

FOR EDITORIAL BACKGROUND

Despite holding majorities in both the House and Senate, Gov. Tom Corbett failed to gain passage of nearly any of his major initiatives during the 2013-14 legislative session.

In the end, the only significant Corbett Administration “priority” that reached enactment was the \$2.4 billion transportation funding plan (*See House Bill 1060, Transportation*) – a bill that was largely brokered between Senate Democrats and Republicans. Corbett’s calls for public employee pension reform and privatizing the state Lottery and liquor stores were largely ignored in both legislative bodies.

The Republican-authored budgets (*see House Bill 1437 and House Bill 2328, Appropriations*) enacted during the two-year session were punctuated with devastating spending cuts to schools, economic development programs and safety net programs. Democrats were particularly critical of the 2014-15 budget, which many considered a sham that was cobbled together using wildly optimistic revenue projections, one-time revenue sources, accounting tricks and fund transfers. Democrat projections that the budget would collapse by the end of 2014-15 fiscal year were largely borne out by the end of 2014 when the Republican Administration was cornered into borrowing up to \$1.5 billion from the state Treasury to cover operating expenses. In December of 2014, the Corbett Administration’s budget secretary finally admitted that newly-elected Democratic Governor Tom Wolf would have to deal with a nearly \$2 billion budget shortfall.

Throughout the session, Democrats continually pressed the governor and majority Republicans to focus more attention on stimulating the economy through job creation and economic development. Democrats also urged Gov. Tom Corbett to expand Medicaid eligibility for approximately 500,000 low income Pennsylvanians. They argued that the move could have saved \$400 million in state budget dollars. Corbett instead countered with a plan that uses federal funds to help the working poor pay for private health coverage.

While most of the attention was aimed at budget issues, senators did pass a number of significant bills. Some of the laws enacted during the 2013-14 session: give crime victims the right to appear personally before the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole to provide testimony on an inmate’s parole request (*See House Bill 492, Judiciary*); toughen penalties against child abusers (*See Aging and Youth/Judiciary*); and allow bars and taverns to operate small games of chance (*See House Bill 1098, Community, Economic and Recreational Development*).

Legislation was also enacted that will: protect senior citizens from losing prescription drug benefits and Lottery-funded property tax/rent rebates due to small Social Security COLAs (*See House Bill 777 and House Bill 1067, Aging and Youth*); criminalize so-called “revenge porn,” (*see House Bill 2107, Judiciary*); protect certain people from utility shut-offs (*see House Bill 939, Consumer Protection and professional Licensure*); and double the amount that volunteer fire

and emergency service departments may borrow for equipment (*See House Bill 1706, Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness*).

For the 2014-15 legislative session, Senate Democrats said they will continue to fight for job training, economic development initiatives, repair the human services safety net and increase funding for schools.

January, 2015

Legislation is coded as follows: a single asterisk indicates Senate passage, two asterisks indicate Senate and House passage, and three asterisks indicate the measure became law. A "V" means the governor vetoed the measure.

AGING AND YOUTH

*** **Child Protection Package** -- In response to the Jerry Sandusky child abuse scandal, the General Assembly impaneled the [Task Force on Child Protection](#) and accepted its report. The result was a series of bills that were signed into law to address weaknesses in the child protection system.

The Senate approved these bills unanimously:

[House Bill 316](#) reforms the state's child protective services law. The bill strengthens child advocacy centers (CACs) throughout Pennsylvania. The measure increases fees on birth certificates from \$10 to \$20 and uses the increased funding to: (Fiscal 2014-2015) train mandated reporters; (Fiscal 2015-2016 and on) 25 percent of the money will be used to train mandated reporters, and 75 percent as grants for CACs and Multidisciplinary Investigative Teams.

The bill also directs the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) to establish a Child Advocacy Advisory Committee with up to 21 members.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 28](#) of 2014.

[Senate Bill 21](#) clarifies who is a mandatory reporter of suspected child abuse in Pennsylvania. Under the new law, all reports must first be filed with the state's ChildLine hotline or directly to local law enforcement or child welfare personnel.

The responsibility to make a report can be triggered by direct observation of the child, or by a credible second-hand report where there is an identifiable victim. Reporters will also be trained to try to include the victim's identity, the nature and extent of the alleged abuse, the name and relationship of the suspects, and the source of the information.

The governor signed the bill into law as [Act 33](#) of 2014.

[House Bill 434](#) eliminates the separate reporting requirements of suspected child abuse by school employees. Previously, school employees operated under different reporting standards, largely based on the seriousness of the injury. This bill makes their reporting responsibilities consistent with all mandated reporters.

The bill also requires that an indicated or founded report of suspected child abuse by a school employee to be provided to the school administration within 10 days. The bill was signed into law as [Act 45](#) of 2014.

[House Bill 436](#) expands and clarifies the list of mandated reporters of child abuse. In addition to changing the list of those who must report suspected cases of child abuse, House Bill 436 clarifies a mandated reporter's basis to report child abuse and enhances the penalty scheme for those who fail to report alleged cases.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 32](#) of 2014.

[House Bill 726](#) amends the definitions of "child abuse" and related terms in the Child Protective Services Law. The bill makes child abuse the same conduct that would constitute assault. It also expands the definition of "sexual abuse or exploitation" to include conduct, with regard to a child, that would constitute the criminal offenses of institutional sexual assault, indecent assault and unlawful contact with a minor.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 108](#) of 2013.

[Senate Bill 23](#) updates the definition of a person who can be a perpetrator who commits child abuse and specifies who is responsible for a child's welfare.

The bill defines a "perpetrator" as a person who has committed child abuse and includes the parents of the child, spouse or former spouse of the child's parent, paramour or former paramour of the child's parent, a person 14 years of age or older who is responsible for the child's welfare, a person 14 years of age or older who resides in the same home as the child or a person 18 years of age or older who does not reside in the same home, but is related within the third degree of consanguinity or affinity to the child.

The bill also expands the definition of a person responsible for a child's welfare to include any person who has direct or regular contact with a child through any program, activity or service sponsored by a school, for-profit organization or religious or other not-for-profit organization.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 117](#).

[Senate Bill 27](#), requires certified medical practitioners to provide relevant medical information on a child's current and prior health when an assessment for general protective services or a child abuse investigation is being conducted or when the family has been accepted for services by a county agency:

The bill was signed into law as [Act 176](#) of 2014.

[Senate Bill 30](#) establishes accountability and essential due process protections for individuals who work with delinquent children, students in juvenile detention facilities and officials from private residential rehabilitative institutions.

The number of false claims of child abuse against staff has increased, and the appeals can take an average of 18 months to conclude. The bill would establish specific timelines for appeals for indicated cases of child abuse. It would also contain provisions to establish a sub-file

within the State Registry of those who have been found guilty of intentionally filing a false report, along with the name of the child involved in the report.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 119](#) of 2013.

[Senate Bill 33](#) provides whistle blower protection for those who report child abuse. The bill was signed into law as [Act 34](#) of 2014.

[Senate Bill 1116](#) streamlines the duties and responsibilities of multidisciplinary investigative teams to allow for a more open and expedited process of investigating reports of child abuse.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 123](#).

[House Bill 2204](#) amends the Early Intervention Services Act of 1990 to add a sixth category of at-risk children to trigger automatic tracking of an infant or toddler by early intervention services.

Before passage, there were five categories that trigger the automatic tracking of a child by early intervention services. These categories include children whose birth weight is under 1500 grams; children being cared for in neonatal intensive care units of hospitals; children born to chemically dependent mothers; children who are seriously abused or neglected; and children with confirmed dangerous levels of lead poisoning.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 143](#).

[Senate Bill 22](#) would have increased penalties for failing to report suspected child abuse. It died in the House, but its provisions were contained in other bills.

*** **PACE Income Limits** - The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 777](#), which continues the state's Social Security cost of living adjustment moratorium until Dec. 31, 2015.

The extension allows many people to remain under the income limit that determines eligibility for PACE and PACENET prescription benefits. The legislature initially adopted Act 21 of 2011 to permit approximately 30,000 PACE and PACENET cardholders to retain the benefits they otherwise would have lost due to Social Security COLA increases.

The bill also excludes Medicare Part "B" premium payments from the definition of income, which, for about 8,200 senior citizens, is equivalent of \$1,200 a year.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 12](#) of 2014.

*** **Community Respite Services** --The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 1702](#), which authorizes a new affordable tool to help aging Pennsylvanians live safely at home through the Community Respite Services Program Act.

Community Respite Service Programs provide services to individuals who need more than the normal scope of services offered at senior centers, but not the full attention of licensed adult day centers.

This legislation provides for appropriate safeguards and standards of care, and ensures that such programs would be overseen by the local Area Agencies on Aging.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 166](#) of 2014.

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS

*** **High Tunnels** -- The Senate voted 48-0 to approve [House Bill 1439](#), which exempts certain structures from being assessed for tax purposes as real estate.

The bill was part of a three-bill package on high tunnels. Other proposals included HB 1440 and HB 1438. House Bill 1438 was the only bill of the three to not be considered by the Senate.

House Bill 1439 was signed into law as [Act 114](#) of 2014.

*** **High Tunnels** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1440](#), which amends state law to allow for the agricultural use of so-called high tunnels.

The bill changes the PA Construction Code Act by clarifying the definition of “agricultural building” to include structures used to grow agricultural and horticultural products. Agricultural buildings are already exempt from the construction code.

House Bill 1440 was part of a three-bill package on high tunnels. Other proposals included HB 1439 and HB 1438.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 159](#) of 2014.

*** **Ag Conservation Easements** -- The Senate unanimously voted to approve [House Bill 84](#), which amends the Agricultural Area Security Law to change the time period for counties to inspect farmland that has been preserved under the state’s preservation program.

Before the change in law, counties had to review easements every year. The new law mandates that inspection must now happen every two years.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 19](#) of 2014.

*** **Rabies Vaccinations** -- The Senate voted 49-0 to approve [Senate Bill 155](#) to exempt dogs and cats with medical conditions from having to be vaccinated against rabies.

A licensed veterinarian must examine the dog or cat and determine that their infirmity, physical condition or regimen of therapy could not support a rabies vaccine.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 65](#) of 2014.

