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LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA
THE VOICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

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CCAP Annual Resolution and Platform Review

CCAP successfully concluded its 139th Annual Conference and Trade Show in Somerset County, held August 17–20. During Tuesday's annual business meeting, members took part in shaping CCAP's policy direction, approving 14 resolutions to amend the Pennsylvania County Platform, CCAP's comprehensive policy statement. Members also completed the Association's four-year platform review, ensuring all positions remain timely and relevant. This marked the final step in CCAP's annual policy-setting process, which reflects the work of ten policy committees and more than 130 members who examined platform positions and advanced resolutions throughout the spring and summer.

The conference featured a wide range of discussions on critical issues, including healthcare access, rural revitalization, artificial intelligence, and the opioid crisis. CCAP was also honored to welcome Lieutenant Governor Austin Davis and State Treasurer Stacy Garrity, as speakers, who addressed an audience of 500 attendees.

As part of the conference, CCAP held its Annual Dinner and Awards Ceremony, celebrating members and partners whose leadership, dedication, and collaboration have made a lasting impact on the Association. This year's award recipients are:

- Outstanding County Commissioner: Brian Smith, Wayne County
- Outstanding County Chief Clerk: Roni Shilling, Mercer County
- Outstanding County Solicitor: Robert Cravitz, Snyder County
- Friend of County Government: Joseph Saeler, Butler County
- Affiliate of the Year Award: John DiMattio, Erie County

- President's Award: Lori Vargo Heffner, Northampton County

Looking ahead, policy committees will reconvene this fall to develop work plans and refine priorities for the coming year. Members will then consider and adopt CCAP's 2026 priorities during [CCAP's Fall Conference](#), November 23- 25 in Hershey.



BUDGET TALKS CONTINUE WITH FOCUS ON MASS TRANSIT

On August 11, both the House and Senate returned to Harrisburg to resume negotiations on the overdue state budget, with mass transit funding emerging as a central issue. The House advanced [House Bill 1788](#) to the Senate, a measure designed to bolster public transit funding.

This builds on the chamber's earlier passage of the full budget in July and reflects the Governor's proposal to dedicate a portion of state sales tax revenue to the Public Transportation Fund, along with new accounts to support road and bridge improvements.

The Senate reconvened to consider the transit package as part of broader budget deliberations. The chamber approved a \$47.6 billion short-term budget in [Senate Bill 160](#), approximately \$3 billion below the House's plan. This stopgap measure, flat-funded from last year's levels, covers essential services such as schools, nursing homes, human services, and public transit. In addition, the Senate passed [House Bill 257](#) providing roughly \$300 million to sustain the state's mass transit systems for the next two years. However, when the House Appropriations Committee met to review the Senate's proposal, the measure failed on a party-line vote, with all Democratic members voting against it.

Despite these actions, the two chambers remain divided on overall spending levels, leaving the budget impasse unresolved. The Senate has recessed until September 8, while the House is not scheduled to return until September 22. In the meantime, counties are left to shoulder the strain of operating without state funding.

SENATE POLICY COMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON DATA CENTERS

On August 11, the Senate Republican Policy Committee held a public hearing to discuss data center development across the commonwealth. The discussion focused on the potential impacts of proposed projects on local communities while also exploring possible opportunities and solutions.

Senator Lisa Baker (R-Luzerne) emphasized the importance of working closely with local leaders to assess both the benefits and challenges of data centers. She noted the growing necessity of these facilities given society's increasing reliance on technology, while also stressing the need to balance technical demands with environmental protection and resource management.

The hearing highlighted a wide range of impacts tied to data center development, from potential economic benefits such as job creation and infrastructure investment to concerns around local land use and community well-being. A diverse group of stakeholders provided testimony. Local government stakeholders underscored the critical role counties and municipalities play in land use decisions and voiced concerns to any state preemption of local authority. They stressed the importance of community-specific standards related to setbacks, noise, lighting, height, water use, and emergency access.

Testifiers also expressed support for streamlining state permitting processes but cautioned against eliminating necessary oversight. Overall, the conversation reinforced both the opportunities that data centers may bring and the need for thoughtful planning that addresses community concerns.

Senator Greg Rothman (R-Cumberland) introduced [Senate Bill 939](#) in early June, which would establish the Office of Transformation and Opportunity to oversee artificial intelligence, data centers, and emerging technologies. The bill also creates a regulatory sandbox to test new technologies, sets timelines for permitting large-scale data centers, and standardizes local zoning regulations for their development.

For local governments, the bill requires that ordinances allow the "reasonable development" of high-impact data centers. Local control can not be more restrictive than those applied to other industrial uses in the same zoning district with respect to construction, building height, lighting, noise, or fencing. Local governments would also be required to review applications within set timelines and could not restrict hours of normal data processing operations.

Counties remain committed to working with the General Assembly to ensure that local land use authority and responsibilities are preserved as data centers continue to develop across the commonwealth.

BIPARTISAN POLICY REPORT HIGHLIGHTS ELECTION OFFICIAL TURNOVER

The Bipartisan Policy Center recently released an [updated analysis](#) of election official turnover rates through the 2024 election, revealing a steady increase in turnover since 2000, with the pace accelerating after 2020. The 2024 election saw the highest rate of turnover in at least 25 years, as 41 percent of election officials overseeing the presidential election were

new to the role compared to those who ran it four years earlier. The report also noted important differences based on jurisdiction size, with smaller jurisdictions experiencing gradual increases over time and larger jurisdictions seeing a sharper spike in recent years.

While turnover is rising nationwide, state-by-state variation is largely tied to the number of jurisdictions within each state. Pennsylvania experienced a 55 percent turnover among local officials in 2024, contributing to a total turnover rate of 55.2 percent between 2020 and 2024. This surge reflects the broader national pattern of rising turnover, which has accelerated significantly in recent election cycles.

These findings highlight the growing challenges facing the election workforce and underscore the need for policies and strategies that provide greater support for election officials. The Bipartisan Policy Center's [2024 report](#) offers several recommendations to address both the long-term trends and the more recent surge in turnover.

CCAP COMMITTEE NOMIATIONS OPEN

CCAP members who wish to play an active role in shaping Association policy are encouraged to apply for a position on one of our policy committees. These committees tackle a wide range of county government issues and provide a platform for members to engage in both state and federal policy discussions. To learn more and submit an application, please complete the Committee Interest Form available on our website.

[Committee Interest Form →](#)



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