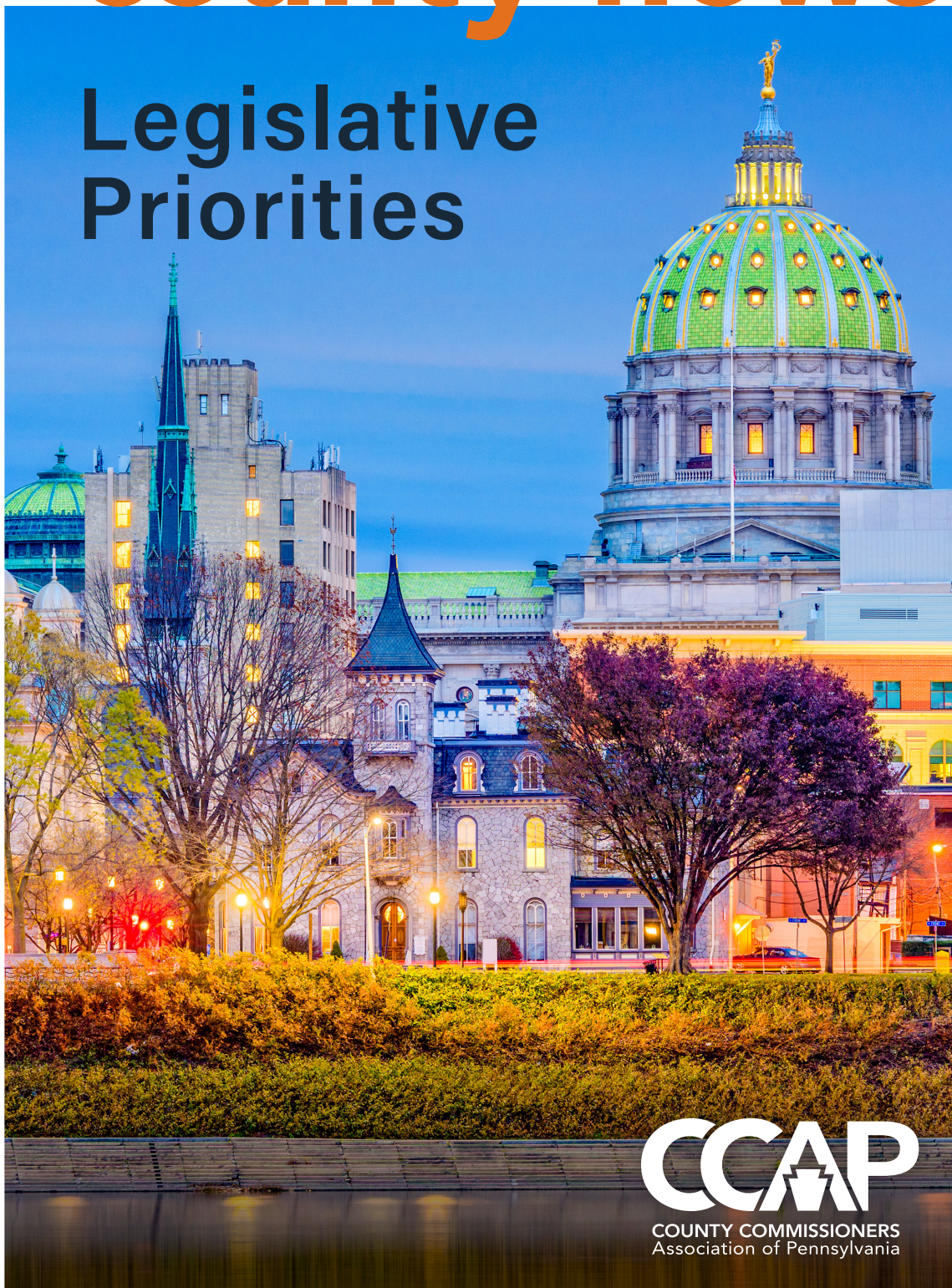


# PENNSYLVANIA county news

## Legislative Priorities



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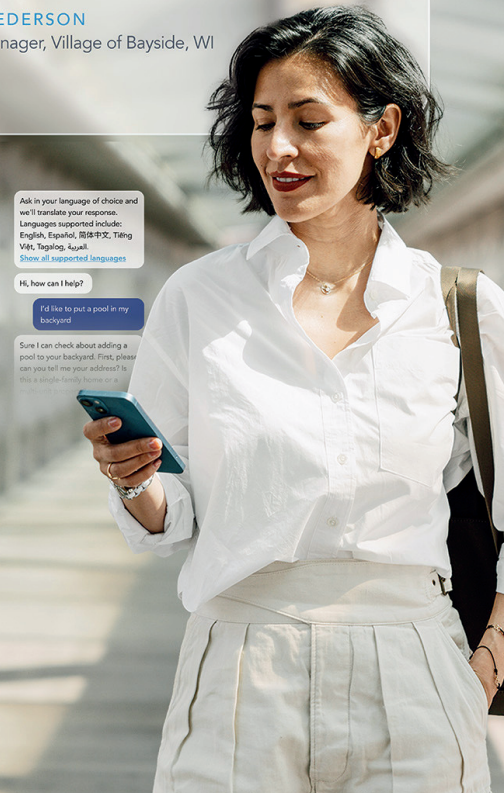
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CCAP advocates as the unifying voice of all Pennsylvania counties and provides leadership and support for excellence in county government.

## Our Vision

CCAP continually strives to be Pennsylvania's leading voice in local governance, across our Commonwealth and the nation, for all 67 counties.

*Founded in 1886, CCAP is an affiliate of the National Association of Counties (NACo).*

To acquire an article idea submittal form for CCAP's *Pennsylvania County News* please email John Buffone at [jbuffone@pacounties.org](mailto:jbuffone@pacounties.org).

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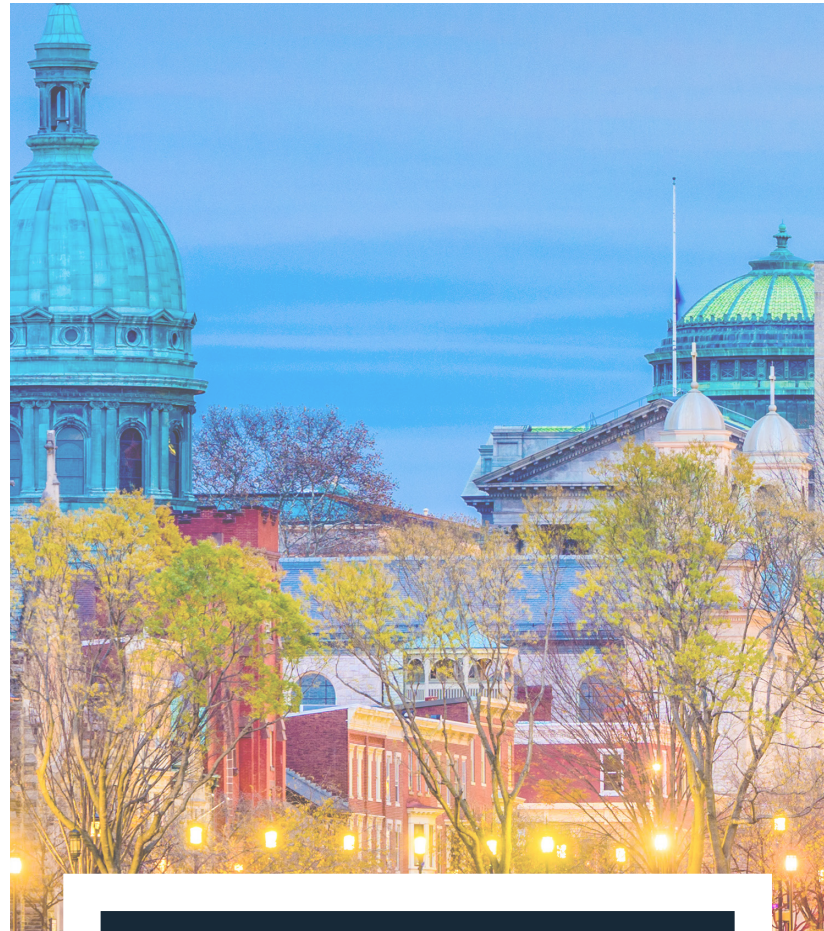
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## Advertisers Index

Chrislynn Energy	34
Firetree Ltd.	35
HRG	9
MCM Consulting Group	38
PCHIPC	25
PFM Asset Management	39
PLGIT	9
Polimorphic	Inside Front Cover
Prime Care Medical, Inc	8
The EADS Group	39
Tremco Roofing & Building Maintenance	18
Tyler Technologies, Inc	26
Zelenkofske Axelrod LLC	26

# PENNSYLVANIA county news

## VOLUME 1 2026



The Priorities Issue highlights counties' unified legislative agenda and the collaborative spirit driving it forward. Throughout 2026, Pennsylvania's counties are working with state leaders to secure critical resources, strengthen essential services and ensure long-term stability for communities. In this issue, we'll dive deep into the three legislative priorities that counties believe will have the biggest impact in 2026.

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# features

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County Jails: The Mental Health Hospitals No One Asked For



A Breath of Fresh Air: The Long-Overdue Acknowledgment of Assessment Inequities



911 Funding: Be a County Champion for Public Safety



2026 CCAP Spring Conference

- 12** Get to Know Your CCAP President
- 14** 911 in Pennsylvania: Ready for the Future
- 16** Recognizing and Supporting Caregivers of Veterans
- 19** A Personal Look at Mental Health Funding
- 20** Training Opportunities from CCAP Insurance Programs
- 22** County Jails: The Mental Health Hospitals No One Asked For
- 27** An Inside Look at the Impacts of an Underfunded County Mental Health System
- 28** CCAP Q&A: The County Administration Conference
- 30** A Breath of Fresh Air: The Long-Overdue Acknowledgment of Assessment Inequities
- 32** 911 Funding: Be a County Champion for Public Safety
- 35** Coming Attraction: Bright Path Center in Bucks County
- 36** CCAP Insurance Programs Educational Priority: Preventing and Responding to Cyber and Privacy Events- Best Practices Everyone Should Know
- 40** Reassessment 101: A Practical Guide for County Commissioners
- 44** The Quality Paradox: Losing The Battle, Winning The War

---

## in every issue

- 6** Letter From The President

# letter from the president



**JOE KANTZ**

**President  
County Commissioners  
Association of  
Pennsylvania**

For those of you who know me, thank you for reading this far into my introductory letter. For those of you that don't know me, well, thank you for reading this far into my introductory letter.

My name is Joe Kantz, and like each of you, I care deeply about the counties we represent and the residents who rely on us for steady, thoughtful leadership.

As we navigate 2026, the best advice I can offer is simple: check your ego at the door. Every one of us brings unique strengths to the table. We also bring weaknesses. That's not a flaw; it's human nature. CCAP succeeds when we combine our strengths, respect our differences and focus on what benefits the association and our counties as a whole.