*** **Animal Exhibition Certificates** -- The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 526](#), which allows people who exhibit animals at livestock shows to only use a health certificate to show an appropriate veterinarian-client-patient relationship.

Before the new law, exhibitors had to self-certify that relationship with a separate form.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 31](#) of 2014.

*** **Potato Packaging** -- The Senate voted 48-0 to pass [Senate Bill 1131](#) to give people the authority to pack potatoes without weight restrictions.

Before the new law, potato packers had to stuff their starchy vegetable in packages of 3, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 50, 100 and multiples of 100 pounds.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 124](#) of 2014.

*** **Weight Restrictions on Potatoes** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1131](#), which removes all weight restrictions on how potatoes can be packaged for sale.

To help compete with neighboring states, Pennsylvania farmers had requested allowing for the sale of 8-pound bags, which are legal and growing in popularity in other states. The state's previous law only allowed potatoes to be sold in packages of 3 pounds or less. Senate Bill 1131 removes all weight limit requirements.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 124](#) of 2013.

*** **Police Animal Murder** – The Senate voted 49-0 in favor of [Senate Bill 1261](#), also known as Rocco's Law.

The new statute toughens the penalties for someone who tortures or murders police animals from a third- to second-degree felony and from a \$15,000 to \$25,000 fine.

Senate Bill 1261 was signed into law as [Act 110](#) of 2014.

*** **Fair Market Value** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 84](#), which amends the Deficiency Judgment Act to allow one County Court of Common Pleas to set the fair market value for all of the collateral real property owned by a debtor whose property is located in more than one county.

The measure stipulates that the court located in the county with most of the collateral real property will be charged with setting the full market value. The measure applies retroactively to Jan. 23, 2005.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 19](#) of 2013.

*** **High Tunnel Construction** -- The Senate voted 48-0 to approve [House Bill 1439](#), which helps farmers avoid building code issues and potentially higher real estate taxes when they erect "high tunnels."

High tunnels are, essentially, temporary structures that include a frame and are covered with a plastic tarp. The structures help agriculture producers extend the growing season for some crops, and they give them the ability to create a climate that would not be possible in that area.

House Bill 1439 exempts high tunnels from being assessed as real estate. And, it amends the state construction code by adding "structures used to grow agricultural and horticultural products" to the definition of "agricultural building," something that is already exempt from provisions of the construction code.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 114](#) of 2013.

*** **Pet Vaccines** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 155](#), which exempts a dog or cat from the state's mandatory vaccination if the owner can prove that a vaccination is detrimental to the animal's health and safety. Under the measure, if an animal is deemed exempt, it must be examined again within a year.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 65](#) of 2013.

*** **Animal Health** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 526](#), which removes the requirement for animal exhibitors at livestock shows to fill out a veterinarian-client-patient relationship forms.

Bill proponents claim the form is no longer necessary since most, if not all, exhibitors already have a signed “animal health certificate.”

This bill was signed into law as [Act 31](#) of 2013.

* **Race Horsing** – The Senate voted unanimously to approve [Senate Bill 1188](#), which would have replaced the state Racing and Harness Racing Commission with an independent five-member State Racing Commission.

The proposal would have also allowed telephone or internet wages from Pennsylvania residents.

The bill died in the House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee.

* **Livery Providers Lien** -- The Senate voted 49-0 to approve [Senate Bill 995](#), which would have allowed stable owners to issue a lien against owners who abandoned their horses instead of paying for services.

The lien would have been enforceable 30 days after written demand for payment had been made. After the lien holder executes the lien by petitioning a district magistrate for sale authorization, all parties who have an interest in the horse would have been notified of the pending sale. A lien sale would not be allowed for the purposes of slaughter.

This bill died before the House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee.

* **Kennel Licenses** -- The Senate voted 46-0 to approve [Senate Bill 1107](#), which would have changed Pennsylvania’s dog law by denying new licenses to relatives or people who live on the property of kennel owners who have had their licenses revoked.

The bill died before the House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee.

* **Farm Vehicles** – The Senate voted 46-0 in favor of [Senate Bill 1301](#), which would have changed Title 75 to exempt farm vehicles from intrastate motor carrier safety regulations.

The proposal fell *sine die* before the House Transportation Committee.

APPROPRIATIONS

*** **2013-14 State Budget** -- The Senate voted 33-17 in favor of [House Bill 1437](#), the 2013-14 state budget.

This legislation provides for the expenses for the executive, legislative and judicial departments as well as public schools and public debt for fiscal 2013-14.

The \$28.37 billion spending plan reflects a 2.3 percent increase in spending and holds the line on taxes. It adds \$130 million to public education, but flat funds special education.

The Department of Public Welfare and state police receive additional funding under the budget. It also increases funding for the Attorney General's office, including \$2.5 million for a mobile crime unit.

The budget plan also freezes the Capital Stock and Franchise Tax phase-out for two years, which will recapture \$54 million in revenue in fiscal 2013-14.

The budget measure flat funds job creation assistance programs such as Regional Economic Partnerships, Discovered in PA and infrastructure facilities grants. While it adds no funds to the state's Rainy Day Fund, the budget carries \$500 million over into the next fiscal year.

Citing inadequate public school funding and minimal investment for initiatives aimed at stoking the economy and creating jobs, most Democrats opposed the bill. While the governor and numerous Republicans boasted about the budget being on time for the third consecutive year, an integral fiscal code bill (Senate Bill 591) wasn't finalized and enacted until mid-July.

House Bill 1437 was signed into law as [Act 1A of 2013](#).

*** **Debt Reduction** -- The Senate voted 49-0 in favor of [House Bill 493](#), which reduces the amount of debt the state can have from \$4.05 billion to \$3.45 billion.

The measure also makes several changes to the RACP program and the capitol project itemization process. The bill was amended to clarify the definition of "capital project," and to add a new definition of "community asset project."

The bill was signed into law as [Act 77 of 2013](#).

*** **Funding for Professional Boards** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1275](#), which appropriates \$48.229 million from the General Fund to the Department of State to fund the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs (\$38.8 million); State Board of Medicine (\$7.3 million); State Board of Osteopathic Medicine (\$1.3 million); State Board of Podiatry (\$209,000); and State Athletic Commission (\$509,000). The bill was enacted as [Act 2A of 2013](#).

*** **DCED Funding** -- By a 48-1 vote, the Senate approved [House Bill 1276](#), which appropriates \$1.092 million to the Office of Small Business Advocate in the Department of Community and Economic Development for fiscal 2013-14. The amount equals what was appropriated for 2012-13. The bill was enacted as [Act 3A of 2013](#).

*** **SERS Appropriation** -- The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 1277](#), which appropriates \$21.002 million for the general government operations of the State Employees Retirement System (SERS) for the 2013-14 fiscal year. To cover higher-than-anticipated employee retirement costs, the appropriation is \$164,000 above what the governor requested in his budget proposal. The bill was enacted as [Act 4A of 2013](#).

*** **PSERS Appropriation** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1278](#), which appropriates \$41.689 million for the general government operations of the Public School Retirement System (PSERS) for the 2013-14 fiscal year. To cover higher employee pension costs,

the appropriation is \$324,000 above what the governor requested in his budget proposal. The bill was enacted as [Act 5A of 2013](#).

*** **Worker's Compensation** -- By a unanimous vote, the Senate approved [House Bill 1279](#), which appropriates \$76.028 million from the Workmen's Compensation Administration Fund to the Department of Labor and Industry to administer the Workers' Compensation Act and the Pennsylvania Occupational Disease Act for fiscal 2013-14. The measure also provides \$194,000 to the Office of the Small Business Advocate under the Department of Community and Economic Development. The bill was enacted as [Act 6A of 2013](#).

*** **Office of Consumer Advocate** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1280](#), which appropriates \$5.165 million from the General Fund to the Office of Consumer Advocate in the Office of Attorney General for fiscal 2013-14. The measure reduced the agency's appropriation by \$8,000 compared to the 2012-13 fiscal year. The bill was enacted as [Act 7A of 2013](#).

*** **PUC Funding** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1281](#), which appropriates \$63 million from the state General Fund; and \$4.8 million in federal funds to the Public Utility Commission. The appropriation is \$2.6 million above what was appropriated in 2012. The bill was enacted as [Act 8A of 2013](#).

*** **Gaming Regulatory Funding** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1282](#), which appropriates \$70.023 million from the state Gaming Fund to the Gaming Control Board (\$36.908 million), Department of Revenue (\$9.513 million), State Police (\$22.531 million, and Office of Attorney General (\$1.071 million) for gaming industry oversight in fiscal 2013-14. The total appropriation is an increase of about \$3.7 million over the total for fiscal 2012-13 total. The bill was enacted as [Act 9A of 2013](#).

*** **Penn State's NCAA Fine** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 187](#), which requires that all proceeds from Penn State's \$60 million NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) fine be used to fund child abuse prevention and awareness programs within Pennsylvania.

Under the bill, if a higher education institution enters into an agreement to pay a penalty of at least \$10 million per year, the money must be sent to a special trust fund in the Pennsylvania State Treasury and distributed by the Commission on Crime and Delinquency for use within Pennsylvania on child abuse prevention, treatment, investigative and awareness initiatives.

Following the Jerry Sandusky child sex abuse scandal, the NCAA ordered Penn State to pay \$12 million in installments over five years. Approximately 75 percent of the monies are to be earmarked for child abuse prevention programs in other states.

Senators claim that the penalty money will largely come from Pennsylvania and should be used exclusively for child abuse prevention efforts within Pennsylvania.

Following a 194-2 vote in the House, the bill was enacted as [Act 1 of 2013](#). Later that year, Commonwealth Court denied an NCAA motion that would have dismissed a lawsuit aimed at keeping the funds in Pennsylvania.

*** **Capital Budget Allocation** -- The Senate unanimously concurred in House amendments to [Senate Bill 680](#), the capital budget for fiscal year 2013-2014. The bill allocated \$13,878,234,000 for capital improvements, including revenues generated from bond sales and the General Fund. The bill was enacted as [Act 85 of 2013](#).

*** **Non-Preferred Appropriations** -- The Senate unanimously approved the following fiscal 2013-14 non-preferred appropriations bills.

