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AAP Journal

ASSESSORS' ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA

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AAP Committee Meetings
CCAP Office, Harrisburg
July 10

AAP Board of Governors' Meeting
CCAP Office, Harrisburg
July 11

2025 Fall CPE Classes
CCAP Office, Harrisburg
Intro - September 9 - 13
Site - September 16 - 20
Cost - September 30 - October 4
Income - October 7 -11

AAP Board of Governors' Meeting
Wind Creek Bethlehem
November 12

AAP 2025 Fall Conference
Wind Creek Bethlehem
November 13 - 14

AAP Board of Governors' Meeting
DoubleTree Hotel, Reading
May 5, 2026

AAP 2026 Annual Conference
DoubleTree Hotel, Reading
May 6 - 8

*Visit **www.paassessors.org** for more information.*

Good, But Increasingly Unjust: The Veterans Exemption Quandary

Camdon Porterfield, Chief Assessor

Westmoreland County

Without question, the sacrifices our veterans have made to protect our freedoms – yes, even the freedom to assess property for *ad valorem* taxation purposes – are actions for which we are forever indebted.

Because of this, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has approved several pieces of legislation over the years to recognize going above-and-beyond the call of duty. As we are all well aware by now, that includes full exemption from property taxes for disabled warriors.

The original intention and spirit of approving such generous monetary relief is noble. What has happened more recently, however, threatens to taint the program forever.

In order to explain, let me take you back to 2022, when Congress passed the PACT Act. This extended eligibility disability benefits to any veteran potentially exposed to toxic chemicals and environments over the course of their honorable service.

On the surface, that seems like a no-brainer. But the ripple-effect became an avalanche.

Suddenly, thousands more service members – including almost anyone who stepped foot overseas for the War on Terror – qualified for the Commonwealth's tax exemption program. The PACT Act (Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act) provided veterans with a list of over 20 conditions that 'may' be caused by exposures such as 'burn pits,' thereby opening the door for many more people to claim 100% disability.

Shortly thereafter, the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) was inundated with requests and appeals. So, their idea (recently posted in *The Pennsylvania Bulletin*) is to charge assessment boards with any and all eligibility appeals – a startling proposition, because assessment boards and assessment offices could never possibly rule on such requisites, right? Let me elaborate.

Should a board of assessment, let alone office staff, be reviewing and keeping personal medical records? Can they even do so? And will assessment boards that are made up of county commissioners be willing to make a decision bereft of political reasoning? The law specifically states a veteran appeals their eligibility determination to the Adjutant General, not a tax assessment board.

Apparently, though, the status quo no longer applies.

When we brought those issues to the attention of our county DMVA, they

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AAP

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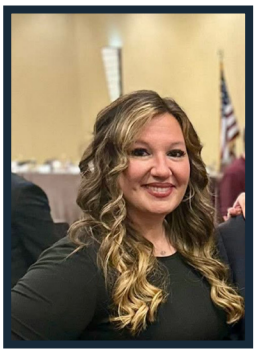
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President's Message

Hello, my fellow AAP members,

It is still so surreal to me that I am writing this article as your President…. WILD! Again, I would like to thank everyone for this honor, it is not taken lightly!

I hope you all had a wonderful time at the Annual Conference! Kalahari treated us well! In my opinion the classes were amazing - so diverse and educational. There was a little something for everyone! The food was also delicious! The education auction went off with a bang (probably due to those wonderful auctioneers if I do say so myself, *wink*), and the banquet was beautiful. You all sure know how to dress up and show out!! No one would know that most of you wear jeans and tape measures for a living because you sure proved you know how to be fancy on a Thursday evening!

I'd like to offer a huge shout out to all those new CPEs!! What an accomplishment, my friends! To see the number of new CPEs coming into our association truly brought me goosebumps and encouragement! Congratulations to all the award winners that night as well! I hope you all are as proud of yourselves as I am of you. They were very well-deserved!

We ended the Conference with a beautiful farewell party for our immediate past president Rita. What a nice turnout! I personally enjoyed listening to all the laughter and story sharing. We may have been off the clock but it's times like these where I believe you do most of your learning about the job. From sharing experiences in the field to debating the never ending Clean and Green questions. Times like these are unmeasurable!

As we bring this article to a close, I would like to welcome all the new chapter Board of Governors' members! We are so very excited to work with you! Thank you for your willingness to serve, I promise you it will be a decision you won't regret! I look forward to meeting you all at the New Board Member Orientation at the end of June! I am also excited to see everyone at the upcoming AAP BOG meeting in July at Harrisburg.

Lastly, a huge shout out to our new executive board. Camden Porterfield (secretary), Michelle Hasker (treasurer), Kristin Montgomery (vice president), Michelle Mack (president elect) and Rita Yannayon (immediate past president), I look forward to working alongside of you all. Let's make it the best year yet!! Thank you everyone!