We do not need to change who we are to work effectively

together. However, we do need to recognize when our personal views may not align with a particular priority and we must have the courage and wisdom to step back when appropriate. A long-time state representative once told me, "There are things you can compromise on, and then there are core beliefs on which you should never compromise." Each of us must determine what those core beliefs are. And if one of those beliefs stands in opposition to a CCAP priority, perhaps we are not the right spokesperson for that particular issue. That is not weakness; it is leadership. It is understanding that the mission is bigger than any one individual.

Earlier in my career, I served as chairman of my county's political party. After a heated primary, a candidate I did not and could not wholeheartedly support became

"If we approach this year with humility and clarity about our core beliefs, alongside a commitment to collaboration, I am confident we will leave our association stronger than we found it."

our nominee. I quickly realized I could not perform the chairman's role with the enthusiasm and unity it required. So, I stepped aside. I did not change who I was or what I believed. But I understood that the good of the group came first. That decision strengthened our organization. I believe that same principle applies to CCAP.

In today's world, it is easy to fall into political divisions, especially on social media. I often see posts from commissioners on both sides of the aisle and wonder whether those posts ultimately help us

serve our constituents. When we speak in ways that alienate half of our residents, we risk losing their future attention when we truly need it. I strive to keep my public communications focused on collaboration and solutions. There are plenty of voices fueling division. I would rather work with people, even those with whom I disagree, to make something positive happen for our counties.

If we approach this year with humility and clarity about our core beliefs, alongside a commitment to collaboration, I am confident we

will leave our association stronger than we found it. None of us has all the right answers all the time. But together, we can find better ones.

Our counties need strong leadership. We have one opportunity each day to get it right. Let's work together. Let's focus on what unites us. And let's win for the counties across our Commonwealth. 🍷

**JOE KANTZ**



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# County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania 2026 PRIORITIES DAY

In January, county leaders across Pennsylvania unveiled three key legislative priorities at the State Capitol, led by a call to increase 911 funding in the state, followed by mental health funding and assistance in property reassessment. The 2026 priorities were selected by the full CCAP membership, which spans all 67 counties in Pennsylvania.





# Get to Know Your CCAP President

**CCAP's 2026 President is Snyder County Commissioner Joe Kantz. While he is a familiar face to most, let's get to know him a little bit better through some Q&A.**

---

**Q What inspired you to be a County Commissioner?**

**A** I decided I wanted to be a county commissioner at the age of twelve. As someone who was interested in politics at an early age, I remember watching fellow churchgoers in my church interact with one of the county commissioners on a weekly basis. They ask him what was happening in the county and maybe even complain to him about things they did not like. I think the interaction and watching him problem solve is what prompted me to think about running for office, even at an early age.

**Q Tell us a little about your county.**

**A** Snyder County is a great example of a rural county that has pockets of progress all around. Most residents have a fiscally conservative streak in them and expect their government to follow suit. We have a lot of agriculture and wood related manufacturing in our county, especially mass produced cabinet making. Our eastern side of the county has a lot of retail with a major highway (Routes 11&15) running north to south and one of the largest highway projects in the Commonwealth scheduled to be completed in 2027. This highway sees over 50,000 vehicles per day.



**Q What issues have been the most important to you during your time as commissioner?**

**A** I'd have to say watching out for the spending of tax-payer money has always been my top priority. You have to learn how to best accomplish this, however. If you are looking to cut spending on a certain program or department, you have to weigh the potential cost if something from that cut causes the county to be put into a bigger liability situation. Which will cost more and what is the risk? We manage a lot of risk as commissioners.

**Q Overall, what are the most important issues PA counties are facing right now?**

**A** In my opinion, counties' most important issue has always been and continues to be paying for the sins of people. One does not need to be religious to believe and understand that approximately 60-70% of our budget each year pays for staff who are dealing with folks who broke the law, abused children, are on the road to rehabilitation after having been incarcerated for breaking the law. We pay for a multitude of sins. That's the world

in which we live. We have to get creative to stretch limited amounts of money in order to do as much as we can. We also need to recognize what works and what doesn't work. If we see something that doesn't work, stop wasting money on it and find something that does work. Sometimes we have to try something new, even if we don't know what the outcome will be. There is some risk taking involved in this job. Like Henry Ford once said, "failure is simply the opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently." If we can help residents turn their lives around permanently, the cost to the taxpayer goes down exponentially and we also improve our community.

**Q Why did you get involved with CCAP?**

**A** I'd have to say mainly because a former CCAP president, Jim Kennedy introduced himself to me when I attended one of my first conferences and suggested I should get involved if I wanted to learn and also help shape the future of CCAP. I've been involved with CCAP ever since.

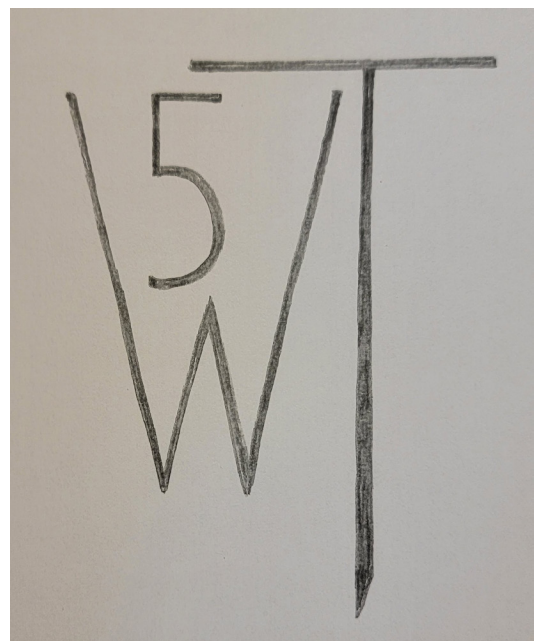
**Q Are you involved in any other local government groups or organizations?**

**A** At one point, I think I was on 28 boards at one time. Of course being a Commissioner requires us to sit on a number of boards right off the bat. I do a lot of work in Economic Development. I have been a member of the SEDA-COG Board which serves an 11 County region and also served as President of that board in 2025. I have also served on the board of DRIVE, a five county Council of Governments, since Snyder County joined

in 2020. I have also worked part time for the North Shore Railroad as their Business & Development Manager since 2014. I really enjoy being involved in Economic Development!

**Q What do you hope to accomplish as CCAP President?**

**A** When I decided to run for 2nd VP two years ago, I shared a logo I created. You can see it below. 5WT means "We Win When We Work Together." Now in my nineteenth year as a Commissioner, I have watched many presidents lead our association on issues. Some presidents have really reached out to individual members to ask for input and request their help as CCAP advocates for laws and policies that benefit counties, large and small. I hope to be able to continue this advocacy on behalf of all our member counties by setting personal agendas aside and working together to accomplish our goals and priorities. ▾



# 911 In Pennsylvania:

## READY FOR THE FUTURE

By Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency

**T**he first phase of modernizing Pennsylvania's 911 infrastructure was completed in Spring 2025 when all our county Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) became operational on the Next Generation 911 (NG911) system.

All PSAPs now have access to several enhancements, such as receiving incoming calls faster over the system's Emergency Services IP Network (ESInet), a secure state-wide private fiber network dedicated to public safety communications traffic, and using geographic information systems (GIS) data for more accurate routing of 911 calls.

This transformation from the legacy 911 environment to a more resilient, adaptable technology equipped to handle the demands of modern-day communications would not have been possible without the support and cooperation of all our 911 stakeholders. Much of the success of this first NG911 phase can be attributed to the dedication of county partners at the PSAPs and GIS offices who assisted with planning, training, testing, and migration activities.

### WORK TO BE DONE

Getting county PSAPs on the NG911 platform was just the first part of the upgrade. Pennsylvania's transition to NG911 won't be considered complete until we finish these crucial elements:

**Phone Carrier Migration:** To reach end-state NG911, telecommunications service providers are required to connect to the NG911 system in accordance with a two-phased approach outlined in the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Report and Order Facilitating

Implementation of Next Generation 911 Services. Carrier migrations may take two years to complete based on the compliance regulations included in the FCC Order. Pennsylvania is working to establish the necessary regulatory framework prior to beginning these migrations.

**Border Crossings:** Twenty-nine Pennsylvania counties share a border with a neighboring state. It's important for these counties to be able to transfer 911 calls with their interstate counterparts. Today, these transfers occur outside of the NG911 system – and they lack caller information. Establishing interoperability through our Emergency Services IP Network (ESInet) promotes phone number and location data sharing between states once they each finalize their migrations to NG911. Discussions are already underway with our NG911-ready neighbors Maryland and Ohio.

**Cybersecurity:** Ensuring the security of the NG911 system and technology used with the PSAP is critical to maintaining its reliability. Additionally, it's essential that emerging technologies introduced to the NG911 system are implemented in accordance with strict cybersecurity standards and best practices. A statewide cybersecurity gap analysis procurement is underway as of Spring 2026. The goal is to update minimum cybersecurity requirements for PSAPs, conduct an analysis of both PSAP and regional systems to identify gaps in meeting these updated minimum requirements, and provide cost estimated and best practices for resolving them.

**Reaching New Heights:** The addition of elevation data to a 911 call can provide a more precise, dispatchable location and improve response times by alerting telecommunications of the floor from which the call is being made. The National Emergency Number Association is



expected to release a new NG911 data model in 2026 that offers guidance on including z-axis details. County GIS data will need to eventually align with these new standards, GIS and call taking workflows will need to be revised, and applications such as computer-aided dispatch will need to be updated to accept and display the elevation data.

**Ongoing GIS Upkeep:** Continued timely and accurate maintenance of GIS datasets ensures that 911 calls are routed to the proper center and enables phone carriers to validate customer location data prior to when that customer needs to call for emergency assistance.

## THE “HEART” OF 911

While Pennsylvania has taken great strides in fortifying its public safety communications infrastructure, we also need to determine how these enhancements can best support the “heart” of our 911 system: our telecommunicators.

In a 2025 statewide survey, counties reported an average vacancy rate of 20% of the 2,685 allocated 911 telecommunicator positions. Eight counties said staffing levels dropped below 70%. The 911 system doesn’t work if there’s no one there to answer the call.

It will take a variety of strategies in areas such as technology, training, public recognition, operations, and mental health and wellness to address current and future personnel needs.

## THE FUTURE IN ACTION

NG911 system data show that the length of an average 911 call in Pennsylvania is 121 seconds. However, that

average duration increases to greater than five minutes for non-English speaking individuals because telecommunicators need time to conference a live agent from a language assistance service.

What if 911 telecommunicators had access to the tools commonly available in today’s digital world?

Instant messaging and video calls have become second nature to many people. Features like automatic transcription of meeting notes, real-time language translation, and quick data summarization from multiple sources through artificial intelligence have enhanced business communication.

Our statewide ESInet can act as the secure foundation on which PSAPs can embrace these new technologies, share workloads, and streamline workflows based on established standards and best practices. The PEMA 911 Office is working to develop a statewide call handling equipment marketplace which will include many of these modern features and ensure all PSAPs have access to the latest advancements.

The role of the 911 telecommunicator will evolve to include data-driven decision making, which will permit responders to be dispatched more quickly.

Counties will need to update organizational structures, hiring practices, training, and policies to ensure that its 911 personnel have the necessary skills to interpret these new data elements.