- [Senate Bill 725](#), which appropriates \$227.1 million to Penn State University for fiscal 2013-14 – a \$13 million increase compared to fiscal 2012-13. However, the measure specifies that \$13 million of the appropriation go to the school's affiliate Pennsylvania College of Technology. The bill was enacted as [Act 10A of 2013](#).
- [Senate Bill 726](#), which appropriates \$136.076 million to the University of Pittsburgh for fiscal 2013-14. The amount is the same appropriated in fiscal 2012-13. However, the legislation specifies that \$2.083 million of the school's appropriation be allocated for rural outreach programs ([Act 11A of 2013](#)).
- [Senate Bill 727](#), which appropriates \$139.917 million to Temple University for fiscal 2013-14 ([Act 12A of 2013](#)). The amount is the same appropriated in fiscal 2012-13.
- [Senate Bill 728](#), which appropriates \$11.163 million to Lincoln University for fiscal 2013-14 ([Act 13A of 2013](#)). The amount is the same appropriated in fiscal 2012-13.
- [Senate Bill 729](#), which appropriates \$28.137 million to the University of Pennsylvania for fiscal 2013-14 ([Act 14A of 2013](#)). Of that amount, the legislation specifies that \$27.8 million be allocated for veterinary activities and \$248,000 for the school's Center for Infectious Diseases. The school's appropriation is the same as fiscal 2012-13.

*** **Capital Budget Debt** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1002](#), the Capital Budget Act.

Senate Bill 1002 sets the maximum principal amount of additional debt the state can take on during 2013-2014 for buildings, furniture, transportation assistance, redevelopment assistance, bridge and flood control projects at \$1.275 billion.

The bill was enacted as [Act 69 of 2013](#).

* **Horse Race Regulatory Funding** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1181](#), which would amend the Fiscal Code to authorize a \$5 million transfer from the Race Horse Development Fund to the State Racing Fund.

Since the Pennsylvania horse and harness racing commissions will become financially insolvent by 2014, this proposal would provide a short term bridge for the continued regulation and oversight of the racing industry while lawmakers work to update the Race Horse Industry Reform Act to provide long term, sustainable funding solutions.

Since many of the state's casinos can only operate if they conduct a set amount of live racing days, continued regulation and oversight of the state's horse racing industry is necessary so not to impact casino operations and revenues.

The measure was amended to suspend the racing fund balance transfer for the 2013-14 fiscal year; and start a pilot program to purchase safety equipment for outdoor events.

The bill is now in the House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee.

*** **BPOE Funding for 2014-15** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2280](#), which appropriates \$48.777 million from the General Fund to the Department of State to fund the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs (\$39.2 million); State Board of Medicine (\$7.5 million); State Board of Osteopathic Medicine (\$1.2 million); State Board of Podiatry (\$225,000); and State Athletic Commission (\$536,000). The bill was enacted as [Act 2A of 2014](#).

*** **Workmen's Comp** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2281](#), which appropriates a total of \$70.860 million from the Workmen's Compensation Administrative Fund to administer the Workmen's Compensation law, Pennsylvania Occupational Disease Act and Office of Small Business Advocate for 2014-15. The bill was enacted as [Act 3A of 2014](#).

*** **DCED Funding for 2014-15** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2282](#), which appropriates \$1.163 million to the Office of Small Business Advocate in the Department of Community and Economic Development for fiscal 2014-15. The amount would be \$71,000 more than the 2013-14 total. The bill was enacted as [Act 4A of 2014](#).

*** **Funding for Consumer Advocate** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2283](#), which appropriates \$5.165 million from the General Fund to the Office of Consumer Advocate in the Office of Attorney General for fiscal 2014-15. The amount equals what was appropriated the previous year. The bill was enacted as [Act 5A of 2014](#).

*** **School Retirees** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2284](#), which appropriates \$41.689 million for the general government operations of the Public School Retirement System (PSERS) for the 2014-15 fiscal year. The amount is the same that was appropriated in fiscal 2013-14. The bill was enacted as [Act 6A of 2014](#).

*** **State Retirees** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2285](#), which appropriates \$22.3 million for the general government operations of the State Employees Retirement System (SERS) for the 2014-15 fiscal year. The appropriation was \$1.3 million higher than the previous year. The bill was enacted as [Act 7A of 2014](#).

*** **Philadelphia Parking Authority Funding** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2286](#), which appropriates \$7.072 million from the Philadelphia Taxicab and Limousine Regulatory Fund and \$500,000 from the Philadelphia Taxicab Medallion Fund to the Philadelphia Parking Authority for fiscal 2014-15. The bill was enacted as [Act 8A of 2014](#).

*** **PUC Funding for fiscal 2014-15** --The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2287](#), which appropriates \$64.571 million from the state General Fund; and \$3.785 million in federal funds to the Public Utility Commission. The appropriation is \$1.481 million above what was appropriated for 2013-14. The bill was enacted as [Act 9A of 2014](#).

*** **Gaming Oversight Funding** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2288](#), which appropriates \$71.069 million from the state Gaming Fund to the Gaming Control Board (\$37.990 million), Department of Revenue (\$9.513 million), State Police (\$22.995 million), and Office of Attorney General (\$1.141 million) for gaming industry oversight in fiscal 2014-15. The total appropriation is an increase of \$1.616 million over the previous year's amount. The bill was enacted as [Act 10A of 2014](#).

*** **2014-15- Budget** -- In a largely party line vote, the Senate voted 26-24 in favor of [House Bill 2328](#), the state's \$29.1 billion budget for fiscal 2014-15.

Many Senate Democrats sharply criticized the spending plan, calling it a sham that underfunds schools, job creation and human services while being balanced by unsustainable budget gimmicks, rosy revenue projections, accounting tricks and fund transfers. Democrats attempted to amend the plan to add \$275 million in education funding, \$40 million for job creation programs and \$28 million to restore human services that had been cut by Corbett in previous budgets. Those efforts were turned aside by the Republican majority.

Facing a \$1.5 billion budget deficit, many Democrats favored raising additional revenues through a Marcellus Shale extraction tax and other efficiencies.

Republicans argued that the budget held the line on taxes, only increased overall spending by 2.5 percent and still managed to make substantive investments in education and other key areas.

The spending plan provides \$100 million in new money for the governor's proposed "Ready to Learn" block grant program, and hiked special education funding by \$20 million.

The budget also increased aid to county welfare offices by \$40 million, increased funding for mental health services by \$41 million, and hiked both state police (\$15 million) and corrections (\$97 million) funding.

Gov. Tom Corbett line item vetoed the bill, slashing \$72 million in legislative operating funds. Senate leaders later filed suit, claiming the governor's veto was unconstitutional.

[House Bill 2328](#) was enacted as **Act 1A of 2014**.

*** **Penn State Funding for 2014-15** -- The Senate voted unanimously for [House Bill 2334](#), which appropriates \$229.7 million to Penn State University.

It specifies that \$214 million is for general support and \$15 million is for the Pennsylvania College of Technology. The bill also directs the appropriation of the moneys of the restricted account within the Agricultural College Land Scrip Fund for the 2014-2015 fiscal year. Following House approval, the bill was enacted as [Act 11A of 2014](#).

*** **Funding for Pitt** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2335](#), which appropriates \$136.2 million to the University of Pittsburgh. It specifies \$133.9 million is for

general support and \$2.3 million is for Rural Outreach Programs. These are the same amounts that were appropriated for fiscal year 2013-2014. The bill was enacted as [Act 12A of 2014](#).

*** **Funding for Temple** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2336](#), which appropriates \$139.9 million to Temple University for general support. This is the same amount appropriated for fiscal 2013-2014. The bill was enacted as [Act 13A of 2014](#).

*** **Funding for Lincoln University** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2337](#), which appropriates \$13.1 million to Lincoln University for general support. This is the same amount appropriated for fiscal year 2013-2014. The bill was signed into law as [Act 14A of 2014](#).

*** **Funding for Penn** -- The Senate voted unanimously to approve [House Bill 2338](#), which appropriates a total of \$28.2 million to the University of Pennsylvania. It specifies \$28 million for veterinary activities and \$261,000 for the Center for Infectious Diseases. This is the same amount appropriated for fiscal year 2013-2014. The bill was enacted as [Act 15A of 2014](#).

*** **2014-15 Capital Budget** -- The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 2355](#), the Capital Budget, which contains a list of \$1.2 billion in projects, reflecting an overall \$40 million decrease in what the governor had requested. The bill was signed into law as [Act 128 of 2014](#).

*** **Race Horse Development Fund** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1181](#), which amends the Fiscal Code to authorize a \$4.2 million transfer from the Race Horse Development Fund to the State Racing Fund.

Since the Pennsylvania horse and harness racing commissions became financially insolvent by 2014, this proposal provides a short term bridge for the continued regulation and oversight of the racing industry while lawmakers work to update the Race Horse Industry Reform Act to provide long term, sustainable funding solutions.

Since many of the state's casinos can only operate if they conduct a set amount of live racing days, continued regulation and oversight of the state's horse racing industry is necessary so not to impact casino operations and revenues.

The bill was enacted as [Act 30 of 2014](#).

* **State Employees** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1389](#), which would have appropriated \$22.3 million for the general government operations of the State Employees Retirement System (SERS) for the 2014-15 fiscal year. The appropriation would be \$1.3 million higher than fiscal 2013-14. The measure died in the House; and House Bill 2285 was used as the vehicle for the legislation.

* **School Retirees** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1390](#), which would have appropriated \$41.689 million for the general government operations of the Public School Retirement System (PSERS) for the 2014-15 fiscal year. The amount would have been the same that was appropriated in fiscal 2013-14. The bill died in the House. House Bill 2284 became the vehicle for the legislation.

* **Funding for State Boards** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1391](#), which would have appropriated \$48.777 million from the General Fund to the Department of State to fund the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs (\$39.2 million); State Board of Medicine (\$7.5 million); State Board of Osteopathic Medicine (\$1.2 million); State Board of Podiatry (\$225,000); and State Athletic Commission (\$536,000). The bill died in the House. House Bill 2280 became the vehicle for the legislation.

* **Workmen's Comp** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1392](#), which would have appropriated a total of \$70.8 million from the Workmen's Compensation Administrative Fund to administer the Workmen's Compensation law, Pennsylvania Occupational Disease Act and Office of Small Business Advocate for 2014-15. The bill died in the House; and House Bill 2281 became the vehicle for the legislation.