Take Care,

Sarah

Sarah Jordan, CPE
AAP President

In partnership with the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania

CCAP

Legislative Update

By Jonathan B. Schuck, Chair
Government Information Committee and
Director of Assessment/Tax Claim, Chester County

Greetings fellow assessment professionals throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. By the time you receive this issue of the AAP Journal, the summer season will be in full swing. Hope you have already enjoyed some well-deserved vacation time or have plans to enjoy time off before the seasons once again turn. In either case, those who are part of the AAP remain committed to meeting the complex and diverse challenges encountered with a combination of intelligence, applied knowledge and creativity. Keeping abreast of the legislative environment is one means of accomplishing this goal.

Just over five months into the 2025/2026 Session, the following legislation has been introduced: 1448 House bills, 248 House resolutions, 742 Senate bills and 118 Senate resolutions. Of these totals, 41 bills/resolutions are assessment-related and four bills are tax claim-related. Since the prior Legislative Update, several pieces of legislation have been introduced and there has been advancement on a number of other bills.

House Bill 359

This amendment would allow municipalities to use Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds for anti-displacement activities in and around TIF districts such as the creation of affordable housing, foreclosure and rental assistance and workforce programs. It would also extend the time that TIF districts can exist from 20 to 25 years to allow for more tax increments to fund these projects.

Passed 102-101 in the House on May 10, 2025 and currently in the Senate Community, Economic and Recreational Development Committee as of May 22, 2025

House Bill 858

This amendment, previously introduced as House Bill 961 of the 2023/2024 Session, would make the chief assessor responsible for maintaining a list of information for each property including contact information that was either voluntarily submitted by a property owner or collected by a municipality when the property was cited for the violation of an ordinance or code. Information would be available to individuals demonstrating a reasonable need. Generally, this would apply to neglected or blighted properties.

Passed 132-71 in the House on June 3, 2025.

House Bill 1257

This constitutional amendment would remove the requirement of having served in combat from the qualifications needed to be eligible for the Veteran's property tax exemption. It also guarantees benefits for surviving spouses of eligible veterans, including those who were killed in action, taken prisoner, or went missing in action. It would shift certain program guidelines from the Constitution into statute making future changes easier to implement.

Introduced in the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee on April 17, 2025.

House Bill 1328

Modeled off the Pennsylvania program for seniors, this program would provide recent veterans with house-

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AAP Journal

The AAP Journal is published four times a year.

Deadline for the Fall 2025 issue is September 6, 2025.

Article submissions are welcome.

Please send to:
Terry Cochran, AAP Executive Director

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Veterans Exemptions

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claimed the proposed changes were because boards of assessment were 'making up their own minds.' To date, our board of assessment has only gone against the DMVA's recommendation one time, based on a disagreement of whether the U.S. invasion of Grenada was an applicable conflict. Maybe this is a larger problem elsewhere, but not here.

Whatever the reasoning, it sets a dangerous precedent that can already be felt and seen. What's more, we're taking the brunt of the backlash

Several veterans have berated our office staff demanding immediate tax exemption. When we explain to them the process, they threaten lawsuits and journalistic exposés.

One such individual just had his million-dollar home exempted, because 'the $114,637-per-year income threshold wasn't breached.'

Clearly, they only look at the veteran's income, not their benefits, assets or spousal income. Many are beginning to game the system which, in turn, is gouging county budgets – and for a county like ours at the millage cap, it could turn catastrophic.

On the flipside of the coin, another veteran, who suffered an injury between declared conflicts, moved here from Tennessee (where he had full exemption) because his realtor explained to him he would retain full exempt status on a brand new $500,000 house. Because he did not meet the service requirements, he was denied by the DMVA.

His appeal was directed to the Westmoreland Board of Assessment, despite the Board having absolutely no say in determining said-requirements. Our Board denied the tax exemption appeal for this man, but not before he was forced to explain to three strangers what had happened to him – as he basically broke down in front of them, sobbing.

That's not fair to the Board. That's not fair to the veteran. But hey, less work on the state's end, right?

These adjustments, in lockstep with the new federal guidelines, have begun to break apart our assessment system as we know it – not to mention bankrupt our counties, and force undue burden on our staff and the disabled vets themselves.

Will the program ever return to assisting those in actual need? Or will we continue to exempt mansions right along with mobile homes?

All this, I guarantee you, is not what the General Assembly had in mind upon adopting the program into Title 51 in 1979.

Victor Hugo once opined, "Being good is easy – what is difficult is being just."

Speak up and speak out, because the veterans' exemption process can be just again – it's not too late to do actual good.