Through our collective diligence, Pennsylvania’s NG911 system ensures all individuals who contact 911 for help have access to the same standards of care regardless of which PSAP answers the call. 🗡



# RECOGNIZING AND SUPPORTING CAREGIVERS OF VETERANS

**A**cross Pennsylvania and the nation, caregivers quietly sustain a system that would otherwise struggle to function. For military and veteran caregivers in particular, this role is rarely planned for and almost never fully understood at the outset. Caregiving is most often thrust upon individuals when a loved one experiences a sudden injury, illness, or crisis, leaving them to navigate complex systems, financial strain, and emotional demands with little preparation.

Pennsylvania is home to nearly 650,000 veterans, half of which are older than 65. So, Pennsylvania's Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) is shining a light on caregiver support as a critical component of veteran well-being. By elevating caregiver voices and convening partners such as the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, the Pennsylvania Department of Aging (PDA), and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), DMVA is helping to raise awareness of the challenges caregivers face and the resources available to support them.

## THE CAREGIVING LANDSCAPE

Most caregivers tend to not initially identify themselves as such. They are spouses, parents, siblings, children, or friends simply stepping in to help a loved one. Over time, caregiving often expands to include managing medications, coordinating medical appointments, assisting with personal care, providing emotional and mental health support, maintaining a household, and sometimes continuing to work outside the home to earn income.

Caregivers seldom receive formal training, and even fewer are prepared for the long-term impact of the role. Without adequate support, caregivers themselves may experience declining health, burnout, depression, and financial insecurity – sometimes shortening their own lives and affecting the well-being of those they care for.

Research consistently shows that unpaid caregivers play a vital role in sustaining the long-term care

system, yet many experience significant stress and financial pressure. Out-of-pocket expenses related to housing, medical needs, transportation, and daily living supports can consume a substantial portion of household income, forcing difficult choices between caregiving responsibilities and personal financial stability. These pressures are especially pronounced for working caregivers still building careers and families of their own, as well as caregivers from historically underserved communities.

## VETERAN CAREGIVERS AND THE HIDDEN HEROES MISSION

For military and veteran caregivers, these challenges are often intensified by service-connected injuries, including invisible wounds and conditions that require long-term or lifelong care needs. Many support veterans with complex physical injuries, traumatic brain injuries, or mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder. Despite the scope of their responsibilities, many caregivers do not realize that they are considered caregivers – or that specialized support exists.

The Elizabeth Dole Foundation's (EDF) Hidden Heroes Campaign has played a pivotal role in raising awareness of military and veteran caregivers nationwide. Through advocacy, storytelling, and a national caregiver registry, the initiative works to ensure caregivers are recognized, supported, and connected to resources, while also inspiring community leaders to take action at the local level.

In 2023, Pennsylvania was formally recognized as a Hidden Heroes Commonwealth. Hundreds of registered military and veteran caregivers live in Pennsylvania, alongside many more who remain unseen. DMVA remains committed to honoring caregivers – especially those caring for veterans – whose daily efforts often go unrecognized, and encourages them to seek support without stigma.



## STATE AND FEDERAL SUPPORT

Pennsylvania offers meaningful assistance through the Pennsylvania Caregiver Support Program, administered by local Area Agencies on Aging. This program provides respite care, supportive services, and financial reimbursement to help reduce caregiver stress and promote caregiver well-being. The Pennsylvania Department of Aging also supports caregivers through the PA CareKit, a collection of tools and information designed to help individuals navigate their caregiving journey.

At the federal level, the VA's Caregiver Support Program offers two complementary pathways. The Program of General Caregiver Support Services provides training, peer support, respite, and connections to caregiver resources if the veteran is enrolled in VA health care. Eligible caregivers may utilize the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers, offering enhanced clinical support for veterans with serious injuries or illnesses, which may include mental health services, health coverage options, travel assistance, and a monthly stipend.

Together, these programs form a broad network of support. However, gaps in awareness and understanding remain a challenge, underscoring the importance of outreach and education.

## A COLLECTIVE PATH FORWARD

Caregivers provide essential care that would otherwise require costly institutional services, allowing veterans and loved ones to remain in their homes and communities. Yet caregiving often comes at a personal cost—emotionally, physically, and financially.

Supporting caregivers is not only a moral imperative; it is a practical one. Strengthening caregiver support systems benefits veterans, families, and communities alike. By continuing to elevate caregiver voices and encourage the use of available resources, Pennsylvania is taking important steps toward a more coordinated and compassionate approach.

Recognizing caregivers as the Hidden Heroes they are means ensuring they are supported, valued, and never expected to shoulder this responsibility alone. 🇺🇸

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# A Personal Look at Mental Health Funding

By State Representative Mike Schlossberg

**R**ates of mental illness are rising. One in five U.S. adults has experienced a mental illness over the past year, a major jump over the past decade. The increases are sharpest among our youth, where rates of mental illness have increased 35% since 2016.

Of course, I don't need to tell you any of this. As someone involved in county government, you are on the front lines of those who need the most mental health assistance but have the least to combat these challenges.

The world of mental health has been a mixed bag over the past few years. Stigma is down. Investments in Pennsylvania are up. The 988 Lifeline and increased school funding are unqualified successes. Our county systems have seen \$60 million returned in the past five years.

The July 2025 budget passed by the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives did include a \$20 million increase for county-based mental health programs. Unfortunately, that funding did not make it into the final budget that was signed into law in November.

This year's proposed budget reflects the need to invest in mental health systems. In a world of limited priorities, it invests additional dollars into rate increases, crisis-stabilization centers, 988, transitions to community-based services, school-based mental health, and more.

Like every budget, this one is a starting point, and I look forward to advocating for more dollars for this issue, including working to overcome traditional reticence to fund our county-based efforts.

The Governor's continued support for increased mental health funding is indicative of where so many of us are as a governing body. The vast majority of us are smart and compassionate enough to realize that funding county-based mental health programs is not optional.

I'd also note a fundamental truth: Funding mental health now is a better investment than funding it later. Every study – and simply common sense – shows that getting kids and teens the help they need will ensure that they develop the skills needed to manage their mental

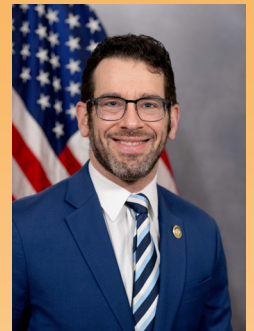
illness. Early treatment is prevention. Getting people the help they need allows them to lead happy lives, productive lives, and keeps them away from the criminal justice system.

That being said, let me drop the government-speak. Hi. My name is Mike Schlossberg. When I was 18, I was diagnosed with a major depressive and generalized anxiety disorder. I suffered from horrific panic attacks and was briefly suicidal. I know the pain that so many of your constituents are suffering from.

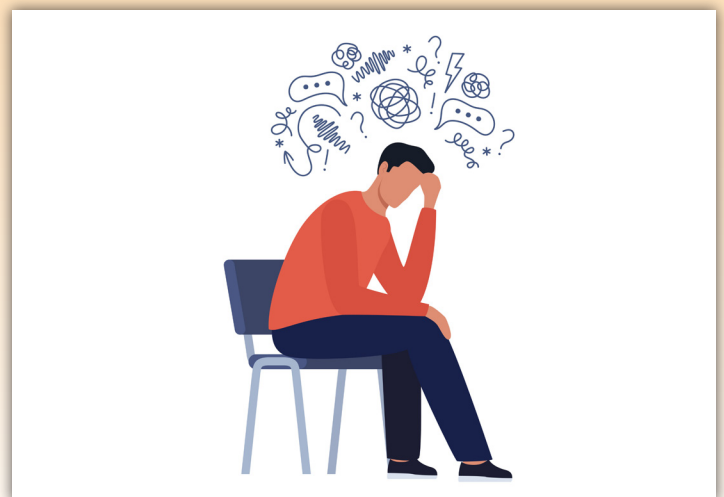
Simply put, birth made me lucky. I had supportive parents, top-notch insurance, and access to the medication I take – to this day – to regulate my mood and ensure that the words of my therapist make a difference.

Are all of your constituents that lucky? Are the people that are served by county government so fortunate? Of course not.

Forget the dollars, forget the "investment" and talk about prevention. The goal of government isn't to hoard money. It's to be compassionate and decent. It's to give the least among us the chance to be the most. ▼



Mike Schlossberg





Risk Management  
Training

# Training Opportunities from CCAP Insurance Programs

## **BUILDING STRONGER COUNTIES THROUGH EDUCATION AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

Proactive risk management begins with education, a principle at the heart of the training initiatives offered by Insurance Programs at CCAP. Designed to equip county leaders, elected officials and employees with practical tools and current knowledge, these risk management trainings serve as a comprehensive resource to help counties operate safely, efficiently and responsibly.

As a cornerstone of CCAP Insurance Programs' commitment to professional excellence, these trainings are offered free of charge to any elected official or employee of a county or county-related entity (CRE) that participates in the sponsoring CCAP Insurance Program(s). Non-members may attend for a nominal fee, with discounted pricing available for groups of three or more.

By eliminating financial barriers for members, CCAP Insurance Programs ensures that high-quality education remains accessible. Additionally, these trainings offer a tangible return on membership investment and a strategic approach to reducing claims, mitigating risk and controlling long-term insurance program costs.

## **A ROBUST AND RELEVANT SEASONAL TRAINING SCHEDULE**

CCAP Insurance Programs offers approximately 40 trainings hosted at locations throughout Pennsylvania, along with convenient virtual options. This hybrid model ensures accessibility for counties of all sizes and geographic regions.

These training courses are structured to deliver practical, real-world guidance tailored to the evolving demands of local government. Each training season begins with input from members, as CCAP actively solicits topic suggestions to ensure the training schedule reflects emerging trends, legislative updates, regulatory changes and operational concerns facing counties today. Subject areas include personal development, professional development and specialized risk management.

Professional speakers and subject matter experts lead each session, offering high-quality instruction grounded

in practical experience. Beyond the educational value, these sessions also create meaningful networking opportunities, allowing county officials and employees to share insights and best practices with peers from across Pennsylvania. By investing in employee development, county leaders cultivate resilient teams prepared to meet the complex challenges of public service.

The success of these programs is made possible by the dedicated support of the CCAP Insurance Programs' Boards of Directors. Their continued commitment to risk management enables these trainings to remain a valuable and sustainable member benefit.

## **ADVANCING A MISSION OF PREVENTION AND SUSTAINABILITY**

By prioritizing education and prevention, counties strengthen their workforce, safeguard taxpayer resources and position themselves for long-term financial stability. Every training, webinar and online course contributes to a broader culture of accountability and proactive risk management.

Spring is the perfect time to invest in growth, safety, and stronger leadership. This season, our lineup of professional trainings are designed to protect your people and elevate performance. From Defensive Driving and Field-worker Safety to ensure your employees stay safe on the road and in the field, to Workers' Compensation, Cyber Security, HR Boot Camp and Prison Risk Management programs that strengthen compliance and risk awareness. These sessions deliver practical, real-world strategies you can apply immediately.