* **Small Business Advocate** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1393](#), which would have appropriated \$1.163 million to the Office of Small Business Advocate in the Department of Community and Economic Development for fiscal 2014-15. The amount would have been \$71,000 more than the 2013-14 fiscal total. The bill died in the House; and House Bill 2282 became the vehicle for the legislation.

* **Consumer Advocate** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1394](#), which would have appropriated \$5.165 million from the General Fund to the Office of Consumer Advocate in the Office of Attorney General for fiscal 2014-15. The amount would have equaled what was appropriated the previous year. The bill died in the House; and House Bill 2283 became the vehicle for the legislation.

* **PUC Funding** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1395](#), which would have appropriated \$64.571 million from the state General Fund; and \$3.785 million in federal funds to the Public Utility Commission. The appropriation would have been \$1.481 million above what was appropriated for 2013-14. The bill died in the House; and House Bill 2287 became the vehicle for the legislation.

* **Gaming Administration** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1396](#), which would have appropriated \$71.069 million from the state Gaming Fund to the Gaming Control Board (\$37.990 million), Department of Revenue (\$9.513 million), State Police (\$22.995 million, and Office of Attorney General (\$1.141 million) for gaming industry oversight in fiscal 2014-15. The total appropriation would have been an increase of \$1.616 million over the 2013-14 amount. The bill died in the House; and House Bill 2288 became the legislative vehicle that was enacted.

* **Philadelphia Parking Authority** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1397](#), which would have appropriated \$7.072 million from the Philadelphia Taxicab and Limousine Regulatory Fund and \$500,000 from the Philadelphia Taxicab Medallion Fund to the Philadelphia Parking Authority for fiscal 2014-15. The bill died in the House. House Bill 2286 became the vehicle for the legislation.

* **Capital Budget** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1400](#), the state's capital budget bill for 2014-15. The bill would have authorized \$1.295 billion in additional debt to be incurred for capital projects in 2014-15.

The measure specified indebtedness of \$725 million for buildings and structures, \$50 million for furniture and equipment, \$175 million for transportation assistance, \$335 million for redevelopment assistance, and \$10 million for flood control. The total authorized debt would have been \$20 million over what was authorized for fiscal 2013-14. The bill died in the House; and House Bill 2355 became the capital budget vehicle.

BANKING AND INSURANCE

*** **CHIP Advisory Council** -- The Senate voted 47-0 on an amended [House Bill 108](#), which changes the state's insurance law by requiring the advisory council of the Children's Health Insurance Program, or CHIP, to meet twice a year instead of once. It also removes the six-month waiting period for children applying for CHIP.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 74](#) of 2013.

*** **Abortion Health Insurance Coverage** -- The Senate voted 31-19 in favor of [House Bill 818](#), which establishes the conditions for abortion health insurance coverage if Pennsylvania ever establishes its own health insurance exchange program.

The bill largely mirrors the federal Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) that bans the use of public dollars for abortions unless a pregnancy results from rape, incest or risks the life of the mother.

The federal exchange provides health insurance to those who have no coverage at work or have to spend more than 9.5 percent of their income to buy into their employer's plan. It also is available to some small businesses.

Supporters said House Bill 818 was necessary to reconcile the federal exchange with the state's abortion control law.

Opponents claimed the measure was unnecessary because the governor has already declined to establish a state version of the exchange. They also contended that the legislation would restrict a woman's right to use her own money to purchase private health insurance that includes abortion coverage. Others argued that the measure leaves out the broader "health of the mother" exception in Pennsylvania's abortion control law.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 13](#) of 2013.

*** **Mortgages** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1124](#), which updates Pennsylvania's mortgage licensing act.

The changes deal with:

- Restoring a person's ability to originate, offer, negotiate, or service less than four mortgages loans in a calendar year;
- Clarifying that someone using an installment sales contract to sell a dwelling or tract must be a licensed mortgage lender and their employees must be licensed as mortgage loan originators;

- Exempting non-profit organizations from mortgage loan originator licensing requirements, as the Department of Banking and Securities now has oversight; and
 - Eliminating the requirement that mortgage loan originators be W-2 employees.
- This bill was signed into law as [Act 38 of 2013](#).

*** **Business Practices** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1128](#), which amends Title 12 (Commerce and Trade) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, creating Part V, which codifies the provisions of the Motor Vehicle Sales Finance Act and the Goods and Services Installment Sales Act.

The bill is intended to modernize existing law to account for improved business practices, new federal regulations, updated definitions and changes in consumer protection laws.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 98 of 2013](#).

*** **Child Allergies** -- By a vote of 48-2, the Senate passed [House Bill 1436](#), which amends the Medical Foods Insurance Coverage Act to ensure that insurance carriers cover the cost of amino-acid based elemental formulas for children with severe food allergies or other esophageal disorders that prevent them from consuming normal foods.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 158 of 2014](#).

*** **Insurers and Risk Management** -- The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 1481](#), which updates Pennsylvania's insurance law to comply with recommendations developed by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners in their Financial Regulation Standards and Accreditation Program.

The bill requires insurers to maintain a risk management framework and complete a Risk Management and Own Risk Solvency Assessment (ORSA). It will also set forth requirements for filing an ORSA summary report, and provides for confidentiality.

ORSA ensures that the company has developed a risk management policy that clearly identifies material risks and the amount of material risks the company is exposed to. The ORSA is essentially an internal assessment of the risks associated with an insurer's current business plan, and the sufficiency of capital resources to support those risks.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 78 of 2013](#).

*** **Stolen Electronics** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1483](#), which places additional notification requirements on those who insure lost, stolen or damaged portable electronic devices.

Under the bill, portable electronics insurers are required to provide vendor policyholders and their enrolled customers with 60 days notice prior to altering or terminating a policy.

The senate amended the bill to give consumers the option of receiving such insurer notices electronically.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 76 of 2013](#).

*** **HMOs** -- The Senate voted unanimously to approve [House Bill 1574](#) and [House Bill 1575](#), which amends the Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) Act of 1980 and Title 15 to allow an HMO to be organized as a Limited Liability Company (LLC).

Previously, any corporation could establish an HMO, but the privilege did not extend to LLC's. This limited certain business opportunities for non-profit HMOs that have both for-profit and non-profit hospital owners.

An LLC is a flexible form of enterprise that blends elements of partnership and corporate structures. An LLC is not a corporation; it is a legal form of company that provides limited liability to its owners in the vast majority of United States jurisdictions.

An HMO is an organization that provides or arranges managed care for health insurance, self-funded health care benefit plans, individuals, and other entities in the United States and acts as a liaison with health care providers (hospitals, doctors, etc.) on a prepaid basis.

The bills were enacted as [Act 96](#) and [Act 97](#) of 2014.

*** **Credit Union Code** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2009](#), which updates the state's credit union code.

Among other things, the proposal clarifies which credit union positions are actually officers; requires credit unions to keep a copy of their original articles of incorporation and any amendments; limit interest rates on loans; and updates notice provisions to permit notice to be provided by fax, e-mail or other electronic communication.

The code was last updated more than 10 years ago.

The bill was enacted as [Act 62](#) of 2014.

*** **Collateral** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2353](#), which enables insurance companies to offer different types of assets as collateral, namely commercial real estate holdings.

This change was recommended by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners. Delaware, Iowa, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Michigan and Indiana have adopted similar laws.

The governor signed the bill into law as [Act 144](#) of 2014.

*** **Medical Malpractice** -- By a vote of 45-4, the Senate passed [Senate Bill 194](#), which eliminates reporting requirements for insurers or groups that provide medical malpractice insurance. In response to a sharp rise in malpractice insurance premiums in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the General Assembly passed the Medical Care Availability and Reduction of Error (MCARE) Act in 2002. Among the components intended to assess the cause of premium increases was a requirement that any insurer issuing malpractice insurance file an annual report with the state Department of Insurance. Senate Bill 194 eliminates that requirement.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 22](#) of 2013.

*** **Savings and Loan** -- The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 371](#), which repeals the Savings Association Code of 1967. The outdated code provided state-chartered savings and loan associations with their powers, and regulates those powers. While there used to be hundreds of savings and loan associations in Pennsylvania, only four remain.

The measure repeals the code, aiding an effort by the Department of Banking to eliminate the program that regulates and examines these four savings and loan associations — encouraging the associations to convert to a state-chartered savings bank form.

This will provide the state with a small savings by absorbing the four small savings associations into the same regulatory system as savings banks.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 23](#) of 2013.

*** **Health Care Apologies** -- By a unanimous vote, the Senate approved [Senate Bill 379](#), which allows health care professionals to apologize for an error without fear of legal reprisal.

Under the measure, any sympathetic gesture or apology made prior to a medical liability action by a health care provider, assisted-living or personal-care home official is inadmissible as evidence of liability.

Proponents said simple explanations and apologies often prevent medical malpractice lawsuits. Thirty-six states have similar laws.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 79](#) of 2013.

* **Banking Rules** -- The Senate unanimously passed a [Senate Bill 380](#), which would have continued state and federal modernization of banking rules under the Dodd–Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act.

Senate Bill 380 would have clarified regulations regarding “electronic remittance transfers,” which generally refers to consumers sending money to foreign individuals or companies. Under new federal regulations, such transfers are covered through the consumer protections contained in the federal Electronic Transfer Act. Senate Bill 380 would have aligned state law with the federal regulations.

The bill died in the House Judiciary Committee.

*** **Debtor on Financing Settlements** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 381](#), which amends Article 9 of the state’s Uniform Commercial Code to deliver better guidance as to the name of a debtor listed on a financing statement. For business entities and other registered organizations, including business trusts, the proper name for perfection purposes is the name filed with the state and provided on the organization’s charter or other constitutive documents.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 30](#) of 2013.

*** **Debt Settlement Companies** -- The Senate unanimously approved an amended [Senate Bill 622](#), which changes state law to better cover how the state Department of Banking licenses and regulates the commonwealth’s debt-settlement industry.

A loophole in previous law allowed debt-settlement providers to operate without a license. It also did not prescribe how the Department of Banking should investigate, license or regulate these companies.

