

# LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA  
THE VOICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

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## LEGISLATURE BACK IN SESSION; KEY BILLS ADVANCE

During the week of March 23, both the House and Senate returned to Harrisburg, marking the beginning of the spring budget season. As part of this legislative push, several measures of interest to counties advanced through the General Assembly.

**[House Bill 1257](#)**, introduced by Representative Tarah Probst (D-Monroe), proposes an amendment to the Pennsylvania Constitution to expand the Disabled Veterans Real Estate Tax Exemption. Counties have expressed support for key provisions in the bill, including removing the requirement that a veteran must have served during a war or conflict, and extending eligibility to spouses of service members who were killed in the line of duty, declared missing in action, or who would have been deemed disabled but passed away prior to a formal determination.

The legislation is intended to make the exemption more equitable and accessible. Counties have long advocated for updates to better align the program with the needs of veterans while also recognizing the fiscal responsibilities of local governments.

Counties remain committed to supporting veterans through both direct services and thoughtful public policy. The bill has passed the full House and has been referred to the Senate Local Government Committee for further consideration.

[House Resolution 443](#), introduced by Representative Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz (D-Berks), would designate May 2026 as Mental Health Awareness Month in Pennsylvania. The resolution was approved by the House Health Committee and now moves to the full House for consideration. Counties support this measure as it raises awareness of mental health issues, a key priority for CCAP. [Increased Investment](#) in county mental health systems would help reduce system strain, shorten wait times for services, strengthen the delivery of behavioral health care, and expand access to critical mental health crisis services.

The House is scheduled to return to session on April 13, with the Senate reconvening the following week, at which point budget negotiations are expected to intensify.

## D'AGOSTINO TESTIFIES ON IMPACTS OF RTK LAW ON COUNTIES

On March 23, Lancaster County Commissioner and CCAP Board Member Ray D'Agostino [testified](#) before the House Intergovernmental Affairs & Operations Committee on the impacts of Pennsylvania's Right-to-Know Law (RTKL) on counties. He emphasized that, since the law's enactment in 2008, the environment in which it operates has changed significantly, driven by advances in technology, widespread digitization, and the growth of data-driven business models.

As noted in the Pennsylvania Office of Open Records' 2025 Annual Report, requests are increasingly complex, often involving large volumes of electronic data and leading to appeals that require substantial time and resources. Counties, responsible for maintaining records across elections, courts, human services, public safety, land use, and tax administration, are at the center of this activity. What was once a system for accessing discrete public records has, in many cases, evolved into a mechanism for large-scale data extraction and, at times, a way to burden or disrupt local governments.

Counties have seen a rise in commercial, vexatious, and overly burdensome requests, placing strain on limited resources. To address this, counties support reforms such as a fee-based structure for commercial requests and reasonable safeguards, including temporary blackout periods surrounding elections, to ensure critical operations are not compromised.

At its core, the RTKL carries real and growing costs that are ultimately borne by local taxpayers. Counties are seeking a modernized framework that reflects current usage while maintaining transparency, protecting sensitive information, and preventing abuse.

[Senate Bill 431](#), introduced by Senator Tracy Pennycuik (R-Berks), offers one such solution. By allowing agencies to deny requests that pose cybersecurity risks or appear to be generated by artificial intelligence, the bill provides a practical tool to manage vexatious or exploitative requests while preserving the public's right to appeal. This balanced approach helps ensure the RTKL continues to promote open government without overburdening local resources.

CCAP looks forward to working with the General Assembly to advance thoughtful, balanced reforms that address these challenges and ensure the Right-to-Know Law remains effective,

sustainable, and responsive to the evolving landscape.

## HOUSE HEARING SHORT-TERM RENTAL REGULATIONS

On March 25, the House Tourism, Recreation and Economic Development Committee held a [hearing](#) to discuss compliance regulations for short-term rentals across the Commonwealth. [House Bill 2303](#) would establish a statewide framework for regulating short-term rental properties in Pennsylvania, including homestays, vacation rentals, and corporate operators. The bill proposes an annual, county-issued permit for operators, with requirements such as proof of liability insurance, compliance with local nuisance ordinances, occupancy limits, and the designation of an on-call contact.

In addition, the legislation would direct counties to develop and maintain a registry of short-term rental properties, as well as hotels and other lodging establishments subject to the hotel and occupancy tax within their jurisdiction.

Counties generally recognize the value of a more consistent and transparent approach to short-term rental oversight. A coordinated system could help improve data collection, support more accurate hotel tax administration, and enhance the ability to locate properties when needed, including during emergency situations. Greater uniformity across jurisdictions may also provide clarity for both operators and local governments.

At the same time, there are considerations regarding how the proposed system would be implemented. The bill outlines a significant role for counties in administering permits, maintaining records, and supporting compliance efforts. As discussions continue, it may be helpful to further evaluate how these responsibilities align with existing county functions and resources, as well as how they interact with municipal roles.

Overall, counties appreciate the intent of House Bill 2303 to bring greater consistency to the short-term rental landscape. CCAP looks forward to continued collaboration with the General Assembly to further review the proposal and support an approach that is workable for all stakeholders involved.