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For more information about the CCAP Insurance Programs trainings or to register for a session, visit the Risk Management Training section of the CCAP website at [www.pacounties.org/insurance/risk-management-trainings](http://www.pacounties.org/insurance/risk-management-trainings) or contact: Linda Rosito - Risk Management Training Director at [Irosito@pacounties.org](mailto:Irosito@pacounties.org). 🍷

# COUNTY JAILS: The Mental Health Hospitals No One Asked For

## A JAIL ADMINISTRATOR'S PERSPECTIVE ON PENNSYLVANIA'S GROWING CRISIS

**A**cross Pennsylvania, county jails are absorbing a responsibility they were never designed to carry: serving as de facto mental health treatment centers. Inside our facilities, the shift is unmistakable. Individuals who should be receiving community-based treatment for depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, or trauma are instead entering our custody—often not because they are dangerous, but because there was nowhere else for them to go.

### A SYSTEM STRETCHED BEYOND ITS PURPOSE

County jails were built for short-term detention and public safety, not long-term clinical care. Yet on any given day, a significant portion of our population is managing a diagnosable mental illness.

When someone is in crisis at 2 a.m., it's a correctional officer—not a mental health professional—who responds. When paranoia prevents someone from eating or sleeping, it's our staff trying to stabilize them with limited tools. These are dedicated public servants, but they are not clinicians, and the environment itself is not therapeutic.

The result is predictable: symptoms worsen, crises escalate, and the cycle of incarceration continues.

### ROLE CONFLICT AND INSTITUTIONAL STRAIN

In contemporary correctional environments, officers increasingly encounter a profound 'role conflict' originating from the divergent mandates of custodial security and the therapeutic management of inmates with serious mental illnesses (SMI). This tension serves as a primary indicator of occupational stress, which when intersected with institutional stressors such as understaff-

ing and mandatory overtime, exacerbates both burnout and secondary traumatic stress.

This cumulative psychological burden, frequently termed 'corrections fatigue,' mirrors the developmental course of compassion fatigue. As correctional personnel are increasingly deployed to manage specialized SMI populations, they face increased exposure to high-acuity incidents, including self-injurious behavior, physical mutilation, and suicide attempts. The pervasive burnout observed among correctional staff frequently precipitates high attrition rates and voluntary separations, thereby intensifying chronic staffing deficits and further compounding systemic institutional strain.

### THE HUMAN AND FISCAL REALITIES FOR COUNTIES

Counties are already carrying the financial burden of housing individuals who would be better served elsewhere. Suicide watches, emergency transports, constant monitoring, and specialized medical care all drive up costs.

But the human cost is even harder to quantify. Jails are loud, stressful, and inherently restrictive—conditions that can intensify mental health symptoms. Staff experience burnout and compassion fatigue. Individuals leave our facilities without adequate community support and often return within weeks or months.

This is not a failure of county government. It is the predictable result of a mental health system that has been underfunded for more than a decade.

### REAL PEOPLE, REAL CONSEQUENCES

The stories behind the statistics are what stay with you. A young man experiencing undiagnosed schizophrenia, arrested for a disturbance in a convenience store

because the voices in his head insisted the other customers were dangerous, and denied involuntary inpatient treatment because he could go to jail instead. A former college professor struggling with serious mental illness was incarcerated to create the appropriate circumstances for involuntary inpatient treatment and competency restoration, whose condition deteriorated rapidly in the stress of incarceration.

These individuals didn't need a jail cell. They needed treatment, stability, and support—services that were too often simply unavailable.

## WHY COMMUNITY INVESTMENT MATTERS

Counties know what works:

- Assertive community treatment teams
- Crisis stabilization units
- Mobile crisis response
- Supportive housing
- Outpatient programs with real capacity

But counties cannot build or sustain these programs without meaningful, consistent investment.

Community mental health services reduce jail populations, improve public safety, and help people maintain stability in the community. They keep families intact, reduce recidivism, and provide a far more humane and cost-effective alternative to incarceration.

## A CALL FOR PARTNERSHIP AND FUNDING

Pennsylvania's counties and their jails have long been committed to public safety and public health. But we

cannot continue absorbing the responsibilities of an underfunded mental health system without additional support.

State investment in community-based mental health services would allow counties to:

- Divert individuals from jail before a crisis escalates
- Expand outpatient and residential treatment capacity
- Strengthen crisis response and stabilization options
- Support families seeking help for loved ones
- Ensure humane, effective care for those who do enter county custody

This is not about shifting responsibility. It is about aligning resources with need and ensuring that individuals with mental illness receive appropriate care in the appropriate setting.

## CONCLUSION

While county jails will always be a cornerstone of public safety, they were never designed to serve as Pennsylvania's primary mental health facilities. Correctional staff around the Commonwealth work tirelessly under increasingly untenable conditions, but we must acknowledge that the current model is neither sustainable for our personnel nor effective for those in our custody.

By reinvesting in community-based mental health services, we can divert individuals toward clinical care rather than confinement, effectively improving outcomes and reducing recidivism. Ultimately, strategic fiscal investment and robust structural reforms are the only direct means of stabilizing our workforce and protecting the psychological well-being of the officers who manage high-acuity populations on the front lines every day.



# STRATEGIES TO REDUCE THE STRAIN ON COUNTY JAILS

## STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

- Restore county mental health funding
- Expand supportive housing
- Increase psychiatric bed availability

## IMPROVE CRISIS RESPONSE & DIVERSION

- Deploy 24/7 mobile crisis teams
- Establish crisis stabilization units
- Implement pre arrest diversion pathways

## ENHANCE CROSS SYSTEM COLLABORATION

- Strengthen partnerships between jails, human services, and providers
- Use shared data systems for continuity of care
- Expand co responder models

## SUPPORT REENTRY & CONTINUITY OF CARE

- Begin reentry planning at intake
- Provide warm handoffs to outpatient treatment and housing
- Coordinate transportation and appointments

## INVEST IN JAIL STAFF TRAINING & SUPPORT

- Expand mental health training for correctional officers
- Provide clinical consultation for complex cases
- Offer staff wellness and resilience programs

## SECURE TARGETED STATE INVESTMENT

- Create dedicated funding streams for justice involved individuals
- Commit to long term, sustainable investment in county mental health systems



## AUTHOR BIO

Katy Hileman, CCE, serves as the Warden of the Adams County Adult Correctional Complex in Pennsylvania, where she oversees facility operations, staff leadership, and inmate services for one of the region's key correctional institutions. With more than a decade of experience in county corrections and criminal justice administration, she has become a leading voice on the growing intersection of mental health and incarceration.

Warden Hileman is an active member of the Adams County Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB), serves as Chair of the CJAB Behavioral Health Subcommittee, and is a member of the statewide Criminal Justice Advisory Committee. In each of these roles, she works closely with county leadership, human services partners, and statewide organizations to strengthen community-based mental health supports and reduce the reliance on jails as default treatment centers.

She is committed to building safer, more humane systems that support both staff and the individuals in their care. 📌



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# An Inside Look at the Impacts of an Underfunded County Mental Health System

By Lori Vargo Heffner, Northampton County Council Member and Practicing Psychotherapist

In my capacity as a county commissioner, CCAP board member, and member of the Human services committee both at the state and local level, I have seen the debate regarding funding and service delivery for mental health needs. It has been difficult to make the ask for funding every year and see it reduced or ignored, as other priorities are treated as more important. I am in a unique position as a full-time practicing psychotherapist, as well as commissioner. I have been practicing in my profession for over 40 years. There have been many changes in terms of treatment techniques, diagnostics, medications, evidence-based practices and clinical strategies. People have become more conversant and clinically savvy regarding their own mental health and well-being. One area that has not changed, and has in fact increased, is the number of people seeking mental health services. New pharmaceutical options have become available. They are more effective and give consumers the option to live a better quality of life.

However, medications alone are not enough to manage mental health concerns. More people are seeking services than ever before, and our profession has not been able to keep up with the demand. Adding to the difficulty is finding qualified providers that are available to serve acute or chronic cases or special needs. Insurance companies in most states have granted parity to be able to treat mental health and substance abuse clients, but there are still many without the means to afford care and those who have public assistance may have more difficulty with access and longer wait times to get in touch with providers. This gap results in more emergency room visits, more crisis response, and less consistent care to manage and reduce symptoms. The debate continues among government officials about how much they should fund these services. When 2.3 million Pennsylvania residents experience mental health concerns, it is inhumane to deny services or coverage that will allow them to have the ability to live well and have their issues addressed effectively. Last year's funding/ budgetary delays significantly impacted the ability for people to receive timely continued care and services. Consumer services were interrupted because of the inability of

providers to continue due to the lack of pay and increase in demand. While many providers tried to keep services available and intact, others were simply unable to afford to do so.

Many have not returned to practice their specialty areas which has created deficits in service delivery. Other providers decided to leave the field entirely, citing distress and burnout exacerbated by the financial insecurity. Fiscal responsibility is important, but ignoring the deficits for mental health funding over the past several decades while demand continues to increase is a short-sighted approach. When people are healthy and their mental health needs are treated, they are better able to be productive functioning members of society who are able to contribute to a financial bottom line that benefits all. When they are unable to receive care, especially younger and more vulnerable populations, it increases a financial burden overall. Families are unable to be productive in their workplace due to their need to take care of their family members who are affected. It makes fiscal sense to contribute a fair amount to the mental health system before it breaks.

There are wonderful, creative, qualified people who are working tirelessly to serve this population at every level of care. This is a lifespan issue which touches all of us, not just a certain age or demographic group. They are our neighbors, our friends, our family. The people of the Commonwealth deserve a continuum of care that is adequately funded and sustainable. It is time to look forward to a long-term sustainable



funding plan for the future of these services. I won't be giving 40 more years in this profession, but I plan to continue to make a difference in the lives of others. I ask my colleagues in government to do the same by creating and sustaining a culture in which mental health services & funding are seen as an essential part of our lives. 🍷



# The County Administration Conference

*CCAP's County Administration Conference (CAC) will take place  
May 13 - 14, 2026 at the Wyndham Garden Boalsburg Centre County, PA.*

**Q What is the County Administration Conference?**

**A** The CCAP County Administration Conference (CAC) is designed specifically for county personnel in administration, human resources, finance and technology.

**Q Who typically attends the conference?**

**A** Chief Clerks, County Administrators, Human Resources, Fiscal Managers and IT professionals.

**Q What are the primary goals of the event?**

**A** Inform and engage attendees by covering the latest trends, technologies and best practices that will improve and elevate operational efficiencies in their county.

**Q What types of topics are covered during the sessions?**

**A** Topics range from enhancing leadership skills, strengthening safety operations, technology innovations, grant writing, financial best practices, understanding laws and legal processes impacting counties, and the latest trends facing counties both today and in the future.



**Q How does the conference benefit county governments?**

**A** Attendees will leave with practical resources that will not only directly impact their role and productivity but also improve workflow effectiveness within their counties.

**Q Are there opportunities for collaboration and networking during the conference?**

**A** This conference is uniquely designed to provide multiple touch points with other attendees during interactive breakouts and hot-topic roundtable discussions, as well as casual networking during breaks and meals. This conference also hosts select vendors with products and services to enhance county operational performance.