The new law adopts changes made at the federal level to the Federal Telemarketing Sales Rule to prohibit debt settlement companies from collecting advance fees when negotiating agreements with creditors. That rule, adopted in 2010, also requires debt relief companies to make specific disclosures to consumers, prohibits them from making

misrepresentations, and extends the telemarketing sales rule to cover calls consumers make to these firms in response to debt relief advertising.

The bill was enacted as [Act 118 of 2014](#).

*** **Insurance Funding** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 914](#), which provides the state Insurance Department with a dedicated funding structured through the newly-enacted Insurance Regulation and Oversight Fund Act. Pennsylvania, which was funded through a General Fund appropriation, is one of only two states that did not have a dedicated funding source for its Insurance Department.

Bill supporters claim the funding change was necessary because the department had numerous budget cuts and a 35 percent reduction in employees. They claim that a dedicated funding source enables the department to maintain a consistent, professional and apolitical regulation of the state's insurance market. They also argue that the change would enable the department to reduce its reliance on outside consultants who perform regulatory duties at a greater cost.

The legislation establishes this dedicated funding source for the department's regulation, management, development and oversight of the insurance industry. The funding for the Insurance Regulation and Oversight Fund consists of 50 percent of all license and fees collected, received, or derived by the department and 100 percent of all penalties, fines assessments, augmentations, or settlements received by the department.

Under the bill, the department must annually submit a proposal for its budget. The General Assembly will then annually appropriate money for the fund. If revenue exceeds that appropriation, the excess amount is re-directed to the General Fund.

Should the annual appropriation be insufficient to meet the department's expenses, the state treasurer can transfer from the General Fund, Workers' Compensation Security Fund or Underground Storage Tank Indemnification Fund to the fund as directed by the governor. The secretary of the budget must notify the General Assembly within 15 days of such a transfer. The governor then sets the reimbursement deadline for the transfer of funds back to the appropriate source.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 46 of 2013](#).

*** **Insurance Proof** -- The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 1040](#), which amends Title 75 (Vehicles) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes to allow insurers to provide proof of insurance cards in solely electronic formats if the insured agrees to it.

The bill requires police officers to accept proof of insurance in an electronic format just as they would in paper format.

The bill was enacted as [Act 132 of 2013](#).

*** **Securities Act** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1045](#), which updates the state's 1972 Securities Act to reflect changes forced by the merger of the Securities Commission into the Department of Banking.

The bill contains key provisions that reflect the federal Jumpstart Our Business Startups, or JOBS Act, which changed federal securities law to make it easier for small companies to raise capital from multiple individuals.

The bill also adds provisions to bring the state Securities Act in line with the Uniform Securities Act and federal law, such as providing the department with authority to require continuing education as a penalty for license violations, eliminating paper registration certificates and accepting electronic payments.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 52 of 2014](#).

* **Annual Report Format** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1130](#), which would have repealed a provision of law (Act 10 of 1996) that requires the General Assembly to receive a printed copy of an annual report required by the Flood Insurance Education and Information Act of 1996. The report is now published online.

The bill died in the House.

* **Health Insurance Navigators** -- In a party line vote of 27 to 22, the Senate approved [Senate Bill 1268](#), which would have required health insurance navigators to register with the state Insurance Department and pass a background check.

Navigators help people determine if they qualify for tax subsidies through the Affordable Care Act's (Obamacare) health insurance exchanges.

Democrats claim the measure would have added needless bureaucratic obstacles to the process, hamstringing the new healthcare law and discourage people from signing up for health insurance.

Bill proponents argued that the measure was a reasonable way to help regulators make sure that navigators are not steering consumers toward particular health plans or doing what only licensed agents and brokers can legally do.

The bill died in the House.

*** **Affiliate Insurance Transfers** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1356](#), which amends the Unfair Practices Act to further simplify affiliate insurance transfers.

Previously, insurers were required to "non-renew" existing policies under one affiliate to transfer the policies to another affiliate. This caused unnecessary confusion and concern for policyholders and was an administratively burdensome process for insurers.

The bill eliminates this requirement in homeowners insurance and allows insurers to move customers from one affiliate to another without having to go through the non-renewal process.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 182 of 2014](#).

*** **Companion Bill on Affiliate Insurance Transfers** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1357](#), which amends the Insurance Company Law of 1921 to further simplify affiliate insurance transfers.

The measure eliminates the non-renewal requirement in automobile insurance and allows insurers to move customers from one affiliate to another without having to go through the non-renewal process.

The bill was enacted as [Act 183 of 2014](#).

* **Federal Home Loan Banks** -- The Senate unanimously passed a bill that would have allowed Pennsylvania insurance companies to receive better terms when borrowing from Federal Home Loan banks (FHLBanks), specifically the FHLBank of Pittsburgh.

FHLBanks are a popular source of long-term, low-cost funding for insurance companies, but because Pennsylvania law governing FHLBank lending to insurance companies differs from federal banking law, state insurance companies borrow from FHLBanks on less advantageous terms (including collateral requirements) than do similarly rated depository institutions.

[Senate Bill 1415](#) would have made changes to align Pennsylvania law with federal law. The bill died the House.

* **Breast Cancer Tests** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1432](#), which would have amended the Insurance Company Law of 1921 to make access to mammographic examinations and mastectomy and breast cancer reconstruction more affordable.

While Pennsylvania law requires individual and group insurance policies to cover mammograms, it does not prohibit co-pays, co-insurance or deductibles from being applied to these life-saving procedures.

The Democratic-sponsored proposal would have made Pennsylvania consistent with the Affordable Care Act as it relates to mammogram services. Current law also does not require mastectomies to be covered under these policies.

The bill would also have increased insurance coverage to include mastectomy surgery and would have prohibited co-payments, co-insurance or deductibles from being applied. The proposal would have placed limits on co-payments and co-insurances for insured medical services from a physical therapist, chiropractor or occupational therapist.

The bill would also have provided limits on co-payments and co-insurances for insured medical services provided by a physical therapist, chiropractor or occupational therapist.

The measure died in the House.

* **Bail Bonds** -- The Senate unanimously passed a bill intended to reform the bail bond process in Pennsylvania.

Currently, two types of bail bondsmen operate in Pennsylvania, “professional” or “property” bondsmen and “surety” bondsmen. Professional bondsmen issue bonds using their own assets as collateral. Surety bondsmen, however, are licensed insurance producers that issue bonds on behalf of a licensed surety company. These two entities are currently licensed separately.

[Senate Bill 1441](#) would have modernized the licensing of bail bondsmen by discontinuing separate licensure and by requiring every bondsman be licensed as an insurance producer with a casualty line of authority. They would also have been required to issue bonds only under a power of authority granted by a qualified insurance company that has satisfied the minimum capital and surplus requirement necessary for licensure.

The bill would also have ensured that counties and court systems could enforce the law when a bondsman repeatedly fails to pay forfeited bail by allowing district attorneys and county solicitors to file a motion to non-renew or suspend a bail bondsmen license for failure of the bondsmen to pay bail or follow other aspects of the law.

The bill died in the House.

COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

*** **Child Abuse Prevention** - The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 24](#), which amends Title 23 to update clearance procedures for prospective employees and establishes the Statewide Database of Protective Services to manage information about suspected child abuse.

The bill requires reports of suspected child abuse to be submitted electronically or by phone to the Department of Public Welfare. The information in the database is only used for investigations or background checks such as those for employees.

The measure does not have a significant fiscal impact, but requires a modification of the existing statewide child abuse register computer system.

The bill was enacted as [Act 29](#) of 2014.

* **Personal Information Security** - The Senate unanimously passed legislation that would have tightened time limits for public entities to notify authorities of a personal information security breach.

Under [Senate Bill 114](#), state agencies, counties, school districts and municipalities would have been required to notify anyone whose information has been breached within seven days. The bill also would have required public entities to notify the Attorney General's Office within three days of the discovery of the breach. Also, a state agency under the governor's jurisdiction would have been required to notify the governor's Office of Administration within three business days following the discovery of a breach.

The bill died in the House.

*** **Cell Phone Locators** -- By a vote of 48-2, the Senate passed [Senate Bill 1290](#), which requires wireless providers to "ping" (signal to the cell phone to help determine the general cell tower location it is in) a potential victim's cell phone at the request of law enforcement officials to help locate the missing person.

This process goes into effect when there is sufficient information to believe there is a risk or threat of death or serious physical harm. Since 2005, the FCC has required cell phone manufacturers to include GPS receivers in all devices. This has allowed first-responders to pinpoint the location of 911 callers in case of an emergency.

Previously, Pennsylvania law enforcement officials could request this information from cell phone providers. However, a subpoena was required in most cases.

The bill was enacted as [Act 181](#) of 2014.

COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC, & RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

* **County Hotel Tax** – The Senate voted 45-5 for [Senate Bill 838](#), which would have amended the County Code to allow Armstrong, Butler, Franklin, Indiana, Schuylkill, Washington and York counties to levy a 3- to 5-percent hotel tax to promote tourism.

Under the proposal, 75 percent of the proceeds would have gone to tourism with the balance split between grants to local law enforcement and local economic development, historic preservation and arts programs.

Senate Bill 838 also would have allowed Bensalem Township, Bucks County, to levy a 3 percent hotel room rental tax for police and emergency services.

The bill died in the House Tourism and Recreational Development Committee.

*** **Community Service Block Grants** – The Senate voted unanimously for [House Bill 927](#) to re-start the Community Services Block Grant program to allow community action agencies that are established under federal and state law to once again provide employment services to low-income individuals.

The program had expired Dec. 31, 2011.

The governor enacted the bill as [Act 90](#) of 2014.

*** **PIDA** – The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1550](#) to consolidate five existing state business financing programs and place them under the jurisdiction of the Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority, or PIDA.

The new law consolidates Small Business First and its affiliated programs, Community Economic Development, Pollution Prevention Assistance, Export Financing and the Machinery and Equipment Loan Fund, or MELF.

The statute now also consolidates those five programs' business loan mechanisms under PIDA. And, it codifies the Pennsylvania Military Community Enhancement Commission into state law. The commission studies, engages in outreach to the public and private sectors, works with partners and stakeholder groups at all levels of government and supports projects that enhance the military value of Pennsylvania installations.

