CCAP members identified a total of seven priority issues for 2018. Grassroots activity on the priorities began following their adoption at the 2017 Fall Conference. After a formal announcement in January, officers and staff launched efforts to work with the General Assembly and the administration to introduce and advance proposals.

The current status is presented in priority order, as established by CCAP members:

**Human Services Funding and System Reform**
In early February, Gov. Wolf offered his $32.9 billion fiscal proposal for FY 2018-2019, which represents an increase of about $989.8 million, or 3.1 percent, over FY 2017-2018. Approximately $303 million of that increase is dedicated to new initiatives, including a $225 million increase in education funding, with $100 million of that allocated for basic education, as well as a new $50 million workforce development initiative. The remaining increase represents mandatory costs in the state budget, nearly half to meet the actuarially required contribution for the state and school pension systems.

From the county perspective, the governor’s proposal represents generally level funding across line items, particularly in human services. The proposal includes several positive elements, such as a $16 million waiting list initiative to move individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism into services. In addition, the governor’s budget plan addresses the opioid epidemic, another county priority, with $26.5 million for year two of federal Cures Act funding, focused on expanding access to treatment services and a $2 million allocation to expand drug courts. However, while counties’ priority specifically calls for restoration of the ten percent aggregate cut in FY 2012-2013 to seven key human services line items that impact core services in all 67 counties, Gov. Wolf’s proposal does not include any increases in these lines.

Counties also seek increased state funding for county children and youth agencies struggling to deal with increases in referrals and workloads following nearly 30 new child welfare laws enacted in 2015 as well as the impact of the opioid epidemic on families and children. The governor’s proposal for FY 2018-2019 includes an increase of $44.5 million in state funds, based on the counties’ needs-based budgets. An additional $4 million is proposed to provide for evidence-based home visiting services, which the Department of Human Services estimates will be able to serve approximately 800 families and is meant to assist with addressing the impacts of the opioid epidemic. Finally, $500,000 is being requested to provide for cross-system trainings to improve cooperation between child welfare and other human services.
The governor’s plan again recommends consolidation of several state agencies, including the restructuring of the current Health and Human Services agencies into the Department of Health and Human Services. Unlike his FY 2017-2018 proposal, however, this restructuring would not include the departments of Aging or Drug and Alcohol Programs. In 2017, CCAP noted that counties are committed to exploring opportunities to incorporate strong state-local partnerships and innovative approaches toward meeting county service goals, and identified basic and necessary components that must be in place prior to implementation of a unified model. The 2018 county priority also reflects the intention to seek a partnership with the General Assembly and administration on program reform, including efforts for better planning and integration of services.

Ultimately, counties’ overarching theme for this year’s policy and budget objectives is to emphasize the state-county partnership in service delivery, recognizing that a mutual understanding of that partnership can yield a promise of effective and responsible delivery of constituent services. CCAP has provided members and legislators with an analysis of the budget and its impact on counties, which is available on CCAP’s Budget News and Updates web page. That analysis has also been provided to Appropriations Committee chairs and leadership in both chambers.

**Preventing Substance Abuse and Drug Overdose**

At the beginning of 2018, Gov. Wolf declared a state of disaster emergency to combat the opioid and heroin crisis, including the creation of an Opioid Operational Command Center within the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency to monitor progress and implementation of the initiatives within the declaration. Among other measures, the Governor indicated that the declaration would allow for waivers of the face-to-face physician requirement for narcotic treatment program admissions, enable certified registered nurse practitioners and physician assistants to do intake review, and expand treatment programs to allow dosing at satellite centers. Emergency service providers are also enabled to leave the rescue drug naloxone with people after responding to an overdose call, and organizations like prisons and treatment programs are allowed to make naloxone available to at-risk individuals when discharged from these facilities. The declaration further waives annual licensing requirements for high-performing drug and alcohol facilities to permit a bi-annual process, and waives separate licensing requirements for hospitals to expand access to drug and alcohol treatment.