**Q How are emerging issues and trends addressed at the conference?**

**A** From the start of the opening general session, through breakout sessions and roundtables and concluding with the closing general session CCAP provides relevant programming addressing the most current topics facing county administration professionals.

**Q Who will be the Keynote Speaker for this year's conference?**

**A** The conference always opens with an inspirational keynote that addresses issues or concerns that all county personnel face day-to-day. The keynote at this conference is often a speaker who has experience working in county or local government who can relate to work of our conference attendees and is able to provide relevant, impactful content with actionable takeaways that set the tone for the rest of the conference. (At the time of this writing, the speaker has not been confirmed).

**Q Where can information on the conference and registration details be found?**

**A** More information on the County Administration Conference, and all CCAP conferences can be found on the CCAP website [www.pacounties.org](http://www.pacounties.org) under the Conferences and Education tab. ▼

# A Breath of Fresh Air:

## THE LONG-OVERDUE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF ASSESSMENT INEQUITIES

By Camdon Porterfield, CPE – Chief Assessor, Westmoreland County

The Assessors' Association of Pennsylvania (AAP) represents county assessors throughout the Commonwealth. While education is our main mission, our members have always been strong advocates for fair and equitable reassessment. AAP's educational offerings train our members to be fair, professional and knowledgeable about a variety of subjects. Over the 28 years that the AAP has been a CCAP affiliate, our members have been frequent speakers at conferences, the Assessment and Taxation Committee and many other CCAP events with the main topic being reassessments, especially in the last five years. These popular sessions are always overflowing with commissioners trying to solve the issues of tax fairness, not breaking the county budget and explaining to citizens why reassessment is a good thing.

CCAP's landmark priority of statewide reassessment reform is a breath of fresh air and very welcome by the AAP. Under Pennsylvania law, counties are solely responsible for valuing and assessing all properties, without state oversight or a supervising agency. Pennsylvania is the only state in the nation without a statutory requirement for cyclical property reassessments. The AAP's Assessment Reform Subcommittee has studied other states and how they handle cyclical reassessments and know our counties are up to the task. Regular reassessments would be a big win for Pennsylvania's counties and citizens.

This author began his career as a Certified Pennsylvania Evaluator (CPE) in the private sector and worked on my first county-wide reassessment in 2015 which

also happened to be an election year. At the time, this particular county's tax base year was 1962 – an incomprehensible (though unfortunately not rare) situation.

Updating those values to those 2016 market rates during the reassessment meant the following:

1. Over-taxed residents finally got relief.
2. Undertaxed properties finally paid their fair share.
3. Local governments could operate using numbers from the 21st century.
4. The county escaped its 25 mill cap.
5. Future assessments could reflect actual market behavior – not 50-year-old construction costs.
6. A study by Alan Dornfest, a nationally known expert on property tax policy, confirmed the project met the International Association of Assessing Officials (IAAO) standards, proving the silent majority had benefited.

In another example, I also worked with a county that had a base year of 1958. And while residents did not necessarily embrace the reassessment project, the Board of Commissioners stayed the course, got ahead of the messaging AND *got re-elected*.

Our current assessment system in Pennsylvania has been broken for a long time. Pennsylvania's law states assessors must be fair and equitable in tax assessment, but counties are maintaining data that no longer accurately represents their communities.



One can argue about the abolition of property tax, using a sales tax as supplemental income, et cetera – we’ve heard it all. Point being, property tax is how rural communities and school districts survive alongside the cities and suburbs. Not to mention how depressed areas revitalize themselves – resetting the values resets the tax burden.

Reassessment for counties means fairness, modernization and efficiency. Reassessment ensures your elderly neighbors aren’t subsidizing the new house next door, holds corporations and industries accountable for their fair share of the tax burden, and revitalizes past-prime neighborhoods. The current law demands that counties maintain accurate assessments, not revalue whole counties to get there and they are not legally bound to do so.

That’s where the CCAP reassessment priority comes in. So much progress has been made through various appeals and in some recently introduced legislation. State support is essential to the modernization of assessment systems, promoting greater consistency statewide, and ensuring counties have the resources needed to conduct timely, fair, and uniform reassessments

For anyone listening to the local news, you’ve heard that school districts’ tax funding gets chipped away so often, having to cut their budgets along the way, due to appellants who play the ‘ratio game.’ They’ll settle on a number with the taxing bodies in court, then turn around and re-file the following year (with the same

numbers) to take advantage of the plummeting State Tax Equalization Board (STEB) ratio. If property values were reset to where they’re supposed to be on a cyclical basis, this loophole would be closed. Until then, it’s legally fair game to prey on this vulnerability.

On behalf of the AAP, I urge the legislature to begin working on a solution right away. Many counties can’t afford to wait any longer to revalue their county tax bases, and some can’t afford to do them at all. Yet just about every other state in the Union already has cyclical property revaluations built into their rules and regs – Pennsylvania is woefully behind on the times. That’s why agreeing to a funding mechanism and a timeline for everyone to follow is crucial. It will bring our Commonwealth into the 21st century, and puts everyone involved on an even playing field.

And the behind-the-scenes benefits, like calculating assessments based on market and income rates, will allow us to finally realize full taxable assessed value on commercial, industrial, cell tower, and energy properties. That ultimately *decreases the burden* on the rest of taxpayers, who have been footing the difference all this time.

Once and for all, let’s remove the stigma and deterrents for countywide reassessments. Our constituents deserve a fair and equitable system – it’s time to breathe some fresh air into our Commonwealth. ▼

# 911 FUNDING: BE A COUNTY CHAMPION FOR PUBLIC SAFETY

By Frank Mazza, CCAP Director of Government Relations and Jean Foschi, Cumberland County Commissioner

**F**or Pennsylvania counties, few responsibilities are more fundamental than operating 911.

Every day, county emergency communications centers answer thousands of calls that set public safety in motion. Whether dispatching law enforcement, fire, or EMS, 911 is the critical first point of contact when residents are at their most vulnerable. Before a cruiser is dispatched, before an ambulance rolls, before a fire engine leaves the station — a county telecommunicator has already taken the call, assessed the situation, and directed the response, and will remain on the phone offering guidance and support until help arrives on scene.

Pennsylvania counties appreciate the General Assembly's action last fall to prevent the 911 surcharge from lapsing. That decision preserved essential funding stability and avoided disruption to a system that Pennsylvanians rely on every hour of every day.

But maintaining the current surcharge level is no longer enough.

Since the 911 funding and statutory framework received sweeping updates under Act 12 of 2015 and most recently with Act 34 of 2023 and Act 147 of 2024, the operational landscape has changed dramatically. Counties are now managing Next Generation 911 (NG911) systems capable of handling wireless and VoIP calls, text-to-911, enhanced location services, and data-driven technologies. The public increasingly expects to communicate with 911 the same way they communicate in daily life — by text, mobile device, and with precise GPS-based location.

Meeting that expectation requires continuous system upgrades and sustained capital investment.

At the same time, counties are experiencing significant cost pressures:

- **Workforce challenges.** 911 telecommunicators are highly trained professionals performing high-stress, mission-critical work. Recruitment and retention remain difficult amid nationwide shortages and increasing job demands. Counties must offer competitive compensation and invest in ongoing training to maintain quality service.
- **Technology modernization.** Cybersecurity protections, GIS mapping upgrades, call-handling equipment replacement, network redundancies, and cloud-based transitions are not one-time expenses — they are recurring operational realities.
- **Inflationary impacts.** The purchasing power of the surcharge has steadily declined while vendor contracts, maintenance agreements, and personnel costs have risen.

The result is a growing gap between surcharge revenue and the true cost of operating a modern 911 system.

When that gap widens, counties are left to backfill with local property tax dollars or delay needed upgrades. Neither approach is sustainable, and neither reflects the statewide nature of the 911 system. A resident in a rural county deserves the same reliability and technological capability as a resident in an urban one. Public safety



should not vary based on local tax capacity.

It is also important to recognize the increasing complexity of emergency response. Severe weather events are more frequent and more disruptive. Cybersecurity threats target public infrastructure at every level. Large-scale incidents require seamless interoperability across jurisdictions. A resilient 911 system is foundational to managing all of these challenges effectively.

**This is fundamentally about public safety readiness.**

When someone dials 911 because a loved one is not breathing, because a structure is on fire, or because a crash has occurred, there is no margin for delay. The call must be answered immediately. Location data must be accurate. Dispatch must be seamless. The infrastructure behind that call must be redundant, secure, and resilient.

**The surcharge is the foundation that makes that possible.**

Pennsylvania has made meaningful progress toward a fully interoperable NG911 system. Counties have worked in partnership with the state to modernize emergency communications, improve interoperability, and enhance reliability. Allowing funding to stagnate now risks slowing that progress just as the demands on the system continue to increase.

As counties engage with legislators in the coming months, it is important to frame this issue clearly: an increase to the 911 surcharge is not an expansion request — it is a sustainability measure. It ensures that existing

service levels are maintained, that technology keeps pace with modern demands, and that staffing remains sufficient to answer every call for help without delay.

Members of the General Assembly can be champions for public safety by addressing this issue proactively. Supporting a surcharge increase reinforces Pennsylvania's commitment to strong emergency response infrastructure and protects both rural and urban communities equally. It demonstrates a recognition that 911 is not simply a telecommunications line item — it is the front door to the entire public safety system.

County leaders across the Commonwealth see firsthand the demands placed on 911 centers — the staffing realities, the technology requirements, and the expectations of residents who assume that when they call, someone will answer immediately.

CCAP will continue advocating for a responsible increase to the surcharge and will work alongside counties to provide data, operational context, and real-world examples to policymakers. Together, we can ensure that Pennsylvania's 911 system remains strong, modern, and reliable for the citizens who depend on it.

Public safety begins with that first call. We must make sure the system behind it is fully supported. ▾

# The 2026 Energy Outlook:

## Budget Stability Today, Capacity Pressures Ahead

As Pennsylvania counties continue preparing future budgets, energy costs remain a critical and increasingly complex line item. While electric and natural gas commodity markets have experienced periods of relative stability, rising capacity and reliability costs within the PJM regional power grid are expected to place upward pressure on electric budgets beginning in mid-2026.

PJM Interconnection, the regional transmission organization serving Pennsylvania, recently completed capacity auctions for upcoming planning years. Capacity prices cleared at **\$270 per megawatt-day for June 2025–May 2026**, increased to **\$329 per megawatt-day for June 2026–May 2027**, and are now known to be **\$333 per megawatt-day for June 2027–May 2028**. These capacity costs are embedded in retail electric pricing and ultimately flow through to counties, municipalities, and other public entities.

A positive development for county governments is that PJM capacity pricing is now visible several years forward, providing improved predictability for long-term financial planning. This visibility creates an opportunity to proactively manage exposure to future increases rather than reacting once higher costs appear on utility bills.

