

HARRISBURG OVERVIEW:

The House and Senate kicked off the second half of the two-year legislative cycle on January 4th. Keep in mind that any bill that was introduced last year has until the end of 2022 to get through the legislative process and onto the Governor's desk. If a bill does not make it across the finish line by November 30th, it is effectively dead and will have to be reintroduced in the following session.

On February 8th, Governor Wolf gave his eighth and final budget address, proposing a \$43.7 billion plan. The plan was similar to his previous budget addresses and once again calls for more education spending (\$1.55 billion) and a staggered minimum wage increase over the next several years (raising it to \$12/hour on July 1, 2022 and additional \$.50 increases every year until reaching \$15 in 2028).

Shortly after the budget address, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees held their annual budget hearings with each of the state agencies. The purpose of the budget hearings was to review the agencies' work from last year, upcoming projects this year and see how the Governor's budget proposal aligns with the agencies' needs.

The General Assembly has until June 30th to pass a balanced budget.

Redistricting

Another major topic of discussion in the Capitol halls is redistricting. On December 16th, the PA Legislative Reapportionment Commission approved **preliminary state maps** for the House and Senate.

Under the state constitution, anyone can challenge the maps with the state Supreme Court. Nine parties offered challenges to the maps, many noting their frustration with the number of incumbent Republicans who would have to face off against each other in the newly drawn district maps.

On March 16th, the state Supreme Court upheld the new legislative maps as constitutional, dismissing all nine challenges. The state legislative candidates were then given between March 18th and March 28th to collect signatures to qualify for the May 17th primary.

As for the **congressional reapportionment**, Pennsylvania lost one seat in the 2020 census, bringing the state down from 18 to 17 seats. Because the Governor and the General Assembly were gridlocked on what the congressional maps should look like, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court (Democratic majority) stepped in. In February, the courts heard arguments from all sides about which map to choose.

Simultaneously, several Pennsylvanians filed an emergency lawsuit with the U.S. Supreme Court, arguing that the state's Supreme Court should not be deciding the congressional map, instead arguing for an at-large congressional race.

On March 7th, the U.S. Supreme Court denied this effort, further allowing for maps selected by the state Supreme Court. The map that the court selected has 8 Republican-leaning districts, 6 Democrat-leaning districts, and 3 toss-up districts.

Gubernatorial Race

Governor Tom Wolf will be finishing his second term as Governor in 2022. Pennsylvanians will be electing a new Governor in November.

On the Democratic side, Josh Shapiro, the current Attorney General, is the official sole candidate and as of March, reported nearly \$20 million in his campaign account. Interesting to note that is the first time in at least 80 years that a Democrat, who was not an incumbent governor, ran unchallenged in a Pennsylvania gubernatorial primary.

On the Republican side, there are still 9 candidates, but some of the top front runners (according to recent polling by Eagle Consulting Group) include:

- Senator Doug Mastriano (State Senator from Franklin County)
- Bill McSwain (former U.S. Attorney)
- Lou Barletta (former U.S. Representative, from Hazleton)
- Dave White (HVAC business owner for 40+ years)

The top two candidates Mastriano and McSwain, are averaging around \$2 million each in funding. The Republican primary is scheduled for May 17th.

In addition to the gubernatorial race, all House district seats are up for election as well as half of the Senate districts (even numbered districts).

COUNTY FAIRS BUDGET LINE ITEM

So far, so good. The Pennsylvania County Fairs line item was fully funded again in the Governor's 2022-23 budget proposal at \$4,000,000.

We will continue to advocate with both Republicans and Democrats in the General Assembly to make sure this line item is protected in the final budget package.

While our prime champion, House Tourism Committee Chairman Dave Millard (R-Columbia), will be retiring next year, we still have plenty of support from members of the House and Senate Agriculture and Tourism Committees to help address the fairs' future needs.

PSSA PROJECT: DEPARTMENT OF STATE/SOLICITOR DEFINITION ISSUE

We are diligently working on a resolution regarding the Department of State (DOS)/solicitor issue. We have draft bill language that would amend the definitions of "professional solicitors" and "solicitation" in Act 202 of 1990, with the goal of ensuring that showmen are not to be considered professional solicitors. If showmen were suddenly

classified as solicitors, they would have to register with the state and pay licensing fees, post bonds, and keep a registration of all contributors, which would completely change fundamental business operations for the showmen.

To address this issue with a stand-alone bill, it would likely be referred to the House Finance Committee. So at the end of January, we met with committee staff to discuss the issue in detail. They noted that they were not aware of the DOS investigating any other “violators” of Act 202. But they did make a few recommendations for next steps: (1) Meet with Representative John Lawrence (R-Chester) since he represents the Houghton’s (2) Review Representative Torren Ecker’s HB 1973, which also amends the Solicitors Act, to see if we could utilize it as a potential vehicle for our language.

In February, Jeff Good joined us on a call with Representative John Lawrence, where we requested that he sponsor our draft language. While he was not opposed to bill introduction and seemed VERY supportive of the showmen, he respectfully noted that he would like to review the case in more detail since this was the first he was hearing of the issue. In the meantime, he recommended reaching out to House Republican Policy Committee Chairman Marty Causer (R-McKean) about a potential policy hearing and/or drafting a letter to the DOS to seek clarification.

Shortly after the conversation with Representative Lawrence, we met with the House Republican Policy Committee staff to see if they would be willing to hold a hearing with DOS and the Showmen to highlight the issue. While they didn’t seem completely opposed to the idea, they didn’t believe that DOS would be very receptive to appearing before the committee while there is an ongoing court case. As a next step, they also recommended trying the letter route.

We drafted a letter, requested Wayne Pierce and Jeff Good’s review, and shared with Representative Lawrence, asking if he could send on our behalf to DOS.

On March 29th, we met with Representative Ecker to discuss his bill language (HB 1973) and see if there’s an opportunity for collaboration. He agreed to amend the bill with our language. We will now push for committee consideration of the amendment and bill.

OTHER LEGISLATION

Broadband Legislation

Several legislators introduced bills this session to address internet access throughout rural areas of the state.

Of note, Representative Marty Causer (R-McKean) sponsored [HB 2071](#). This bill amends Title 64 (Public Authorities and Quasi-Public Corporations) to create a Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority, which would help develop a state plan for addressing broadband expansion issues across the Commonwealth. In December 2021, the bill passed the House and Senate with unanimous votes and was signed into law as Act 96 of 2022.

Meanwhile, the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 provided each state with at least \$100 million for broadband expansion. So now the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority can utilize these funds in their state plan.

Tourism Bills

Representative Karen Boback (R-Luzerne) has introduced a couple pieces of legislation that will help enhance the state's tourism industry.

- [**HB 828**](#): Creates an Independent PA Tourism Commission (a public-private partnership) for the purpose of serving as the state's tourism marketing agency. This is currently one of the roles the Department of Community and Economic Development.
- [**HB 829**](#): Dedicates 1% of the current 6% state hotel occupancy tax for the purpose of supporting tourism marketing, museums and the arts. 60% would go towards marketing PA to out-of-state visitors, 40% for state grant programs for museums/arts, etc.

Both bills have been referred to the House Tourism and Recreational Development Committee. HB 829 passed out of the House Tourism Committee last June and is waiting for a full House floor vote.

Of course, we will keep you updated on these issues as they progress through the legislative process. In the meantime, please let us know if you have any questions or concerns.