

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA
THE VOICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

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SENATE RETURNS TO HARRISBURG; COUNTIES CALL FOR BUDGET AND 911 ACTION

Next week, the Senate returns to Harrisburg to continue budget negotiations. With September now underway, the impasse has stretched more than two months beyond the constitutional deadline. As lawmakers reconvene, counties are bracing for missed state appropriations and preparing contingency plans amid the continued uncertainty. Without a state budget, counties may be forced to raise property taxes or cut services – directly impacting taxpayers due to legislative inaction. Many fear a repeat of 2015, when counties were compelled to take out lines of credit or reduce services, without reimbursement for interest payments or fees.

As the Senate reconvenes, a [top priority](#) for counties this fall is reauthorization of the 911 surcharge and critical updates to statute. Counties are urging state leaders to act on reauthorization well ahead of the January 31, 2026, sunset date and to approve an increase in the current surcharge from \$1.95 to \$2.20. Alongside 911 partners, counties are also seeking statutory updates to Chapter 53 to ensure the law reflects today's Next Generation 911 (NG911) environment.

Counties are proud to provide one of government's most vital public safety functions, the operation of the 911 call-taking and dispatch system. The surcharge is the only dedicated statewide funding source for 911, as no state general funds support the system. Despite a

\$48 million revenue increase in 2024, the surcharge only generated \$375 million in revenue, short of the \$455 million cost needed to sustain the statewide system. County property taxpayers made up the difference, contributing the balance of \$80 million through their general funds. Nationally, Pennsylvania's fee is relatively average, yet it still leaves counties covering significant operational costs, including staffing.

Counties are calling on state leaders to act with urgency: reauthorize the 911 surcharge with a modest increase to \$2.20, enact the statutory updates needed for NG911, and pass a full state budget.

CCAP PROVIDES TESTIMONY ON DATA CENTER DEVELOPMENT

On September 2, the Senate Democratic Policy Committee convened a public hearing to examine the rapid growth of data centers in Pennsylvania, their impacts on communities, and how the commonwealth can best prepare for future development. CCAP, along with local government representatives and industry stakeholders, participated in the discussion.

Frank Mazza, CCAP Director of Government Relations, provided [testimony](#) highlighting the impacts, operations, and policy considerations of data centers from the county government perspective. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that state policymakers recognize the critical role of county land use planning and the limited zoning authority available to counties in balancing environmental protection, infrastructure capacity, public health and safety, economic development, and energy needs.

As with other industrial and commercial properties, counties share concerns about the community impacts tied to the siting and zoning of data center facilities. Legislative proposals under consideration would prohibit local governments from imposing land use and development requirements more stringent than those applied to other industrial uses. While CCAP understands the intent of such measures to streamline timelines and reduce bureaucracy, the Association opposes any legislation that would override local zoning ordinances or county land development plans. Without local authority, counties and their communities would lose one of their most essential tools for managing growth responsibly.

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.

FEMA REFORM PACKAGE PASSES U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE

On September 3, the U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee advanced the Fixing Emergency Management for Americans (FEMA) Act ([H.R. 4669](#)) sending it to the House floor for consideration. This legislation represents a significant overhaul of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, with several provisions shaped by actionable

recommendations from NACo. Many of these county-driven priorities were incorporated into the bill, marking an important win for counties nationwide.

Key County Priorities Included in the FEMA Act:

- Transitioning the Public Assistance Program from a reimbursement model to a grant model, including opportunities for grants to be made directly to counties.
- Streamlining environmental and historic preservation reviews to expedite recovery efforts.
- Establishing a universal disaster application to simplify the process for disaster survivors.
- Restructuring FEMA's pre-disaster mitigation program by converting it into a formula-based grant program.
- Creating a public-facing Public Assistance dashboard displaying information for each major disaster declaration.