## Why Capacity Matters

Electric capacity costs are driven by system demand during a small number of high-load hours each summer. **In practical terms, capacity costs function much like an insurance premium for grid reliability and are paid regardless of how much electricity is ultimately consumed.**

Specifically, five hours known as **PJM RTO Coincident Peaks (5CP)** establish future capacity obligations. A customer's electricity usage during those peak hours directly impacts electric costs for the June-through-May planning years that follow.

PJM has published the official **Summer 2025 5CP hours**, all of which occurred during hot weekday afternoons and early evenings, with system demand exceeding **150,000 megawatts**. These peak events will determine capacity charges for the **June 2026 through May 2027** period.

## Managing Capacity Exposure

Chrislynn Energy Services (CESI) works with counties across Pennsylvania to help stabilize energy budgets by actively managing PJM capacity exposure. CESI's approach includes:

- Reviewing and validating capacity tags that drive future pricing
- Providing advance peak-day notifications during summer months
- Identifying operational curtailment opportunities where feasible
- Incorporating known capacity costs into multi-year procurement strategies

Notably, the Summer 2025 PJM peak hours closely aligned with the peak-day alerts CESI provided to clients. Counties that were able to reduce usage during those hours may benefit from lower capacity exposure in upcoming planning years. CESI can confirm and review these impacts as part of ongoing account analysis.

## Reliability Trends Reinforce the Need for Planning

Across PJM and other U.S. power markets, long-term planning studies continue to show tightening reserve margins driven by rising demand, electrification, and the retirement of older generation resources. While renewable generation and battery storage continue to expand, dispatchable generation remains essential to maintaining grid reliability, keeping capacity costs elevated.

For county governments, this reinforces a key takeaway: **energy cost stability increasingly depends on proactive planning and strategy—not just commodity pricing.**

## Looking Ahead

With PJM capacity pricing now visible through May 2028, counties have a valuable opportunity to align energy procurement strategies with budget cycles, reduce volatility, and improve long-term cost control.

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# COMING ATTRACTION: Bright Path Center in Bucks County

By Donna Duffy Grimm, MA, CPRP, CAADC Administrator

**B**ucks County is excited about Bright Path Center, a one-stop integrated crisis continuum slated to open in July 2026. Embracing the three pillars of an ideal crisis system, someone to contact, someone to respond, and a safe place to go, the Bright Path Center will provide all these components that are now fractured across our system. Specifically, the Center will include the Bucks County 988 Call Center, Crisis Walk-In and Crisis Residential services, Mobile Crisis Dispatch, and Withdrawal Management services, all of which will have access to Peer Support. Mental health, substance use, intellectual disabilities/autism, and physical health will be evaluated and stabilized for adults and children, and/or referred to alternate levels of care when necessary. Treatment will start immediately upon entrance to the site and as indicated, connections will be made to any other programs and supports from which an individual could benefit. As a ground-up construction project, special attention has been given to design and ensuring a no wrong door, trauma-informed and person-focused environment.

Since the Center will be free-standing and not embedded within various hospital environments as currently exists, consolidation of resources, streamlined communication, and diversion from emergency department boarding will be primary expected outcomes.

In addition, opening of Bright Path will follow the opening/implementation of Bucks County's new Diversion, Assessment, Restoration, and Treatment (DART) Center. The DART Center specifically supports individuals forensically at-risk and involved with the criminal justice system to avoid further penetration into the justice system, provide a re-entry resource, and decrease restoration of competency referrals to State Forensic Centers.

While excitement mounts and the synergy of these two projects will go far to strengthen the behavioral health infrastructure so desperately needed across many populations in Bucks County, the ability to fiscally sustain these efforts looms heavily. Braided funding from the State mental health and drug/alcohol public systems, federal grants, local County funding, and donations are standing up these programs, but ongoing operations will fall largely to the public system, including Mental Health Base funding. Without significantly increased State funding or legislatively sponsored requirements for commercial insurers to meaningfully participate in strengthening the behavioral health fabric of our communities, disjointed systems which promote fractured community services will persist and institutionalization, often through incarceration, will continue to be the pathway of our most vulnerable citizens. ▽



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# CCAP INSURANCE PROGRAMS

## EDUCATIONAL PRIORITY:

### PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO CYBER AND PRIVACY EVENTS - BEST PRACTICES EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW



By Amber Baxter, Deputy Managing Director, Insurance Programs

Cybersecurity and data privacy incidents are no longer rare or hypothetical—they are an everyday risk for organizations of all sizes. From ransomware attacks to phishing schemes and accidental data disclosures, public entities face increasing exposure in an ever-evolving digital threat landscape. Recently, PCoRP, the PA Counties Risk Pool, offering property and casualty coverage, has seen a noticeable rise in cybersecurity related claims across member counties. In response, CCAP Insurance Programs has made it a priority to educate members on best practices in preventing and responding to cyber and privacy events.

A cyber and/or privacy event occurs when personal protected information is potentially accessed by an unauthorized user. The Pennsylvania Attorney General website defines security breach as the unauthorized access and acquisition of computerized data that materially compromises the security or confidentiality of personal information maintained by an entity as part of a database of personal information and that causes or the entity reasonably believes has caused or will cause loss or injury to a Pennsylvania resident. Under HIPAA, however, unauthorized access alone, even without confirmed acquisition, is sufficient to trigger a reportable event. Understanding these definitions is critical, because how an organization responds in the first moments of an incident can significantly affect legal, financial, and reputational outcomes.

Bad actors are getting more sophisticated and targeting people as much as technology. Instead of relying solely on brute-force attacks, today's cybercriminals use highly convincing phishing emails, spoofed login pages, social engineering, and even AI-generated messages to trick users into giving up credentials or sensitive information. These attacks are often tailored to appear legitimate, urgent, and familiar, making

them harder to detect and easier to fall victim. As a result, even well-secured systems can be compromised through a single moment of human error. This growing sophistication underscores why cybersecurity is everyone's responsibility and why ongoing awareness, strong security controls, and prompt reporting of suspicious activity are critical to preventing and mitigating cyber and privacy events.

The best defense against cyber and privacy events is prevention. Following established cybersecurity best practices reduces risk and helps protect sensitive information before an incident ever occurs.

One of the most fundamental protections is the use of strong passwords. Passwords should be long, unique, and include a mix of uppercase letters, lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols. Reusing passwords across multiple accounts significantly increases risk. If one account is compromised, others can quickly follow. Password managers are an excellent tool to help generate and securely store complex passwords, so users do not have to remember them all.

In addition to strong passwords, organizations should enable multi-factor authentication (MFA) wherever possible. MFA adds an extra layer of security by requiring more than just a password, such as a text message code, authentication app approval, or biometric verification. Enabling MFA significantly decreases the likelihood of unauthorized access, even if credentials are compromised.

Another critical preventive measure is reporting suspicious emails and activity immediately. Phishing remains one of the most common entry points for cyber incidents. If an unsolicited email includes an attachment, a link, or a request for personal or login information, users should not click, respond, or forward it. Instead, it should be reported immediately to IT. What



may look like a harmless email could be a phishing attempt designed to steal credentials or deliver malware. Keeping software up to date is also essential. Regular software updates patch known vulnerabilities that attackers often exploit. Even when automatic updates are enabled, users should periodically check that updates have been applied to operating systems, browsers, and applications.

Finally, organizations should limit the amount of confidential information stored in email. Email is not a secure file cabinet. When possible, secure file-sharing software should be used instead of email attachments. Sensitive documents should be saved to approved systems and then deleted from email inboxes to reduce exposure.

## WHAT TO DO DURING A SUSPECTED CYBER OR PRIVACY EVENT

Despite best efforts, incidents can still occur. When they do, a calm, coordinated response is essential.

**Do notify IT immediately.** As soon as suspicious activity is detected—such as ransomware, phishing, malware, or accidental data exposure, whether electronic or paper, IT should be contacted without delay. They will follow the organization’s incident response plan and determine next steps.

**Do report the incident to your cyber insurance or coverage carrier immediately.** Early notification allows access to forensic experts, legal coordination, and response resources covered by the policy or coverage document.

**Do preserve evidence.** Do not delete suspicious emails, logs, or files, and do not shut down systems unless instructed. Screenshots, communications, and system logs may be critical to the investigation.

**Do reset compromised credentials as soon as possible.** If credentials were entered into a phishing site or malware is suspected, passwords should be reset immediately, at a minimum.

**Do wait for legal guidance before notifying third parties.** All notifications to regulators, law enforcement, or affected individuals should be coordinated through the assigned Privacy and Response Attorney.

## WHAT NOT TO DO DURING AN INCIDENT

Equally important are the actions to avoid. **Do not use the term “breach”** unless legal counsel has confirmed it. **Do not notify external authorities or affected individuals** without legal direction. **Do not investigate on your own** by clicking suspicious links or testing malware. **Do not ignore suspicious activity**, no matter how small it seems. And finally, **do not panic.** Cyber incidents are stressful, but response teams exist for this reason. Staying calm and following protocol protects both the organization and the individuals involved.

By practicing strong cybersecurity habits and responding appropriately when incidents occur, organizations can significantly reduce the impact of cyber and privacy events and meet their legal and regulatory obligations with confidence.

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For more information on risk management training opportunities related to cybersecurity and data privacy, please visit the CCAP Risk Management Training page at <https://www.pacounties.org/insurance/risk-management-trainings/risk-management-spring-2026-spring-training>. ▼

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# REASSESSMENT 101:

## A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

By Joshua Zeyn, CPE, Chief Assessor, Tioga County | Bruce Witt, CPE, Chief Appraiser, Bucks County

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Property reassessment is one of the most important responsibilities counties have in maintaining a fair, uniform, and transparent system of taxation. When property assessments fall out of alignment with current market values, the tax burden can shift unevenly, and can often go unnoticed until inequities become severe, or litigation forces action. This article explains what reassessment is, why it matters, how it is done, and what changes may be coming that will directly affect our current system.

### WHAT IS A REASSESSMENT?

A reassessment, sometimes referred to as the “R” word, is the process of revaluing all properties county-wide and establishing updated assessments based on the current fair market value of each parcel. Reassessments are commonly completed through a mass appraisal process, which relies on standardized appraisal methodology, common property data, and statistical testing. This process allows for the efficient valuation of a large group of properties at a significantly lower cost than an individual property fee appraisal. The mass appraisal process uses valuation models, and uniform property data, whereas a fee appraisal involves a more detailed, property-specific analysis. Both approaches are governed by the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP) and must adhere to the same ethical and professional requirements.

The International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO) recommends completing a reassessment every four to six years. Pennsylvania is the last state in the country operating under a base year system. The county base years vary from 1961 – 2026, and the Common Level Ratios (CLR) vary from 5.86% - 100%, a clear indicator of how much base year assessments have changed when compared to current market conditions. The CLR reflects the overall ratio of assessed value to sales price for the county’s validated sales each year. This ratio provides each county with a measure of how its existing property assessments compare to the

current market value of properties on a percentage basis. For example, if a county has a CLR of 50%, then on average the current assessed values are 50% of the current market value of properties based on that year’s validated sales.