HB 1550 was signed into law as [Act 161](#) of 2014.

*** **Small Games of Chance** -- The Senate voted 47-3 in favor of [House Bill 290](#), which allows volunteer and charitable organizations to offer small games of chance.

Raffle auctions (commonly known as bashes or Chinese auctions), night at the races and small sports betting pools, such as those typically associated with the NCAA tournament or Super Bowl are now permitted under the new law. Also, the reporting requirements and background checks for organizations that do not have a liquor license have been eliminated. They are required, however, for liquor licensees garnering at least \$30,000 a year in small games proceeds.

Under the new law, prize limits for a single daily drawing are increased to \$3,000; aggregate weekly limit to \$35,000; and aggregate annual limit to \$150,000. Games regulated by the Gaming Control Board are prohibited. And, organizations without a liquor license are permitted to operate small games of chance anywhere in their home county.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 92](#) of 2013.

***** Tavern, Bar Small Games of Chance** -- The Senate voted 34-15 in favor of [House Bill 1098](#), giving bars and taverns the option to host raffles and other small games of chance.

Under the bill, taverns, hotels, restaurants and golf courses will be permitted to offer certain small games of chance including daily drawings, pull tabs, and monthly raffles. The revenue would be split between the establishment and state, with a share going to charities. In addition, a 5 percent tavern games tax would go to the host municipality.

Approximately 2,000 establishments could receive tavern gaming licenses under the new law. Individual prizes are limited to \$2,000 and weekly prizes to \$35,000.

The bill also allows volunteer and civic clubs to keep a higher share (40 percent) of small games proceeds for the club's operating expenses. And it allows club licensees to exempt the first \$20,000 in proceeds from the 60/40 distribution list collected if \$40,000 or less is collected in annual proceeds.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 90](#) of 2013.

*** Horse Racing Commission** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 643](#), which would have amended the Race Horse Industry Reform Act to prohibit more than two of the three commissioners for either the horse or harness racing commissions from residing in the same county at the time of appointment.

The bill died before the House Gaming Oversight Committee.

CONSUMER PROTECTION & PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE

***** CPA Uniformity** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 40](#) to bring Pennsylvania's certified public accountants law in line with the Uniform Accountancy Act regarding "attest activity."

Specifically, the bill eliminates the requirement for a specific number of hours of experience to be completed before a CPA can earn his or her license – the "attest activity." The National Association of State Boards of Accountancy and the American Institute of CPAs support one year of broad-based experience, but have said required experience in attest activity is no longer needed for initial licensure.

Twenty-five states and Washington D.C. have already adopted the change.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 15](#) of 2013.

***** Volunteer Health Services** -- The Senate voted unanimously for [House Bill 43](#), which amends the Volunteer Health Services Act, expanding it to include mental health services provided to military personnel and their family.

The bill allows physicians and other health care practitioners who are retired from active practice to provide mental health services within their scope of practice as a volunteer. The volunteer must be referred by a nonprofit whose purpose is to recommend licensed volunteers to military personnel and their families. This nonprofit must be approved by the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 86 of 2014](#).

*** **License Fees and Fines Collection** -- The Senate unanimously passed a bill to improve collection of fees, fines and penalties assessed by professional licensing boards. [House Bill 261](#) amends Act 48 of 1993 to give authority to all 29 licensing boards and commissions under the Department of State's Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs to collect all fees, costs, fines and penalties assessed as a result of a disciplinary proceeding.

The boards and commissions are also granted the power to deny, suspend or revoke a license, registration or certification for failure to pay a fine or fee assessed. Currently only nine of the 29 licensing boards and commissions have specific authority to suspend or revoke a license for failure to pay a fine.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 6 of 2014](#).

*** **Visiting Dental Teachers** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 272](#), which allows dentists from other states or countries to obtain a license to teach in dental schools in Pennsylvania.

Prior law allowed dentists licensed in other states or countries to teach at Pennsylvania dental schools without obtaining a state dentist's license, but only for a maximum of four years. With this bill, they can obtain a license that can be renewed every two years indefinitely, as long as their practice does not go beyond the scope of teaching.

The bill was signed by the governor as [Act 89 of 2014](#).

*** **Child Abuse Prevention** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 431](#), which is part of the 2013-14 child protection package. The changes were proposed by the Task Force on Child Protection.

House Bill 431 requires professional licensees to prove they have completed at least three hours of approved child abuse recognition and reporting training. At least two hours of continuing education on child abuse recognition is also obligatory.

Following House concurrence, the bill was signed into law as [Act 31 of 2014](#).

*** **Utility Bill Flexibility** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 939](#), which gives struggling families more options, time and flexibility to pay their utility bill.

Under the bill, which re-authorizes Chapter 14 in the Public Utility Code for 10 more years, it:

- bans Friday terminations;
- protects people who have serious medical conditions from shut-offs;
- protects victims of domestic violence from having their power terminated;
- shields tenants from termination when their landlord was the one responsible for utility payments;
- prevents utility companies from terminating an impoverished family's (below 250 percent of federal poverty limit) power during winter months; and
- eliminates mandatory cash deposits for customer assistance program (CAP)-eligible people.

Lawmakers emphasized that the bill doesn't excuse or exclude anyone from paying their utility bill.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 155](#) of 2014.

*** **River Pilot Fees** -- The Senate unanimously passed legislation increasing the fees paid for river pilot services on the Delaware River and Bay beginning in 2014.

[House Bill 1029](#) maintained the prior rate for state-licensed pilots of \$12.86 per unit through 2013 and increased the rate to \$13.25 per unit in January 2014, \$13.64 per unit in January 2015 and \$14.05 per unit in January 2016. (A unit is determined by multiplying a ship's length by its width, in feet, and dividing by 100.)

The bill also increases the ship communication charge for vessels transiting the Delaware River from \$220 to \$235.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 12](#) of 2013.

*** **Volunteer Dentists** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1056](#), which allows temporary volunteer dental licenses for out-of-state dentists who want to visit Pennsylvania to volunteer their services.

Under the measure, the board may issue one 30-day temporary volunteer license per applicant each year; or up to three 10-day temporary license per applicant per year.

The bill was enacted as **Act 7** of 2014.

*** **Physician Assistant Supervision** -- The Senate unanimously approved two bills [House Bill 1348](#) and [House Bill 1351](#) that amend the Medical Practice Act to ease requirements for physician oversight of physician assistants.

Under the bills, when records are written by a physician assistant, the supervising physician is required to review and countersign all patient records within 10 days for a certain period of months depending on the physician assistant's experience level. As physician assistants get more experienced and work with a certain physician for a set period of time, the requirement to countersign all patient records is set by the supervising physician.

The bills were signed into law as [Act 100](#) and [Act 101](#) of 2013.

*** **Cosmetology License Update** -- The Senate voted 48-0 for [House Bill 1425](#), which requires cosmetology schools to provide a federally compliant licensing process for students.

New minimum requirements went into effect in 2011, but it was later revealed that some states did not meet the revised benchmarks. Pennsylvania-approved schools that do not meet the changes would have lost federal Title IV funding.

The legislation was signed into law as [Act 113](#) of 2013.

*** **Philly Parking Authority Reforms** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1490](#), which amends Philadelphia taxi and limousine regulations for collection of fees to continue enforcement operations. The legislation replaces the previous system that Commonwealth Court deemed unconstitutional, with a system similar to what the Public Utility Commission uses to set its budget and fees for taxicabs.

The measure establishes the Philadelphia Taxicab and Limousine Regulatory Fund and the Philadelphia Taxicab Medallion Fund as special funds in the state Treasury. The Philadelphia Taxicab and Limousine Regulatory Fund will act as the primary fund for administration and enforcement of regulations for the Philadelphia Parking Authority (PPA). The Philadelphia Taxicab Medallion Fund, through the sale of taxicab medallions, will be used solely for the purpose of administering and enforcing taxicab regulation.

The PPA will submit a budget to the General Assembly for approval that would include a fee schedule. If not approved by March 30, the PPA could use the previous year's approved operating budget. For fiscal 2013-14, the state appropriated \$5,874,399 to the PPA from the Philadelphia Taxicab and Limousine Regulatory Fund to implement and administer the law.

The PPA is required to maintain records of its expenses as well as the assessment determination for all utilities. It will also undergo an annual audit by a certified public accountant.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 64 of 2103](#).

*** **Home Improvement Contracts** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1543](#), which amends the state's home improvement contractor law to give consumers – and contractors – better legal protection during home improvement jobs.

Before this change, contractors often entered into “time and materials” agreements with consumers, but the agreements were not enforceable contracts and not subject to the protections and penalties of the law.

Contracts are now be subject to HIC protections and penalties based on the current standard of the total sales price or a time and materials provision on which the contractor and consumer agreed.

The governor signed the bill as [Act 160 of 2014](#).

*** **Massage Therapists** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1558](#), which amends the state's Cosmetology Law to allow licensed massage therapists to practice in cosmetology and aesthetician salons.

Ranging from being employed directly by the salon to inspection requirements, the measure establishes certain conditions for practicing in the salons.

The bill was it signed into law as [Act 136 of 2014](#).

*** **Selling Diabetic Shoes** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2242](#), which removes the state licensing requirement for pharmacies and companies that want to sell diabetic shoes and inserts. The licensing requirement would have taken effect in July of 2014 if the change had not been made.

The governor signed the bill as [Act 104 of 2014](#).

* **Temporary Mental Health Licenses** -- The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 81](#) which would have amended the Volunteer Health Services Act allow mental health professionals to apply for a mental health volunteer license that would have allowed them to provide free mental health services to military personnel and their families.

The bill died in the House.

* **Dog Purchase Protections** -- The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 82](#), which would have provided additional protection for people who purchase a defective or sickly dog.

Under the bill, the purchase price would have been refunded if the dog purchased has an incurable disease or ailment. The measure would also have expanded the time span in which a dog purchaser could have a veterinarian check for diseases or certify an illness. The bill also would have changed the definition of animals “unfit for purchase” from illnesses that “severely affect” to ones that have “a significant adverse affect.”

The bill died in the house.

*** **Speech and Hearing Regulations** -- The Senate unanimously approved an amended [Senate Bill 137](#), which updates Pennsylvania’s Speech Language and Hearing Act.