## FEDERAL EXECUTIVE ORDER ON MAIL-IN VOTING

On Tuesday, March 31, Donald Trump signed an executive order titled "[Ensuring Citizenship Verification and Integrity in Federal Elections](#)," aimed at establishing new regulations for mail-in voting. The order draws from provisions in the [SAVE America Act](#), which has passed the U.S. House of Representatives and is currently under consideration in the Senate.

Under the proposal, individuals would be required to provide documentary proof of citizenship when registering to vote, and additional standards would be implemented

to facilitate the removal of noncitizens from voter rolls. The executive order also directs the Department of Homeland Security, in coordination with the Social Security Administration, to develop an approved list of absentee voters. Furthermore, the United States Postal Service would be instructed to distribute mail-in ballots only to voters included on that list.

CCAP will continue to monitor the implementation of this executive order and evaluate its potential impacts on county election administration.

## LEGISLATURE RECOGNIZING LOCAL GOVERNMENT DAY, WEEK

Ahead of Local Government Week in Pennsylvania, both chambers within the Pennsylvania General Assembly are preparing to recognize local governments in Pennsylvania via [Senate Resolution 243](#) and [House Resolution 465](#), respectively.

These resolutions were recently introduced by Senator Dawn Keefer (R-York) and Senator Patty Kim (D-Dauphin), Chairs of the Senate Local Government Committee, and Rep. Robert Freeman (D-Northampton) and Rep. Brett Miller (R-Lancaster), Chairs of the House Local Government Committee. The Senate resolution designates April 20–24 as Local Government Week and April 22 as Local Government Day. Similarly, the House resolution designates April 13–17 as Local Government Week and also recognizes April 22 as Local Government Day in Pennsylvania.

April is also National County Government Month, where counties will honor the county workforce, educate residents about local programs and services, and celebrate the county role in the intergovernmental partnership. Additional details are available on the [NACo website](#).

Counties can offer their recognition by adopting a resolution honoring National County Government Month and Pennsylvania Local Government Week; a [sample](#) is available on the CCAP [Legislative Action Center](#).

## OFFICE OF OPEN RECORDS RELEASES 2025 REPORT

The Pennsylvania Office of Open Records (OOR) issued a [2025 report](#) analyzing Right-to-Know Law (RTKL) practices across government agencies. The report highlights ongoing administrative challenges, driven in part by a significant increase in demand for public records since the law's enactment in 2009. In 2025 alone, the OOR received 3,970 appeals, marking another record-breaking year and underscoring the continued strain on government resources—particularly at the county level.

The report also provides insight into who is filing these appeals. Appeals were filed by a range of parties, with 64% submitted by individual citizens. Companies and private organizations accounted for 17% of appeals, followed by inmates at 11% and media organizations at 7%.

AOROs expressed strong support for proposed reforms to the RTKL, noting that such changes could significantly benefit their agencies. These findings highlight both the growing demand for transparency and the operational challenges facing agencies. With thousands of appeals annually—many involving counties—local governments continue to bear a significant administrative burden in complying with RTKL requirements while maintaining day-to-day operations.

The Pennsylvania General Assembly has been actively working to address RTKL challenges raised by counties and other agencies, particularly those involving vexatious requesters and commercial use. As the 2026-2027 legislative session continues, counties remain committed to advancing reforms that support transparency and accountability while addressing these ongoing challenges.

## NATIONAL AI FRAMEWORK RELEASED

In December 2025, an Executive Order on Artificial Intelligence (AI) was signed directing White House advisors to develop and submit legislative recommendations to Congress for establishing a national policy framework on AI. In accordance with that directive, a series of proposals from the White House's Legislative Recommendations for a [National Policy Framework on AI](#) was released on March 20.

Currently, Congress is developing its own legislation on the issue of AI. Senator Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.) introduced an updated discussion draft of the [TRUMP AMERICA Act](#), short for The Republic Unifying Meritocratic Performance Advancing Machine Intelligence by Eliminating Regulatory Interstate Chaos Across America Industry Act. The bill seeks to codify many of the principal elements of the White House's framework.

There are seven principles to be adopted. With the White House having sent its legislative recommendations to Congress, they are now tasked with drafting and passing comprehensive legislation to create a national standard on AI.

Counties are supportive of a national framework that clarifies liability and mitigates risk, provides resources for education and the workforce, and protects consumers from fraud and children from harm.

For a more detailed breakdown and list of the seven provisions visit [NACo's website](#).

## CCAP RESOLUTIONS PROCESS

Beginning in May, CCAP policy committees will be holding their annual virtual meetings to consider resolutions amending the [Pennsylvania County Platform](#), CCAP's comprehensive

policy document determined by counties. All CCAP members are invited to review the Platform and to send any proposed resolutions for additions, changes or deletions to CCAP Government Relations staff or to discuss them with CCAP policy committee chairs. A membership discussion and vote on the resolutions will take place during the CCAP Annual Conference, scheduled for August 2–5 at Kalahari Resort in Monroe County. An overview of the process, timeline and related materials can be found on the CCAP Policy [webpage](#).



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