As of 2026, reassessment has become generational in some Pennsylvania counties, you can serve as a county commissioner, work in assessment office, or own property and never experience the reassessment process during your career or lifetime. Unfortunately, the discussion on fixing our antiquated system has gotten to this point as well. A 2010 report that was sponsored by The Center for Rural Pennsylvania titled: *Pennsylvania County Property Reassessment: Impact on Local Government Finances and the Local Economy* included the following:

“Three separate studies on taxation at the state and local levels have been commissioned by Pennsylvania governors during the past 40 years: in 1968 by Governor Shafer, in 1981 by Governor Thornburgh, and in 1987 by Governor Casey. Additionally, in conjunction with Governor Casey’s 1987 study, the Local Government Commission sponsored a Real Estate Assessment Task Force, which issued its report on October 1988 (Local Government Commission, 1988). All of these studies recognized the inequities that result from not conducting regular reassessments; the difficulties involved in the reassessment process; and, the possible benefits of regular reoccurring countywide reassessments and a uniform assessment standard.”

The 2010 Center for Rural Pennsylvania report references studies that have been commissioned or conducted over the last 40 years, and since this report was written, it’s now been 56 years!

The final key point regarding reassessments, and this is often one of the most common misconceptions about the process is that in Pennsylvania, reassessments are essentially revenue neutral. After a reassessment, each taxing district must recalculate its millage rate so that the total taxes levied in the year following the reassessment do not exceed the prior year’s levy. Counties and municipalities may increase revenue by up to 10%,

but only through a separate and specific action. In practical terms, a reassessment simply results in the redistribution of the existing tax burden based on each property's current fair market value, rather than an increase in tax revenue.

## WHY DO COUNTIES DO IT?

The primary reason counties undertake reassessments is to comply with the Pennsylvania Constitution's requirement of uniform taxation. Since there is no state requirement on how often reassessments are to be completed, or automatic statistical triggers, the constitutional mandate for uniformity is our only standard in Pennsylvania. Article VIII, Section 1 states:

"All taxes shall be uniform, upon the same class of subjects, within the territorial limits of the authority levying the tax, and shall be levied and collected under general laws."

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court's 1909 decision in *Delaware, Lackawanna & Western R.R. Co.'s Tax Assessment*, 73 A.429 held that all real estate constitutes a single class for taxation under the Uniformity Clause, making the mandate of uniformity superior to the requirement that property be assessed at actual value. As the court explained:

"While every tax is a burden, it is more cheerfully borne when the citizen feels that he is only required to bear his proportionate share of that burden measured by the value of his property to that of his neighbor. This is not an idle thought in the mind of the taxpayer, nor is it a mere speculative theory advocated by learned writers on the subject; but it is a fundamental principle written into the Constitutions and statutes of almost every state in this country."

Without a statutory requirement for how often reassessments must be completed, or a statistical trigger to initiate the process, there are three primary reasons why a county would undertake a reassessment:

1. Voluntarily to improve uniformity and fairness. Over time, changes in current market values can make assessments unequal often leading to observations from property owners like "why are my taxes higher than my neighbors, our homes are identical."
2. Court ordered reassessment after a uniformity challenge. Litigation can force a countywide reassessment, voluntarily taking on the process can reduce that risk. It's important to point out that court ordered reassessments can occur regardless of whether a county is prepared to do so.
3. When taxing districts reach their statutory millage caps. If a taxing body cannot raise rates any further, reassessment is used to bring values current, and lower millage rates.

## LOOKING AT THE NUMBERS

The State Tax Equalization Board (STEB) calculates assessment statistics by county annually. Several of these statistics are summarized in the following table using IAAO Standards, as well as the Broader PA standards that were proposed in the Pennsylvania Local Government Commission's (LGC) Assessment Reform Task Force's *Self Evaluation Guide for County Officials*. Many of the counties in Pennsylvania currently fall outside of the acceptable ranges:

### Summary of 2024 Assessment Statistics and Ratio Data\* Provided by the State Tax Equalization Board

Time Standard		
Years Since Last Reassessment	# of Counties	% of Counties
0 to 5	10	14.9%
6 to 10	5	7.5%
11 to 20	13	19.4%
21 to 30	17	25.4%
31 to 40	11	16.4%
40+	11	16.4%
IAAO Standard - not to exceed:	4 to 6 years	
PA Broader Standard:	6 to 10 years	
Level of Assessment Standard		
Level of Assessment (Based on C.L.R.)	# of Counties	% of Counties
IAAO Standard: .90 to 1.10	6	9.0%
PA Broader Standard: .80 to 1.20	9	13.4%
Measures of Uniformity		
Coefficient of Dispersion(COD)	# of Counties	% of Counties
IAAO Standard: 5.0 to 25.0	30	44.8%
PA Broader Standard: 5.0 to 30.0	37	55.2%
Price Related Differential	# of Counties	% of Counties
IAAO Standard: .98 to 1.03	20	29.9%
*STEB is only authorized to certify the Common Level Ratio (CLR), other ratio data provided is not certified and is for informational purposes only.		

The self-evaluation guide was one of several work products from the LGC task that was developed and then adopted as best practices by County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP), and the Assessors' Association of Pennsylvania (AAP) in 2018. Additional resources including *Model RFP and Contracting Standards for County Reassessment Services*, *Assessment Office Public Relations Guide*, and *Data Collection Standards* are all available on the CCAP website.

With the passing of time and the changing nature of the real estate markets, real estate within the same classification and between classifications appreciate or depreciate differently. This can be due to overall market level changes, or changes to individual properties

that are not reflected in the current assessment such as improvements, renovations, or deterioration from the lack of proper maintenance. The longer the time since the last base year was established, the greater the likelihood that assessed values no longer reflect current market values. A reassessment updates those assessed values to align with present-day market conditions. Longer intervals between reassessments often lead to significant changes in property tax bills from one year to the next. Conducting reassessments on a more frequent cycle allows for incremental adjustments over time, rather than property owners experiencing a large change all at once.

Longer intervals can also lead to regressive assessments. As the market changes, the tendency is for lower assessed properties to be carrying a greater proportion of the property tax burden than higher assessed properties, which makes the property tax more regressive. For 2026, there are 44 counties, or about 66%, that have not been reassessed in 15 or more years.

The IAAO Standard on Property Tax Policy (2020), Section 5.1 states:

“To best reflect the changes inherent in a dynamic economy and to maximize fairness and ease of understanding, assessments should be based on the current market value of the property.”

In June, 2019, the Council on State Taxation (COST) and the International Property Tax Institute (IPTI) issued an assessment report – *The Best (and Worst) of International Property Tax Administration*. With their scorecard for the United States, two states received an overall grade of F. These were Mississippi and Pennsylvania. This is one of many reports that have highlighted the problems of Pennsylvania’s antiquated base year property assessment system.

## HOW IS IT DONE?

After deciding to do a reassessment, thorough planning needs to take place to perform it successfully. The county can determine if there is sufficient and trained staff in house to complete it. If not, a review is done of what additional outside contract staff would be required. Counties can decide on how much of the work would be performed by current staff and contract staff. The sales validation data for valid and invalid sales should be checked to find if additional work and corrections are needed. The tax maps and deeds are reviewed for accuracy and completeness.

Another key component of the reassessment is the property data information. One concern is making sure the current system has the necessary components to perform the reassessment. If not, the county determines what steps and how much time and effort will be necessary to complete this effectively and efficiently. An additional factor is whether the municipalities regularly submit their building permit information to

the assessment office. If some have not, additional field work would be scheduled to bring the property data up to date.

For technology, the county will need to study current systems and decide if any changes and upgrades should be made for the assessment office. It may also be discovered that the vendor’s software has capabilities and functions that the county had not utilized up to this point.

Staff education and training are important. If reassessments become more frequent, the county should make sure the staff is properly trained and proficient in the skills necessary for this process. Technical staff on a state level would be needed to provide smaller counties with assistance and advice.

The length of time needed for the reassessment will depend on the number of parcels in the county, how well data has been collected and maintained, and how long it has been since the last reassessment. During the reassessment process, it may be discovered that more time and staffing may be necessary to accomplish the tasks involved.

If it has been a long time since the last reassessment, it will take more time and money to complete the process. The average cost is about \$60 - \$70 per parcel. As reassessments are performed more frequently in the county, the time and costs will be reduced. This may result in a cost of about \$15 - \$30 per parcel.

The LGC’s Self-Evaluation Guide for County Officials included three approaches that counties will consider when determining how a reassessment will be completed:

**Turnkey** – Vendor performs most of the work, most common in Pennsylvania right now due to limited local capacity.

**Hybrid** – The county and vendor share project responsibilities.

**In-house** – County performs the majority of the work, feasible only with experienced staff and quality data and systems in place.

Regardless of which approach to reassessment a county chooses, a positive, continuous public relations campaign is extremely important to keep taxpayers informed on the purpose, status and progress of the reassessment process.

## POSSIBLE CHANGES AHEAD

Over the years, the Supreme Court has discussed uniformity and reassessment-related challenges in their opinions. Most recently, in a dissenting opinion in a case which involved taxing district appeals, Justice Dougherty included the following:

“I write to suggest a legislative remedy for what is, in my view, the underlying problem in many – if not most

– matters challenging individual property reassessments, i.e., stagnant, artificially low overall property values in a taxing district resulting from infrequent, sometimes decades old, countywide property assessments.”... “And, because an indefinite base year assessment method obviously cannot capture and reflect market fluctuations and other trends affecting future property values, in my view, the legislature would do well to repeal its indefinite use, and enact an assessment period encompassing a sound interval of years.”

After holding a series of public hearings on the systematic unfairness of property reassessments in Pennsylvania in 2024 which included testimony from both CCAP and the AAP, on July 31, 2025, State Senator Wayne Fontana introduced Senate Bill No. 567. The bill proposes having 10 to 15 counties complete a reassessment and certify their assessment rolls, and each year thereafter to include each county within a five-year period. Counties would be required to complete a cyclical countywide reassessment every five years, and a parcel data review not less than once every 10 years. Counties would be allowed to fund the reassessment process through a fee not to exceed \$20 per year on each parcel of real property in the county, or levy a tax not to exceed one mill in addition to the county’s general millage. This bill was referred to the Local Government Committee.

Similar to proposed legislation in other states, there are several bills introduced to reduce or eliminate property taxes in Pennsylvania, with varying proposals on how the property tax revenue would be replaced.

A lawsuit filed in July, 2025 in Pennsylvania’s Commonwealth Court from Mon Valley Unemployed Committee Inc. seeks to declare Pennsylvania’s base year assessment system unconstitutional. One count is the General Assembly unconstitutionally delegated their powers to the counties by failing to provide guidance on using a base-year versus current year assessment, and by failing to set standards for counties to implement their property tax responsibilities. The second is the base year system establishes an authorized tax exemption as irregular countywide assessments have de facto exempted property appreciation from taxation. This is seeking to eliminate the base-year system of property tax assessments in Pennsylvania.

## WHAT ARE THE MAJOR ADVANTAGES OF A CYCLICAL REASSESSMENT SYSTEM?

1. Stronger more consistent base for taxation, each reassessment brings better information and allows counties to maintain the system, vs. rebuilding it from scratch each reassessment.
2. The public is more informed of the process. Frequent cycles can normalize the process.

