

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA
THE VOICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

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COUNTIES AND SCHOOL BOARDS URGE ACTION AS BUDGET IMPASSE ENTERS THIRD MONTH

On September 29, CCAP, in collaboration with the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA), held a joint press conference highlighting the consequences of the 2025–2026 state budget being more than three months overdue. With the impasse stretching past its third month, both state and federal pass-through dollars continue to be withheld, leaving communities across the commonwealth facing mounting challenges.

Indiana County Commissioner and CCAP President Sherene Hess underscored the severity of the situation, noting that on average, counties receive nearly 38% of their total funding from the state – with some counties relying on state funds for well over half of their budgets. Without a resolution, she warned, counties anticipate that reserve funds will be depleted by the end of the month, and in many cases, they are already exhausted or nonexistent. As a result, counties are being forced to consider layoffs, furloughs, service reductions, and even facility closures.

With October now here, several counties have already begun implementing these contingency measures in order to keep services afloat. Many are being left with no option

but to seek lines of credit, bringing steep, unbudgeted costs that further strain local resources. Meanwhile, counties remain legally obligated to provide state-mandated services, but are forced to do so without the funding to sustain them and without access to critical federal dollars that cannot be released until a state budget is enacted.

Commissioner Hess noted that counties have still not fully recovered from the damage caused by the 2015 budget impasse, with lingering financial and operational fallout continuing to affect their ability to deliver services today. She emphasized that counties cannot afford to repeat history.

Adding to this concern, Annie Strite, Mental Health Director and Administrator for Cumberland and Perry Counties, emphasized the devastating impact the impasse is having on county mental health services. She cautioned that if the stalemate continues, counties will be forced to make difficult decisions – halting services, furloughing or laying off staff, and leaving providers unpaid. Some counties have already begun furloughs, and Strite noted that if providers are forced to close, the already limited availability of services will shrink even further for those most in need.

To help address the crisis, CCAP has formally adopted a policy position urging the Governor's administration and lawmakers to support legislation reimbursing counties for the cost and interest associated with short-term operational loans. These loans are often the only way counties can continue providing essential services during an impasse, yet counties alone bear the financial burden of the state's inability to pass a budget.

Counties and school boards are united in urging the Governor and General Assembly to finalize and enact a full state budget without further delay. Both state and federal funds must be released to ensure the continuation of essential services for Pennsylvanians. The time for action is now.



HOUSE BACK IN SESSION AMID ONGOING BUDGET IMPASSE

The House returned to Harrisburg on September 29 to continue budget negotiations and advance legislation to the Governor's desk and the Senate. During this session, no budget bills were considered, nor was a resolution introduced to address the state budget, which is now three months overdue. However, the chamber referred [Senate Bill 160](#), introduced by Senator Scott Martin's (R-Lancaster), the Senate's \$47.6 billion short-term spending plan, to the House Appropriations Committee for further consideration next week. As the Senate's version of the budget, the movement of this bill indicates that budget discussions may be progressing between both chambers.

Nevertheless, with the budget already three months past its constitutional deadline, counties continue to stress that the timely passage of a full state budget is critical to maintaining the services that support residents across the Commonwealth.

COUNTIES TESTIFY ON NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING ACT

On September 29, CCAP, in collaboration with local government associations, [testified](#) on House Bill 1291, which would amend the Newspaper Advertising Act to require public notices to remain in print newspapers of general circulation, with publication in a digital or free newspaper permitted only if a qualifying print newspaper does not exist in the community.

While counties support the goal of modernizing Pennsylvania's public notice laws, CCAP respectfully opposes HB 1291 in its current form. The bill does not provide the flexibility or cost savings that local governments and taxpayers urgently need.

Counties recognize that public notices must remain broadly accessible, particularly as technology and media continue to evolve. Under HB 1291, counties would still be required to rely on legacy print newspapers as the primary method for meeting statutory requirements. With declining circulation and reduced publication schedules, this creates timing and logistical challenges. In many counties, publishing a notice in a newspaper can take three to four days, whereas electronic posting could be immediate, with searchable archives and subscription alerts, reaching residents who may not have newspaper subscriptions or easy access to print publications.

Counties remain committed to transparency and accountability. Yet, the landscape for information-sharing has changed dramatically: fewer residents rely on print newspapers, while digital access continues to expand. Many counties already use their websites to post notices almost instantly, often supplemented by email alerts, RSS feeds, and searchable archives. All 67 counties maintain publicly accessible websites where residents can access county news, information, and updates, with many posting public notices online even without a statutory requirement to do so.