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AAP People & Chapter News

Send your news to Terry Cochran at *tcochran@pacounties.org* for the upcoming issue of the *AAP Journal*.

Our next deadline is September 6.

North Central Chapter

President - **Tiffany Kaseman**, Northumberland County

Vice President - **Mark Anderson**, Clinton County

Treasurer- **Ken Raymond**, Tioga County

Secretary - **Nichole (Nicki) Riner**, Tioga County

2024-2026 BOG Rep – **Deb Crawford**, Vision Government Solutions

2025-2027 BOG Rep – **Mark Anderson**, Clinton County

Cambria County

Congratulations to Chief Assessor **Barry Segear** whose last day with the county was Friday, June 20th. Barry had 49 years in the assessment industry, 25 years with the Cambria County Assessment Office. Now you may find Barry in the woods hunting or fishing in his favorite spot.

This leaves an opening for the chief assessor position in the county. If you have your CPE license, look for the job ad!

Mifflin County

Congratulations, Deputy Chief Assessor **Gene Bowersox**, for passing his CPE exam on April 25th.

Northampton County

Congratulations to **Brian Koehler** who retired on February 7th after 36 years of dedicated service to the county. We wish him all the best in his retirement!

Schuylkill County

Congratulations to Chief Assessor **Christy Zimmerman** for being the recipient of the AAP 2025 Annual Conference scholarship!

Thank you to **Danette Magee**, retired from the Local Government Commission, who so generously sponsors the scholarship.

Tioga County

The Assessment Office said farewell to **Deb Crawford** who worked in various capacities for her 30 plus years of service to Tioga County. The entire staff wishes her good luck on future endeavors. Stop in and see us!

Deb is also an AAP Past President, the co chair of the association's Clean and Green committee, and has served on many other committees during her time on the board providing her expertise on many topics.

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November 13 - 14, 2025

Registration materials will be released in mid-September!



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Legislative Update

Continued from Page 3

hold incomes up to $35,000 with financial relief. The sponsors assert that this program would help reduce veteran homelessness in Pennsylvania and may also attract recent veterans to stay in or move to Pennsylvania.

Previously introduced as House Bill 236 of the 2023/2024 Session and currently in the House Finance Committee as of April 30, 2025.

Senate Bill 809

This amendment, previously introduced as Senate Bill 947 of the 2023/2024 Session, would remove the wartime service requirement provision, expanding the program to include 100% disabled veterans who suffered service-related injuries during times of peace.

Introduced in the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee on May 30, 2025.

House Resolution 170

In light of the Commonwealth Court ruling that Pennsylvania's public education funding is inadequate, inequitable and ultimately unconstitutional, it is essential that these shortcomings be corrected to provide for a quality education for all students. The proposed study will evaluate whether it is feasible and beneficial to pool property tax revenue at the intermediate unit level and distribute it to school districts based on the number of students they serve.

House Bill 96

This legislation, previously introduced as House Bill 1646 of the 2023/2024 Session, would help vulnerable individuals like older adults and incapacitated individuals remain in their homes. It charges the PA Department of Community and Economic Development with developing and publishing a form by which an owner may designate certain person(s) to receive prospective real property tax notifications and place annual notification duties on same.

Passed 201-2 in the House on May 7, 2025 and currently in the Senate Urban Affairs and Housing Committee as of May 22, 2025.

House Bill 369

This amendment would remove size stipulations associated with land bank jurisdictions, allowing all municipalities, including smaller municipalities, to establish land banks on a voluntary basis.

Passed 162-40 in the House on March 25, 2025 and currently in the Senate Urban Affairs & Housing Committee as of March 26, 2025.



Cathy Waters

Chief Assessor

CUMBERLAND COUNTY

Past Counties: n/a

Overall Years in County Assessment: It will be 49 years on August 30, 2025.

Years in Some Other Form of Assessment Business: I started in Occupation, then to data entry, secretary, assessor and to Chief Assessor

First Job Ever: in the assessment office

Worst Job Ever: I started when I was 17, part time jobs only, but I liked them. I never had a worst job.

What Irritates Me Most in the Assessment Business is: I'm easy going, nothing irritates me.

My Biggest Challenge as an Assessor is: learning to decide, at the first reassessment in 2000 having the challenge of putting market values on houses when going from 1974.

Not Counting My Present Job, My Dream Job Always Was: was to retire first then work when I was old.

If I Won Millions in the Lottery, I Would: As everyone does, I would pay off my bills, help my daughter and help others that are in need.

Favorite Vacation Memory: Going to Mexico with Bonnie Mahoney, past Cumberland County Chief Assessor

Favorite Food and Drink: Seafood, especially lobster, and white wine

Funniest Assessment story: When I was an assessor years ago, 1990 maybe, and before I knew better, I went into a house to measure a room and a lizard was on the couch, and I hate snakes of any sort.