3. Property owners and real estate investors have a level of consistency and can prepare for cycles, and predictability can support economic development.

4. The cost of reassessment decreases with more consistent data and cycles; maintenance of the system is far less expensive vs. rebuilding from scratch after decades.

## THE AAP HAS IDENTIFIED FIVE MAJOR QUESTIONS THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED IF PENNSYLVANIA MOVES TO A CYCLICAL REASSESSMENT SYSTEM:

**Timing** – How frequently reassessments should occur.

**Statistical Triggers** – What statistical measures should be used to evaluate assessment performance, and or trigger a reassessment.

**Reassessment Cost/Funding** – How are counties going to pay for regular reassessments.

**Oversite** – State agency with direct role in assessment performance monitoring.

**Implementation** – How do we transition from our current system to a cyclical revaluation cycle, including necessary public relations efforts.

## WHY ALL THIS MATTERS FOR YOUR COUNTY

Reassessment is a core county responsibility that protects fairness, legal compliance, and public trust in the property tax system. When assessments drift from current market values—as they have in most Pennsylvania counties—tax burdens shift unpredictably, uniformity erodes, and the risk of litigation or court-ordered action increases. Regular, data-driven reassessments restore equity by aligning values with real market conditions, preventing regressive outcomes, and ensuring taxpayers carry only their proportionate share. For counties, the path forward is clear: modernizing assessment practices, maintaining accurate parcel data, and planning for predictable cycles will strengthen fiscal stability, reduce legal exposure, and provide taxpayers with a transparent, consistent system they can understand and trust.

As we look around the state right now, there are more counties that have recently gone through a reassessment, are in the process of a reassessment, or are planning for a reassessment than any other time over the last 30 plus years. It’s a unique opportunity to put a system in place to assist counties moving forward to ensure adequate maintenance, uniformity, and accuracy for decades to come, and most importantly, to finally bring Pennsylvania’s property assessment system into the 21st century. ▼

# THE QUALITY PARADOX: LOSING THE BATTLE, WINNING THE WAR

Financial markets frequently move in cycles characterized by discipline and madness. From the Nifty Fifty era, to the dot-com bubble, to the 2020–2021 stimulus rally, euphoric phases have repeatedly rewarded speculation while fundamentals temporarily lost relevance. Each of these phases rewards speculators and punishes those obsessing over fundamentals, until it doesn't. Eventually, the party ends and quality and price matter again.

We appear to be in one of those transitions now. After a decade-plus of easy money, markets are adjusting to higher inflation and rates. But the shift isn't clean. While fundamentals matter in the long-term, narratives and momentum can still influence short-term performance. This effect is particularly seen in small caps where risk appetite runs hottest.

Everyone knows quality when they see it, but pinning it down is harder. Research like AQR's "Quality vs. Junk" framework quantifies it with the following metrics: profitability, stable earnings, reasonable leverage, and disciplined capital allocation. Across full market cycles, quality wins on a risk-adjusted basis. But during speculative runs while everyone chases the latest narratives as if they were lottery tickets? It gets left behind.

**Figure 1: Junk Back in Vogue**

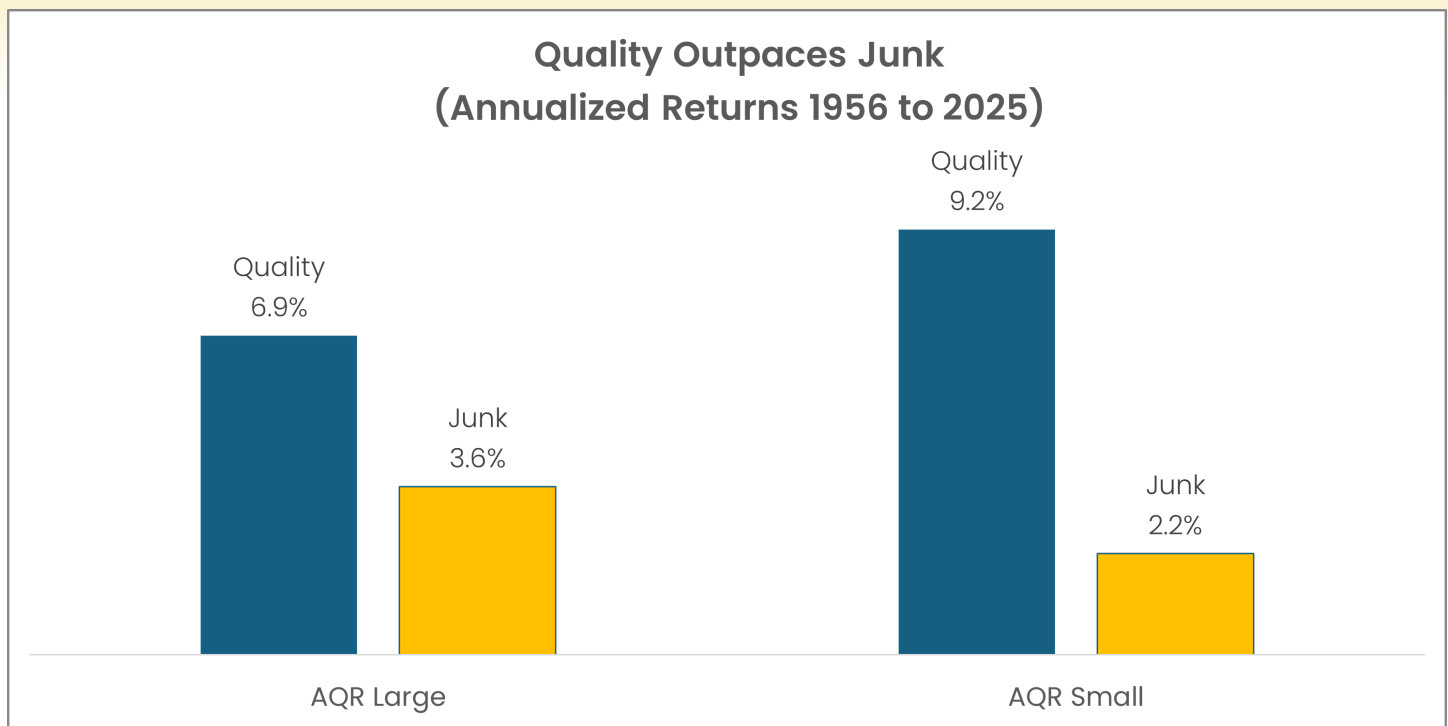


**Source: CS McKee; FactSet - 12/31/25**

2025 was a textbook example as junk topped quality across the board. Through November, low-quality small caps were up 21% versus 13% for high-quality, before leveling out a bit by year-end (18% vs. 14%). We've seen this movie before. When investors fall in love with "optionality" and ignore current fundamentals, neither value nor quality provides much protection.

These dislocations are frustrating to live through, but they're also predictable. When the speculation burns out and capital gets pickier, quality businesses reprice higher relative to the junk that's been leading the charge.

**Figure 2: Despite periodic junk rallies, quality wins over the long haul**



**Source: AQR; annualized returns in excess of T-bills - 10/31/25**

Zoom out and the picture changes completely. Since 1956, quality small caps returned 9.2% annually versus 2.2% for junk, the results are not even close. Quality doesn't win by dodging every downturn; it wins by losing less and compounding steadily when markets recover. The gap is notable everywhere but widest in small caps, where the difference between durable businesses and vulnerable ones matters most.

Eugene Fama said efficient markets price in all available information. While generally true, markets are also brutally efficient at pricing collective psychology. Right now we're in one of those moments where sentiment trumps fundamentals. History says these periods can last longer than seems reasonable, but they end abruptly when the narrative breaks and capital discipline returns.

While early signs suggest the current junk rally might be moderating, transitions are rarely linear. When the turn comes, it typically happens fast. Sticking with quality isn't about calling the exact inflection point, it's about being positioned when it arrives! Especially now, with higher rates, tighter liquidity, and growing intolerance for businesses that can't stand on their own.

Updated and translated from "Is Quality Investing Back "En Vogue" by Mario Tufano-CFA and Mark Roach." Translation by Jason Thon.

Nothing in this article represents a recommendation to buy or sell any particular security. Investors should consult their own investment adviser to determine whether a particular investment or strategy is appropriate for their specific situation. 🍷

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# County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania 2026 SPRING CONFERENCE

Known as the “Legislative Conference”, the CCAP Spring Conference invites members to Harrisburg to participate in programming of educational and professional value. County leaders from across the state came together to participate in informational breakout sessions, a legislative reception and much more. The conference was capped off with county commissioners spending a day at the PA Capitol and being recognized on the Senate floor.



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One Gateway Center | Pittsburgh, PA 15222-1435  
[www.csmckee.com](http://www.csmckee.com) | (412) 566-1234



An institutional investment company founded in 1931, CS McKee manages fixed income, equity and multi-asset class portfolios for public entities, Taft-Hartley plans insurance companies, corporations, endowments, foundations, hospitals, schools, and religious organizations across the U.S. and Canada. A multi-billion dollar organization, CS McKee is large enough to attract investment professionals of the highest caliber, without sacrificing our commitment to individual client objectives. Known for exceptional client service, our ultimate goal is to be a trusted financial partner and responsible corporate citizen.

C.S. McKee has been an annual Sapphire sponsor for over 20 years.

### PrimeCare Medical, Inc.



3940 Locust Lane | Harrisburg, PA 17109  
[www.primecaremedical.com](http://www.primecaremedical.com) | 800-245-7277

PrimeCare Medical, Inc. is the largest provider of contracted correctional health care services in the commonwealth, corporately located in Harrisburg, PA. Since 1985, PrimeCare Health has managed county jails, prisons and juvenile detention centers ranging in size from 50-3,000 inmates. We offer a customized health care organization that includes medical, mental health, dental, pharmacy and nursing services. As the premier provider of correctional health care services in Pennsylvania, PrimeCare Medical Inc., manages 30 correctional institutions in 25 counties. As professionals, PrimeCare Medical, Inc. will make your institutional health care program cost-effective and completely efficient, customizing programs based on county budgets with specific medical and security needs in mind.

## RUBY

### Tremco Roofing and Building Maintenance



1549 Bobali Drive, Suite B  
Harrisburg, PA 17104

[www.tremcoroofing.com](http://www.tremcoroofing.com) | (223) 797-4737

Tremco Roofing and Building Maintenance and affiliated construction services company Weatherproofing Technologies, Inc. (WTI) provide industry-leading roofing and building envelope solutions to improve long-term performance and ROI. The team includes expert WTI Technicians who provide world-class diagnostics, repair, and maintenance services, and Field Advisors who are among the most highly trained roofing experts nationwide. Through advanced diagnostics, asset management programs, innovative roof restoration systems, and cooperative purchasing options, Tremco can help facility managers avoid emergency repairs, establish predictable budgets, and improve building performance to reduce facility lifecycle costs. Tremco Roofing and WTI are part of Tremco Construction Products Group.

## DIAMOND

### AT&T

### Chrislynn Energy Services

### Pennsylvania Counties Health Insurance Purchasing Cooperative (PCHIPC)



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**May 13-14, 2026**

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