In addition, state officials have announced the launch of a new interactive data reporting system to provide information on opioid prescribing and drug overdoses. This system will give the state’s opioid command center real-time assistance in identifying communities experiencing spikes in overdoses and enable the command center to respond quickly with state resources. The data would be collected through the Department of Health’s prescription drug monitoring program, using information reported by prescribers and data from emergency departments across Pennsylvania. Of the 171 emergency rooms in the state, approximately 152 are currently submitting reports as part of the system.
In the General Assembly, the Senate unanimously approved SB 978, introduced by Sen. Lisa Baker (R-Luzerne), in January, which would allow home health and hospice staff to dispose of a patient’s unused prescription medications after the individual’s death or discharge, with permission of the patient or family member, rather than returning them to the patient’s estate with the risk that they might later be sold or abused. In the House, members highlighted legislation (HB 18, Rep. Ryan Mackenzie, R-Lehigh; SB 936, Sen. Don White, R-Indiana) that would consider changes to the formularies that may be prescribed for work-related injuries for those receiving workers’ compensation benefits.

Counties also continue to offer input and solutions to substance abuse and drug overdose issues in other ways, such as the development and distribution of a “warm handoff” protocol with local emergency departments and the College of Emergency Room Physicians to help get overdose survivors directly into treatment of addiction.

A report of the advisory committee on addiction treatment services, established under SR 267 of 2015, to the Joint State Government Commission, was published in early February, reviewing the current services and programs available to Pennsylvania residents who are suffering from substance abuse disorders. It offers background data and information on the scope of drug overdoses in Pennsylvania and the U.S., examines the costs associated with substance abuse disorders and provides a comprehensive review of the many types of treatments currently in use by withdrawal management, treatment, and rehabilitation programs. Several members of CCAP’s affiliate, the Pennsylvania Association of County Drug and Alcohol Administrators (PACDAA), participating in the advisory committee, and the report is available at jsg.legis.state.pa.us.

On the national level, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) extended the opioid public health emergency issued by President Trump in October for another 90 days, through April. The declaration followed a recommendation made by the President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis, and enables the HHS Secretary to waive certain administrative regulations around treatment resources. In addition, the declaration allows greater abilities for states to use federal dollars to combat a public health crisis, although no new federal funds have been committed.

CCAP and its affiliate, the Pennsylvania Association of County Drug and Alcohol Administrators (PACDAA) continue to engage the General Assembly and state agencies to highlight the critical role of the Single County Authorities in prevention, intervention and treatment, including the need for additional state resources for increased local capacity, as well as the coordination and collaboration between state and local authorities to develop and implement a comprehensive approach.

Maintaining the Shale Gas Impact Fee
CCAP’s priority remains maintenance of the shale gas impact fee, complete and as it is now, with the ability to grow with the industry, and with the same distributions to impacted local governments, to all counties through the Legacy Fund, and to conservation districts and state agencies. As part of his FY 2018-2019 budget proposal, Gov. Wolf again called for a severance
tax in the commonwealth; rather than a percentage-based tax, though, the governor
recommended a flat tax per thousand cubic feet (Mcf) that would range from four cents when
natural gas prices range up to $3.00, to seven cents when natural gas prices are $6.00 or more.
In his proposal, the current impact fee under Act 13 of 2012 would remain unchanged.

While several severance tax bills have been reintroduced throughout this session, only HB 1401
has received a significant amount of consideration so far this legislative session, though it has
not been discussed since December 2017. The legislation, which has nearly 400 amendments
filed to it on the House floor, would impose a natural gas severance tax on top of the existing
Act 13 impact fee.

Increasing Forensic Bed Access for County Inmates with Mental Illness
With the growing concern expressed by counties over their inability to access state hospital
services for inmates with mental illness, CCAP’s Comprehensive Behavioral Health Task Force has
taken the lead on this priority, under the direction of the Human Services and Courts and
Corrections committees. The Task Force members have met several times to develop a basis for
a proposal, and will facilitate discussions among counties looking to suggest regional projects.
County jail administrators and third party health providers have also been engaged to both
educate and include them in key Task Force discussions surrounding the development of both
short-term and long-term strategies. The state Department of Human Services (DHS) has also
dedicated staff to ongoing participation in the Task Force’s activities, and a webinar will be
scheduled shortly to help counties understand the issue and their options. A breakout session is
scheduled for the CCAP Spring Conference to provide updates as well.

