousands of polling places, rescheduling tens of thousands of poll workers and preparing petition packets and other materials – is rapidly closing as preparations to administer the November municipal election and related post-election tasks ramp up in the coming weeks. To that end, counties urge the General Assembly and Governor Shapiro, if the primary date is to be changed, to make that determination as soon as possible so counties can begin the process of shifting election logistics and informing voters and candidates of those timeframes and deadline adjustments.

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## STATE REVENUE UPDATE

After the initial two months of the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the Department of Revenue has reported year-to-date in-state revenue collections totaling \$5.7 billion, about \$65.4 million ahead of estimates. Revenues for August alone amounted to \$2.9 billion or 0.3% more than expected, with the state's three primary general fund revenue sources, the personal income tax (PIT), the sales and use tax and the corporation tax, all resulting in above-estimate revenues.

Year-to-date revenues from PIT amount to more than \$2.2 billion, which is 0.5% less than anticipated, while sales and use tax collections reached \$1.1 billion, or 1.4% less than anticipated. However, corporation taxes exceeded estimates to date by 13%, totaling \$326.8 million so far this year. Other state general fund sources performed variably, with the realty transfer tax collections weaker than anticipated, likely due to limited housing supply, and cigarette tax collections also came in lower than expected in August at \$76.9

million, which is 8.8% less than estimated. Inheritance tax and treasury collections outperformed expectations at 128.7 million and 71.8 million respectively. Finally, non-tax revenue amounted to a fiscal year-to-date total of \$185.2 million, which is well above the original \$145.3 million estimate.

The full revenue update can be viewed on the Independent Fiscal Office's [website](#).

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## SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL RECOVERY MONTH

September marks National Recovery Month, a time for individuals, families, groups and organizations across the country to share their stories and raise awareness of substance use conditions, celebrate individuals in recovery and acknowledge the work of prevention, treatment and recovery support services.

In addition, the Pennsylvania Association of County Drug and Alcohol Administrators (PACDAA), a CCAP affiliate, will host its ninth annual [Courage to Change Recovery Advocacy Day](#) at the state Capitol in Harrisburg on September 19. A media event will be held in the main rotunda of the Capitol at noon that day with members of the recovery community and will include remarks from several legislators. More information about the event can be found on the Recovery Advocacy Day Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/recoveryadvocacy](http://www.facebook.com/recoveryadvocacy).

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