The new law updates the scope of practice for audiologists to reflect changes in education and practice over the past 25 years. It also changes the composition of the State Board of Examiners in Speech Language and Hearing, updates licensing requirements to reflect national standards, and provides for the proper use of titles.

The change deals with audiologists and deletes references to teachers of the hearing impaired.

The governor enacted Senate Bill 137 as [Act 106 of 2014](#).

* **Plumbing Licenses** -- By a vote of 47-3, the Senate passed legislation that would have established title protection in the plumbing industry.

[Senate Bill 441](#) would have regulated who can call themselves a state-licensed plumbing contractor rather than who can perform plumbing services.

The legislation would have established minimum standards that individuals would meet to obtain a state license. Plumbing contractors licensure board would have been created to issue licenses, develop regulations, and administer the provisions of the law.

The bill died in the House.

*** **Protecting Car Dealers** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 732](#), which provides protection for franchised new vehicle dealers from abuse by vehicle manufacturers.

Specifically, dealers will have more freedom in choosing building materials when doing dealership upgrades that are imposed by the manufacturers. It also allows manufacturers to reimburse dealers for work done under warranty, and shortens the time span in which manufacturers are allowed to audit invoices submitted to the manufacturers.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 84 of 2013](#).

* **Self-Storage Regulations** -- By a vote of 43-3, the Senate passed a bill that would have made it easier for the owners of self-storage facilities to take control of the possessions of a tenant who is in default of payment.

Under [Senate Bill 799](#) the owner would have had the right to deny the occupant’s access to the leased space after 20 days in default (currently 30). Also, the owner would have been able to remove the personal property from the leased space to another suitable storage space pending its sale after the occupant had been in default continuously for 30 days or more.

The bill died in the House.

*** **Bachelor of Social Work Designation** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 807](#), which creates a voluntary license for a bachelor of social work.

The application fee for the license will be \$40, with a \$75 renewal fee. Only people who are licensed as bachelor social workers are permitted to style themselves as licensed bachelor social workers and use the letters “L.B.S.W.” in connection with their names.

Bill proponents claim that social workers have been pushing for bachelor degree licensure for years. Other states have it.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 179](#) of 2014.

*** **Out-of-State RV Dealers** -- The Senate unanimously passed legislation clarifying Pennsylvania law governing the activity of out-of-state recreational vehicle dealers at Pennsylvania RV shows.

[Senate Bill 814](#) clarifies the definition of an out-of-state RV dealer, and requires such a dealer to register with the board before participating in a recreational vehicle show, recreational vehicle off-premise sale, recreational vehicle exhibition or a recreational vehicle rally in Pennsylvania.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 146](#) of 2014.

* **Pharmacists Administering Vaccines** -- The Senate voted unanimously to approve [Senate Bill 819](#), which would have amended the Pharmacy Act to allow pharmacists to administer flu vaccines to children over the age of seven with parental consent.

Currently, pharmacists and pharmaceutical interns can only administer the vaccine to adults over the age of 18. The bill would also have required that pharmacists maintain at least 1 million dollars of liability insurance per occurrence or claim made.

The bill died in the House.

* **Certified Nurse Anesthetist Designation** -- By unanimous vote, the Senate passed [Senate Bill 959](#), which would have allowed a nurse anesthetist who meets certain qualifications to use the title “certified registered nurse anesthetist” and the abbreviation “C.R.N.A.”

A nurse could have qualified if he or she holds a master’s degree, doctoral degree or post-master’s certificate from an accredited education program in nurse anesthesia that has been approved by the board and that prepares graduates to practice as a certified registered nurse anesthetist.

The bill died in the House.

*** **Regulating Acupuncture** --The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 990](#), which changes laws regarding who acupuncturists may treat.

The bill allows acupuncturists to treat anyone without a physician’s diagnosis who, after 60 days, does not show any symptoms of the original condition. Currently, acupuncturists cannot treat anyone still showing symptoms after 60 days. Additionally, the bill would require acupuncturists to maintain \$1 million per claim in liability insurance.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 134](#) of 2014.

*** **Selling Electric Cars** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1409](#), which amends the Board of Vehicles Act, permitting Tesla Motors to sell its vehicles in Pennsylvania.

The bill allows any dealer who produces only electric cars to own and operate up to five new vehicle dealerships. This applies as long as the manufacturer has had a new vehicle license for at least one year and all of the vehicles they sell are in compliance with the Board of Vehicles Act.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 125](#) of 2014.

* **Funeral Deposits** -- The Senate voted 32 to 16 for [Senate Bill 1491](#), which would have amended the Cemetery and Funeral Merchandise Trust Fund Law to protect consumers who purchase funeral services in advance.

Under the bill, consumers could have still deposit a minimum 70 percent of the cost into a trust fund account. However, sellers would have been required to place deposits into the trust fund within 30 business days. The measure would also have prohibited sellers from retaining any deposit money if the purchaser defaults.

The seller would have been required to provide a detailed price list and description of the vault and casket. Opponents of the bill argued that 100 percent of deposit funds should be placed in the trust fund.

The bill died in the House.

EDUCATION

*** **Special Education Funding Commission** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2](#), which creates a Special Education Funding Commission to identify the most effective and equitable way to distribute special education funding to school districts or charter schools.

Under House Bill 2, the commission has 15 members, including the chairman and minority chairs of the House and Senate Education Committees, four legislators chosen by caucus leadership, the Secretary of Education, Secretary of the Budget and the Deputy Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The commission consults with experts and school officials to examine all of the variables that go into special education needs, and make recommendations to the legislature.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 3](#) of 2013.

*** **Dyslexia Screening** -- The Senate's unanimously approved [House Bill 198](#), which initiates a dyslexia screening pilot program operated by the Department of Education.

Dyslexia is a reading disability that occurs when the brain does not properly recognize and process certain symbols.

House Bill 198 will provide evidence-based early screening and intervention services for children with risk factors. It will also help state officials evaluate the effectiveness of early reading assistance programs for children with risk factors for dyslexia, plus evaluate whether those programs can reduce future special education costs.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 69 of 2014](#).

*** **Epi-pens in Schools** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 803](#), which requires schools to stock epinephrine medication for students experiencing anaphylaxis, a life-threatening allergic reaction.

The bill also establishes requirements for how epinephrine (epi-pens) is stored, who is authorized to administer the medication, and requires the Pennsylvania Department of Health to craft regulations and guidelines.

According to the organization Food Allergy Research & Education, one in every 13 children nationally suffers from a food allergy and many students will experience their first allergic reaction in the school setting.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 195 of 2014](#).

*** **Automated External Defibrillators** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 974](#), which grants or enables public schools to obtain AEDs (automated external defibrillators) and supplies on a biennial basis for distribution to schools at a discounted rate.

If money is appropriated, then the Department of Education can provide AEDs to schools that do not have them — or pay for part of them at a cost lower than the bid price. If there is no funding available, the department will just offer a bid price that schools can use.

Upon request, the department will provide up to two AEDs to each school district, one to each intermediate unit, and one to each area vocational-technical school. To be eligible, at least two employees must know how to use an AED and at least one must be present at all school-sponsored activities.

The bill also requires school entities to annually report the number, age, condition and location of AEDs in each school building.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 35 of 2014](#).

*** **Superintendent Evaluation** -- By a vote of 37-11, the Senate passed a controversial bill that eliminates the need for school superintendents to evaluate the progress of homeschooled students.

Under previous law, parents hired an evaluator to assess the student's work and the assessment was passed on to the school superintendent for approval.

[House Bill 1013](#) eliminates the requirement of review by the superintendent, which proponents described as "over kill."

This bill was signed into law as [Act 196 of 2014](#).

*** **2013-14 School Code** -- By a mostly partisan 34-16 vote, the Senate approved [House Bill 1141](#), the 2013-14 School Code portion of the budget.

The measure guides the distribution of funding for community colleges, basic education funding, intermediate unit funding, special education funding, vocational education funding and Pennsylvania Accountability Grants.

With a basic education funding increase of only 2.4 percent, the bill failed to make up much ground on the \$1 billion in cuts schools that occurred during the first two years of the Corbett Administration.

At the same time, the state only provided about \$45 million of the \$141 million rescue package for Philadelphia schools. Part of the funding scheme for that package anticipates the city borrowing more and collecting more in delinquent taxes.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 59 of 2013](#).

*** **Priority Registration for Vets** -- The Senate voted 49-0 in favor of [House Bill 1164](#), which requires Pennsylvania's colleges, universities and institutions of higher learning to provide honorably discharged veterans and members of the National Guard and the Reserve component with priority registration when an application is received.

Priority registration is now only extended to certain athletes and students in selected demographics.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 46 of 2014](#).

*** **Holocaust Education** -- By unanimous vote, the Senate passed a bill to ensure that students understand the causes and effects of genocide and other crimes against humanity, including the Holocaust.

Under [House Bill 1424](#), the state Department of Education helps provide school curricula related to the Holocaust and other atrocities throughout world history. Instruction includes the history of the Holocaust; the definition, history, response and actions taken in the face of genocide; and personal responsibility in the face of the abridgement of human rights.

The bill was enacted as [Act 70 of 2014](#).

*** **Military Leave Of Absence Designation** -- The Senate voted 46-0 in favor of [House Bill 1460](#), which requires Pennsylvania colleges to allow members of the military or their spouse to receive an "M" on their transcript for all classes they are unable to complete due to a military leave of absence.

House Bill 1460 also requires the Department of Veterans' Affairs to write a report on the feasibility of expanding their publicly accessible website database of medal and award recipients to include all military awards and decorations. Previously, the database only included the Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, the Navy Cross, the Air Force Cross, and the Silver Star, which are awarded for heroic service in the U.S. armed forces.

The bill was enacted as [Act 59 of 2014](#).

*** **Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention Education** -- The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 1559](#), which requires Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention Education for professional educators in school buildings serving students in grades 6 through 12.

Training received under this act may be used to satisfy continuing professional education requirements.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 71 of 2014](#).

*** **Basic Education Funding Commission** -- The Senate voted 47-1 in favor of [House Bill 1738](#), which establishes a 15-member Basic Education Funding Commission.

Under the bill, the commission will study the state's basic education funding formula and recommend reforms to the legislature. Some of the issues the commission is expected to

consider include: market value/personal income ratio, geographic price differences, high enrollment growth, millage rates, student English proficiency and population in relation to a district's geographic size.

