

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA
THE VOICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

IN THIS EDITION

- **Appropriations Hearings on the Horizon; Counties Advocate for Critical Funding**
- **House Hearing Highlights Data-Driven Approach to Stream Impairment**
- **Governor Unveils Housing Action Plan**
- **U.S. House Introduces 2026 Farm Bill**
- **PA Counties Support the BASICS Act to Strengthen County Transportation Infrastructure**
- **U.S House Passes SAVE Act; Election Administration Implications**

APPROPRIATIONS HEARINGS ON THE HORIZON; COUNTIES ADVOCATE FOR CRITICAL FUNDING

With the release of Governor Shapiro's FY 2026-27 Executive Budget proposal just over two weeks ago, the General Assembly is now moving into the next critical phase: Appropriations Hearings. Both the House and Senate began hearings on Monday, February 23, and will continue through the second week of March. These hearings provide legislators the opportunity to engage directly with agencies on their budgets and program priorities as outlined in the Executive Budget.

Of particular significance for counties, the Department of Human Services is scheduled to testify before the Senate on February 25 and the House on March 4. Notably, the current budget proposal does not include an increase for community based mental health services which counties rely upon for their base funding.

Counties continue to emphasize the urgent need for a meaningful investment in mental health services. Increased funding would allow counties to:

- Strengthen crisis services, including walk-in mental health centers, mobile crisis teams, and enhanced emergency support programs.
- Expand justice-involved mental health programs and diversion efforts.
- Provide preventive and supportive services for adolescents.
- Rebuild and modernize community mental health infrastructure, such as certified peer specialist programs.
- Expand supportive housing options for individuals experiencing mental health challenges.
- Address staffing shortages by improving recruitment and retention in critical mental health roles.

As the General Assembly moves forward in developing the FY 2026-27 state budget, counties remain committed to working closely with legislators to secure essential funding and statutory support. These investments are critical to ensuring that county governments can continue delivering timely, effective crisis intervention and comprehensive mental health services to residents across the Commonwealth.

For ongoing updates on budget developments affecting counties, visit [CCAP Budget News](#).

HOUSE HEARING HIGHLIGHTS DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH TO STREAM IMPAIREMENT

On February 11, the House Environmental and Natural Resource Protection Committee held a legislative hearing on stream impairment in Pennsylvania. The discussion focused on key contributors to water quality challenges, including agricultural runoff, acid mine drainage, and urban stormwater runoff. Lawmakers and testifiers further examined the differences between computer modeling systems and direct water testing, emphasizing the need for accurate, real-world data to fully understand water conditions across the Commonwealth.

Jill Whitcomb, Deputy Secretary of the Office of Water Programs at the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, provided an overview of the [2026 Integrated Water Quality Report](#). She underscored the importance of collecting reliable, in-stream data and highlighted the Commonwealth's continued investment in water quality monitoring. Whitcomb pointed to a project in York County that measures nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment levels in the Susquehanna River Basin as an example of targeted, data-driven monitoring efforts.

York County Commissioner Julie Wheeler outlined the county's water quality monitoring program, launched in 2020 in partnership with several organizations, including the U.S. Geological Survey. The initiative collects real-time data from six monitoring stations throughout the county. Commissioner Wheeler noted that this real-time data has shown significantly clearer waterways than previous state modeling reports indicated. She emphasized the value of data-driven decision-making and expressed York County's commitment to sharing its monitoring approach with other counties across the Commonwealth.

Overall, the hearing highlighted opportunities to improve stream impairment strategies, strengthen collaboration between state and local governments, and expand a data-driven

approach to advancing water quality restoration efforts statewide.

GOVERNOR UNVEILS HOUSING ACTION PLAN

On February 12, Josh Shapiro announced Pennsylvania's Housing Action Plan, a statewide strategy to address the housing crisis across the Commonwealth. Over the past year, the administration developed the plan through an extensive stakeholder engagement process, including regional roundtables and feedback from all 67 counties to ensure the strategy reflects diverse local needs and challenges.

The Housing Action Plan is built around five core goals:

- Building and preserving housing stock;
- Expanding housing opportunity;
- Providing pathways to stabilization;
- Modernizing housing development regulations; and,
- Improving accountability across the state government

The Governor's proposed budget advances several key components of the plan, including the creation of a new \$1 billion Critical Infrastructure Investment Fund aimed at supporting the development of additional housing units statewide.

To review the Housing Action Plan in full, please refer to the Pennsylvania [Department of Community and Economic Development overview and breakdown](#).

U.S. HOUSE INTRODUCES 2026 FARM BILL

On February 13, the House Agriculture Committee released the 2026 Farm Bill, formally titled the [Farm, Food and National Security Act of 2026](#), introduced by Chairman G. T. Thompson (R-Pa.).

The legislation advances several priorities important to counties, including targeted investments in rural childcare, expanded access to health services, improvements to water infrastructure, and broadband deployment. It also strengthens technical assistance to help resource-constrained counties better navigate and access federal rural development programs.

The most recent Farm Bill originally expired in 2023 and has since been extended multiple times as Congress continues negotiations. The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill) is currently extended at existing funding levels through September 30, 2026.

For a detailed breakdown of current provisions and implications for counties, please refer to [NACo's legislative analysis](#).

PA COUNTIES SUPPORT THE BASICS ACT TO STRENGTHEN COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE

On February 9, U.S. Representatives Kristin McDonald Rivet (D-Mich.) and Robert Bresnahan (R-Pa.) introduced the [***Bridges and Safety Infrastructure for Community Success \(BASICS\) Act***](#) in the U.S. House of Representatives. This legislation would strengthen federal transportation programs and expand local governments' access to critical infrastructure funding.

The BASICS Act includes [***several key improvements***](#), such as increasing local access to formula funding, maintaining strong federal investments in bridge infrastructure, and establishing a dedicated rural and nonmetropolitan planning program. Together, these provisions are designed to ensure counties have the resources and flexibility needed to address local transportation priorities and maintain safe, reliable infrastructure.

The National Association of Counties (NACo), along with CCAP, endorses this legislation, recognizing its importance in helping counties maintain and strengthen the nation's infrastructure and transportation systems. CCAP thanks Representative Bresnahan for his leadership in advancing this legislation and supporting critical infrastructure improvements across Pennsylvania's communities.

CCAP strongly encourages counties to contact their members of Congress to support and advance this critical legislation. Please use the template letter provided below to communicate with your federal representatives.

[Access Template Letter Here →](#)

U.S. HOUSE PASSES SAVE ACT; ELECTION ADMINISTRATION IMPLICATIONS

The U.S. House of Representatives passed the [***Safeguarding American Voter Eligibility \(SAVE\) Act***](#) on February 11, sending the legislation to the Senate for further consideration. The SAVE Act proposes amendments to the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, requiring individuals to provide documented proof of U.S. citizenship when registering to vote in federal elections. Acceptable documentation would include a valid U.S. passport, certain military identification, or other approved documents verifying citizenship or birthplace.

The legislation would also impose new responsibilities on state and local election officials to verify voter registration records and introduce criminal penalties for individuals who fail to provide the required proof of eligibility.

The SAVE Act carries several implications for counties. The National Association of Counties (NACo) outlined these impacts in a letter to the House prior to the vote. For a detailed breakdown of the legislation and its potential effects on county operations, refer to [NACo's legislative analysis](#).



County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania
PO Box 60769 | Harrisburg, PA 17106-0769

Did someone forward you this email? [Sign up to stay up-to-date on topics](#) affecting Pennsylvania's counties!

[Unsubscribe](#) from this newsletter.

[View this email in your browser.](#)

© 2026 All rights reserved.