Most People Would Be Surprised to Know: I have a horse. See my photo above - his name is Stretch!



Registration and hotel links are on the IAAO website - iaao.org! Don't wait to make your plans!



The AAP recognized all of the new CPEs at the banquet. Congratulations to all of you on this great achievement! We look forward to you getting involved in the Association.

AAP Leadership

Thank you to all who attended the AAP Annual Conference at he Kalahari Resort in the Poconos. Over 160 members and vendors gathered to learn, network, conduct AAP business and celebrate member achievements.



Meet the new AAP officers for the 2025-26 term! From left to right: Immediate Past President **Rita Yannayon** (Tyler Technologies); Secretary **Camdon Porterfield** (Westmoreland County); Treasurer **Michelle Hasker** (Monroe County); Vice President **Kristin Montgomery** (Luzerne County); President-Elect **Michelle Mack** (Vision Government Solutions); and, President **Sarah Jordan** (Vision Government Solutions). Congratulations!



Thank you to our AAP officers for the 2024-25 term! From left to right: Immediate Past President **Josh Zeyn** (Tioga County); Secretary **Michelle Hasker (**Monroe County); Treasurer **Kristin Montgomery** (Luzerne County); Vice President **Michelle Mack** (Vision Government Solutions); President Elect **Sarah Jordan** (Vision Government Solutions); and, President **Rita Yannayon** (Tyler Technologies). Thank you for your service to the AAP!

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AAP Annual Conference Recap - Awards



Congratulations to our service award winners (left to right): **Randy Waggoner** (Perry County) - 40 years; **Brenda Shaw** (Snyder County) - 50 years; **Jennifer Pisasik** (Vision Government Solutions) - 33 years; **DeAnna Heichel** (Blair County) - 24 years; **Tina Schaeffer** (Berks County) - 39 years; **Lisa Hoch** (Berks County) - 50 years; **Josh Zeyn** (Tioga County) - 21 years; **Mark Mashula** (Tioga County) - 20 years; **Craig Haerter** (Vision Government Solutions - 30 years; **Charlie Kechula** (Vision Government Solutions) - 30 years



AAP Awards Committee co chairs, **Darrell Lutz** (Monroe County) and **Michelle Hasker** (Monroe County), get ready to hand out the 2025 service awards.





Award Winners Not Pictured:

- **Kim Deubner**, Jefferson County - Garrity Award

Trailblazer Award
- **Joyce Hillegas**, Bedford County
- **Christina Roland** (Westmoreland County)

Board of Governors' Award
- **Joan Fitting**, Montgomery County

Congratulations to our AAP Annual Awards winners (left to right):

- Eugene Porterfield Award - **Tom Hill** (Monroe County)
- Michael M. Chudy Award - **Camdon Porterfield** (Westmoreland County)
- Robert A. Hanisits/Alfred K. Hettinger Award - **Michelle Mack** (Vision Government Solutions
- Matylda Zurowska Hudak Award - **Kristin Montgomery** (Luzerne County)
- President's Appreciation Award - **Josh Zeyn** (Tioga County)
- Carl W. Naessig Award - **Jonathan Schuck** (Chester County)

AAP Annual Conference Recap



AAP Education Co Chairs, **JR Hardester** (Vision Government Solutions) and **Michelle Mack** (Vision Government Solutions), were on hand to recognize all of the new CPEs who attended AAP's CPE classes in the last year.



We were excited to have our official AAP auctioneers, **JR Hardester** (Vision Government Solutions) and **Sarah Jordan** (Vision Government Solutions), with us to conduct this year's Education Auction. The auction helps to support chapter education. Thanks to everyone who donated and all who purchased items!



Our Annual Banquet included the changing of the gavel from the current president to the new one. **President Rita Yannayon** (Tyler Technologies) shared her final thoughts with the membership as she turned the gavel over to **President Elect Sarah Jordan** (Vision Government Solutions). Thank you, Rita, for your dedication to the AAP and its members! Congratulations, Sarah, on being the new AAP President!

The AAP was lucky enough to have Gene Porterfield and the current and two past Porterfield awards recipients at the Conference. The Eugene Porterfield award honors a member with 10 years of membership, who has made significant contributions to AAP or the assessment profession. The AAP board chooses the member receiving the award.

From left to right: **Tom Hill** (Monroe County), this year's award recipient; **Gene Porterfield** (Vision Government Solutions); **Randy Waggoner** (Perry County and 2023 Recipient); and, **JR Hardester** (Vision Government Solutions and 2024 recipient). Not pictured - **Mark Kellerman** (Centre County and 2022 recipient)



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