To help build momentum for passage, NACo has prepared a template letter of support that county leaders can adapt and share with their congressional delegations. NACo has also submitted its own letter of support, which can be found [here](#). A full analysis of the FEMA Act is available on the [NACo website](#).

NACo Template Letter →

COURTS RULE PENNSYLVANIA MUST COUNT UNDATED MAIL-IN BALLOTS

On August 26, the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals [upheld](#) a lower court ruling requiring Pennsylvania to count undated or incorrectly dated mail-in ballots. The panel found that rejecting such ballots violated the First and Fourteenth Amendments by imposing unreasonable burdens on voters with virtually no benefit for preventing fraud. This ruling carries significant implications for upcoming elections as well as the 2028 presidential election.

[Vote-by-mail reforms](#) remain one of CCAP's top legislative priorities for the 2025-2026 session, particularly given the ongoing lack of clarity surrounding Act 77 of 2019 – the law that expanded mail-in voting. Counties continue to face challenges with its implementation, highlighted most recently during the 2024 General Election when a surge in "on-demand" requests for mail-in ballots overwhelmed county staff and resources. In addition, the inability to pre-canvass ballots ahead of Election Day and unrealistic ballot application deadlines remain pressing concerns.

Since the enactment of Act 77, counties have identified several provisions of the Election Code that require clarification or adjustment in light of numerous court decisions and appeals. Counties support:

- Extending the pre-canvassing period so counties can prepare mail-in and absentee ballots for tabulation, ensuring accurate and timely results.

- Moving the deadline for absentee and mail-in ballot applications to 15 days prior to an election, providing sufficient time for counties to process applications and for ballots to travel to voters and back.
- Resolving ambiguities in the Election Code, including counties' authority to use ballot drop boxes, establishing clear guidelines for curing ballot defects, and setting uniform rules for third-party submission of ballot applications.

Counties remain committed to working with the General Assembly on thoughtful election reforms and look forward to being a partner in discussions on any future changes to the Election Code.

CCAP POLICY UPDATES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE

At the CCAP Annual Conference in late August, members approved [14 resolutions](#) amending the [Pennsylvania County Platform](#), the Association's comprehensive policy statement. The updated Platform and adopted resolutions can be found on the policy page of the CCAP website.

This fall, CCAP policy committees will reconvene to develop work plans and sharpen priorities for the year ahead. Those efforts will set the stage for the membership's consideration and adoption of CCAP's 2026 priorities at the [Fall Conference](#), November 23-25 in Hershey.

Members interested in taking a more active role in shaping Association policy are invited to apply for a position on one of CCAP's policy committees. These committees address a wide range of county government issues and provide a forum to engage in both state and federal policy discussions. To learn more or submit an application, please visit our website to complete the Committee Interest Form.

[Committee Interest Form →](#)

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 11th annual [Courage to Change Recovery Advocacy Day](#) at the state Capitol in Harrisburg on September 29. A media event will take place in the Capitol's main rotunda from 1-2 P.M. that day, featuring members of the recovery community and remarks from several legislators. More information about the event

can be found on the Recovery Advocacy Day Facebook page at www.facebook.com/recoveryadvocacy.

IFO ISSUES AUGUST REVENUE UPDATE

The Independent Fiscal Office (IFO) released its monthly revenue update for [August 2025](#), reporting General Fund collections of \$2.96 billion, an increase of \$31 million (+1.0%) compared to August 2024.

Sales and use tax revenues were the primary driver, totaling \$1.27 billion, up \$67 million (+5.6%) from the prior year, led by strong non-motor vehicle sales. Personal income tax collections reached \$1.16 billion, an increase of \$59 million (+5.4%), reflecting growth in both withholding and non-withholding payments. Corporate net income tax revenues were \$86 million, down \$25 million (-22.4%) from last year.

Fiscal year-to-date collections for FY 2025-26 total \$6.00 billion, a gain of \$76 million (+1.3%) over the same period in FY 2024-25.



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