Counties share the General Assembly's goal of ensuring public notices remain open, accessible, and transparent. However, HB 1291, as drafted, falls short of providing meaningful modernization. We urge all stakeholders to work collaboratively with counties and local government partners to craft legislation that preserves public access while allowing the flexibility needed to serve residents efficiently and responsibly, all while being good stewards of taxpayer resources.



TREASURY LAUNCHES SHORT-TERM LOAN FOR COUNTIES

The Pennsylvania Treasury Department [announced](#) that \$500 million will be made available to Head Start providers and county governments through a short-term investment loan program. Approved applicants will receive funds within two days. Repayment is required within 15 days of state funding released following enactment of the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget. This repayment must cover both the initial Treasury investment and a 4.5 percent annual interest rate. To qualify, Head Start providers and counties must certify that the funds will be used for immediate operating expenses and agree to the program's standard terms and conditions.

At a time when many counties face significant financial strain, the Treasury's short-term loan program offers a measure of relief. However, the ongoing budget impasse continues to create immense pressure on counties, and our foremost priority remains urging the Governor and General Assembly to come together to enact a state budget without further delay.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN THREATENS COUNTY SERVICES

On Wednesday, October 1, the federal government entered a shutdown after Congress failed to reach an agreement on a funding package. The Senate was unable to advance a short-term measure, with the primary point of contention centered on Affordable Care Act subsidies. Without passage of the necessary appropriations legislation, a lapse in funding has forced federal agencies to halt many operations.

This shutdown will have significant consequences for counties, limiting their ability to deliver essential services to residents. Counties urge our federal partners to work together in a bipartisan manner to restore funding and ensure the federal government remains fully operational.

For more information on the impacts of the federal shutdown on county operations, please visit [NACo's website](#).

PA SUPREME COURT REQUIRES VOTER NOTIFICATION FOR MAIL-IN BALLOT ERRORS

On Friday, September 26, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court [upheld](#) lower court rulings requiring election officials to notify voters if their mail-in ballots are at risk of being rejected due to errors, such as an incorrect date or a missing signature on the return envelope. In a 4-3 decision, the justices ruled that counties must inform voters when a mistake on the outer return envelope could result in their ballot being disqualified.

Combined with a related ruling from last year, this decision stipulates that voters across the state have the right to be notified and to take corrective action if their mail-in ballots contain errors. The Supreme Court found that failing to provide such notice violated voters' procedural due process rights under the Pennsylvania Constitution, holding that "providing accurate notice of errors to the impacted electors", even through an automated email, represents the minimal procedural safeguard required.

[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

PACDAA RECOVERY ADVOCACY DAY

Recovery month activities concluded on Monday with the 11th annual Recovery Advocacy Day. The Pennsylvania Association of County Drug and Alcohol Administrators (PACDAA) members and representatives of Community Based Recovery Organizations filled the capitol steps to celebrate recovery. The program featured powerful messages of hope and success, and PACDAA was honored to welcome Senator John Kane (D-Delaware), who shared his inspiring personal journey and experiences as a state senator. Attendees also met with legislators to advocate for continued support of community programs and resources.

In addition, PACDAA hosted a legislative breakfast where Representative Jim Struzzi (R-Indiana) was presented with the PACDAA Bulldog Award in recognition of his strong legislative advocacy and steadfast commitment to supporting individuals with substance use disorders and their families.



IFO ISSUES SEPTEMBER REVENUE UPDATE

The Independent Fiscal Office (IFO) released its monthly revenue update for [September 2025](#), reporting General Fund collections of \$4.06 billion, a decrease of \$103 million (-2.5%)

compared to September 2024.

Corporate net income tax revenues totaled \$687 million, down \$284 million (-29.2%) from the prior year, reflecting the impact of federal H.R. 1, which allowed retroactive expensing of domestic research and experimentation costs.

Personal income tax collections reached \$1.73 billion, an increase of \$127 million (+7.9%), driven by both withholding revenues of \$1.07 billion (+6.0%) and non-withholding payments of \$665 million (+11.2%). Sales and use tax revenues totaled \$1.24 billion, up \$67 million from the prior year, with non-motor vehicle collections at \$1.11 billion (+5.8%) and motor vehicle collections at \$124 million (+4.7%).

Fiscal year-to-date collections for FY 2025-26 total \$10.06 billion, a decline of \$27 million (-0.3%) compared to the same period in FY 2024-25.



County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania

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