Immediately after the CCAP membership identified this issue as a priority, CCAP initiated
outreach to DHS, including discussions with Secretary Teresa Miller and Deputy Secretary Lynn
Kovich. Further engagement with the Department developed through a half day meeting with
the staff heading up the Department’s work to realign and address the bed shortage at the two
state hospitals – Norristown and Torrance – including the administrator of Norristown. In
addition, CCAP was provided an opportunity to be interviewed by PRM, a firm engaged by DHS
to prepare a strategy and report, which was published in January acknowledging the CCAP
suggestions. Additional meetings with DHS have resulted in a promise to consider regional and
local efforts whereby counties can identify options to have forensic services brought to their
inmates with support from the commonwealth for both clinical and supervisory staff costs.

Supporting Veterans Services
In January, the House and Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committees
held a joint hearing with the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) and other
veterans’ stakeholders to discuss the status of veterans’ services in the commonwealth.
Participants discussed current and future efforts for outreach to veterans about the programs
and services available to them, as well as the status of the state’s veterans homes.

A second round of applications was recently accepted by the DMVA for $800,000 in grants
through the Veterans’ Trust Fund that will be awarded in March 2018; as in the previous round,
this includes up to $150,000 for new, innovative or expanded programs or services offered by county veterans affairs directors, with an emphasis on veterans’ outreach and court services. Since its inception four years ago, the Trust Fund has awarded 98 grants collectively valued at nearly $2.2 million.

Gov. Wolf’s FY 2018-2019 budget proposal includes a request for an additional $500,000 for veterans outreach services and an additional $8 million for state veterans homes, but does not include $750,000 in funds previously allocated to the DMVA to help veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder. However, the administration has indicated that most veterans get mental health treatment through programs overseen by the Department of Human Services.

**Funding for Voting Systems**

In late 2017, CCAP CIO Rita Reynolds and Dauphin County election director Jerry Feaser testified at a joint public hearing of the Senate State Government and Senate Transportation committees on election cyber security, particularly as it relates to voter registration and voter fraud. During the course of that hearing, both Reynolds and Feaser highlighted the fact that the election equipment across the commonwealth is at least ten years old, while technologies are also advancing to offer higher degrees of security, and that state assistance will be needed to achieve certification for next generation systems and to perform upgrades. Their full testimony can be ready at [www.pacounties.org](http://www.pacounties.org) by clicking Legislative Action Center, then Legislative Testimony.

Further, the Joint State Government Commission (JSGC) released a study in December regarding the state’s voting technology, pursuant to [SR 394](http://www.pacounties.org) of 2016, which included findings and recommendations on current and future technologies and needed improvements, based on surveys of counties and the experiences in other states. Funding for voting systems was one of five recommendations made in the report, which also included changes to the Election Code to incentivize poll worker training, allow counties to consider actual voter participation levels when determining how many ballots to print, and improve election security and integrity. The full report is available at [jsg.legis.state.pa.us](http://jsg.legis.state.pa.us).

The Pennsylvania Department of State announced in February that all new voting systems purchased in the commonwealth will be required to use a voter-verifiable paper ballot or paper record of votes cast; the agency indicated the directive is necessary because it is in line with the latest equipment offered by manufacturers and allows counties to expand their auditing practices. However, the directive does not prohibit a county from purchasing equipment to support and maintain the county's current voting system for as long as that system is certified for use in the commonwealth.

Finally, Gov. Wolf recently sent a letter to Pennsylvania’s congressional delegation stressing the importance of election infrastructure and urging Congress to authorize the remaining $396 million in Help America Vote Act funds for election improvement. The governor further requested new funding to replace aging voting equipment, which would aid counties in meeting their responsibilities.
Mandate Reform

Counties are seeking to develop and maintain the close working partnership with the state to re-examine mandates currently in place. The intent is to assure their scope, objectives, administration and funding are appropriate to meeting the needs of Pennsylvanians. As part of this priority, CCAP is actively reaching out and engaging its relationship with legislative alumni (former CCAP members who now serve in the General Assembly), who are in a unique position to understand the interaction between county government and state legislators and the impact of state decisions from a local perspective. CCAP leadership met with legislative alumni in the House in mid-March and will also be meeting with alumni in the Senate.

With this focus on building partnerships in mind, CCAP has also begun to engage the 2018 gubernatorial candidates to share an overview of the state-county partnership in service delivery. These efforts will be continuing throughout the months leading up to the November election. The Association strategy includes development of a survey for all gubernatorial candidates on county priority issues, and sharing with members the responses and additional information about the candidates’ platforms as they relate to county policy issues.