The commission must issue a report on its findings and recommendations within a year. This bill was signed into law as [Act 51 of 2014](#).

*** **Background Checks** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1816](#), which prevent schools from quietly transferring or hiring teachers, coaches and staff who have sexually exploited, abused or harassed students; a practice that is sometimes called "passing the trash."

[House Bill 1816](#) requires a school to do a more thorough background check on applicants, including if they have ever:

- been the subject of an abuse or sexual misconduct investigation by any employer, state licensing agency, law enforcement agency or child protective services agency;
- been disciplined, discharged, non-renewed or asked to resign from employment, resigned from or otherwise separated from any employment while allegations of abuse or sexual misconduct were pending or under investigation; and
- had a license, professional license or certificate suspended, surrendered or revoked while allegations of abuse or sexual misconduct were pending or under investigation.

House Bill 1816 also opens the door for educators to gain a "real knowledge" of modern manufacturing to help teach students who are interested in manufacturing careers.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 168 of 2014](#).

*** **School Board members on Active Duty** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2013](#), which helps school boards replace directors who have been called into active military duty.

The Pennsylvania School Code provides direction for school board members who enlist during times of war, but it did not address directors who are eligible to be called back into duty.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 74 of 2014](#).

*** **Safe Schools Grant Program** -- The Senate approved [Senate Bill 10](#) by a vote of 49-0. The measure expands the Safe Schools Grant program, which the Department of Education oversees.

The bill also provides dedicated funding for the training and hiring of armed guards in schools. Pennsylvania previously provided \$500,000 through the Safe Schools Grant program. The bill increases that funding to \$10 million.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 70 of 2013](#).

*** **Child Abuse Reporting** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 31](#), which toughens child abuse reporting requirements in schools.

The Democratic-sponsored bill does away with the separate reporting requirement for schools and mandates that suspected child abuse be reported within 24 hours to the proper authorities for investigation. The measure also removes the different reporting requirement for school employees and put them on the same level as other mandated reporters. The bill

requires that an incident be reported directly to Childline or the police. It covers all students, from kindergarten through college.

The legislation is one of the endorsed bills in the bipartisan, bicameral Legislative Task Force on Child Protection report issued in early 2013.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 44 of 2014](#).

*** **Educator Discipline Act** -- The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 34](#), which modernizes Pennsylvania's Professional Educator Discipline Act.

Senate Bill 34 contains many recommendations of the Professional Standards and Practices Commission, the body that oversees the educator discipline system. It allows for increased access to dispute resolution programs and professional development courses. It also allows for investigations into allegations of educator misconduct and expands mandatory reporting requirements.

The bill also clarifies the duties of schools and provides a specific timeline for investigations of alleged educator misconduct.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 120 of 2013](#).

* **School Employee Hiring** -- The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 46](#), which would have prevented school districts from passing problem teachers to other districts, a practice known as "passing the trash."

Senate Bill 46, formally called the "Stop Educator Sexual Abuse, Misconduct, and Exploitation (SESAME) Act," was designed to close the loophole that allows school districts to hire employees with a history of investigations and dismissals for abuse or sexual misconduct.

Under the Democratic-sponsored bill, a prospective school employee and any former employer would have been required to disclose if an applicant:

- was the subject of any abuse or sexual misconduct investigation, unless such investigation resulted in a finding that the allegations were false;
- was disciplined, discharged, non-renewed, asked to resign or separated from employment while allegations were pending or under investigation; or
- has ever had a license or certificate suspended, surrendered or revoked while allegations were pending.

Applicants for school jobs would have been required to provide complete and accurate information on former employers. Violations could have resulted in fines of up to \$10,000.

The bill was tabled and died in the House. However, [House Bill 1816](#), which contains many of the same provisions, was passed into law.

*** **CPR Certified School Nurses** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 193](#), which amends the Public School Code to require that school nurses be CPR certified.

If an already employed school nurse is not certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation by July 1, 2013, they will be required to complete training within a year. If a school nurse is hired after July 1, 2013 and is not CPR certified, they will have one year to become certified. Certification must come from a Department of Health-approved agency.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 107 of 2014](#).

***** Acceptable School Absence Excuses** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 267](#), which amends the Public School Code to extend the acceptable excuses for school absence to include educational reasons.

Under the bill, school boards may provide guidelines for the absences, but the guidelines must be approved by the Department of Education.

The bill also makes Automatic Emergency Defibrillators (AEDs) available in all school buildings, provided schools offer staff training. The Department of Education may assist schools by providing a discounted or no-cost AED to schools.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 40 of 2014](#).

***** Junior Reserved Officers' Training Corps** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 437](#), which allows the Department of Education to grant military science teaching certificates to individuals who have a valid military science certificate or endorsement issued by a branch of the armed forces authorizing the individual to teach military science to JROTCs (Junior Reserved Officers' Training Corps).

This bill was signed into law as [Act 10 of 2014](#).

**** Education Funding Formula** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 470](#), which would have established a new equitable formula to distribute special education funding; an accountability system to ensure effective investment of resources; and a special education funding commission.

Special education funding is currently distributed based on an estimate that the average daily enrollment of each district includes 16 percent of special education students.

Under Senate Bill 470, the commission would have reviewed and made recommendations on special education funding in Pennsylvania; drafted proposed regulations and legislation on findings related to charter and cyber charter school funding requirements regarding special education students; held public hearings at various locations statewide; and issued a report on its findings and recommendations by Nov. 30, 2013.

Under the bill, the funding formula must have recognized three cost categories of special education students based on the range of student service needs and determine a weighted special education student count based on the average of the three most recent school years for each category. They may also have utilized a proportional system for distributing changes in special education funding among school districts, considered special education funding throughout the United States, included the potential impact the distribution of special education funding may have had on school districts, and reviewed potential cost savings.

The amended bill stalled out in the Senate Committee on Rules and Executive Nominations.

***** Financial Contributions** -- The Senate voted 46-0 on [Senate Bill 874](#), which changes Pennsylvania's Public School Code to allow community college-sponsoring school districts more flexibility in paying their annual financial contributions to the schools.

Only Harrisburg Area Community College (HACC) will be affected by the bill, thus allowing HACC's sponsoring school districts to negotiate a more affordable funding level and payments.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 108 of 2014](#).

* **Community Colleges** -- By a vote of 42-4, the Senate passed a bill that would have created a new community college to cover rural northern counties of the state. Opponents of [Senate Bill 1000](#) said the expansion of the current system of community colleges should have been considered as a cost effective option.

The bill died in the House Education Committee.

* **Charter Schools** -- The Senate voted 37-13 to approve [Senate Bill 1085](#), which would have made multiple changes to the law governing charter schools.

This bill was very broad in scope, but the main components were as follows:

- Upon approval of a charter application, a written charter containing the provisions of the standardized application would have been developed and signed. The initial charter would have been for 5 years and renewed in 10 year periods.
- The requirement that a charter school receive 1,000 resident signatures supporting its petition would have been removed, and the bill would have solidified what must be on an application to establish a charter school.
- Charter school employee health care benefits would have been required to be the same as the collective bargained benefits of the school district.
- This bill would also have allowed students attending the charter school to concurrently attend institutions of higher education. Currently, only public schools are allowed to do this.
- At the end of each fiscal year, every charter school would have been required to form an independent audit committee of its board members to review a complete certified audit of its operations.

The bill also outlined a limit on the amount of funds in a charter school budget that are unassigned. If the total budget is less than \$12 million, no more than 12 percent of the budget could have been unassigned. With each \$1 million above that, the percentage would have gone down by 0.5 percent. A budget equal to or larger than \$19 million could not have had more than 8 percent unassigned revenue.

The bill died in the House Education Committee.

*** **Law Enforcement Contracting** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1194](#), which gives school districts the option of contracting with law enforcement agencies located outside their boundaries.

According to the bill's sponsor, a number of schools in municipalities covered by state police are geographically within a short distance of local police departments. Some of these schools expressed interest in contracting with local law enforcement for school security and general police coverage.

Senate Bill 1194 authorizes school districts to enter into such service agreements without the consent of a municipality.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 122](#) of 2014.

***** Certification** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1205](#), which allows seminaries to offer a degree that is not listed in their certification, as well as provide requirements for colleges wishing to change their designation to “university” and trade schools to change their designation to “college.”

Under the bill, seminaries will now be able to offer courses unlisted in their certification. Previously, only universities and colleges could do this. In addition, colleges may change their designation from ‘college’ to ‘university.’ This could be done by submitting a letter to the Department of Education from the school president. The letter must contain proof that the institution fulfills at least 2 of the 3 units required to become a university, with the promise of meeting the third within five years. The school must also be in existence for 10 years in good standing and accreditation with the state, and have approval from its board of trustees.

This bill also allows a “trade school” to change its designation to “college” if it holds a certificate of authority to confer, at the minimum, associate degrees in specialized technology and is accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 67](#) of 2014.

**** Weather Emergency** -- With one of the most brutal winters in memory finally waning, the Senate unanimously approved a bill that would have given schools more flexibility to make up time missed as a result of weather emergencies.

[Senate Bill 1281](#) would have allowed schools to calculate the school year on an hourly, rather than daily basis. The legislation would also have permitted districts to hold class on one Saturday per month to make up missed school days.

The bill was patterned from a previous weather emergency bill in 1996 that responded to severe flooding in northwestern Pennsylvania.

The amended bill died when it returned from the House.

*** Ready to Succeed Grant** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1361](#), which would have established a “Ready to Succeed Scholarship Program.”

Students of families whose annual household income is less than \$110,000 would have been eligible to apply for a Ready to Succeed grant. Winning grant recipients would have been determined based on their academic achievements during their first year at any PHEAA-approved higher education program.

The bill died in the House Education Committee.

*** State System of Higher Education** -- The Senate voted 48-0 for [Senate Bill 1440](#), which would have authorized the State System of Higher Education (SSHE) and its employees to enter into economic development agreements.

The proposed change to the SSHE Intellectual Property Act would have allowed an employee to retain a position as an officer or director of a company formed by an agreement. It also would have allowed the state-owned universities to contract with a company or organization that employs the worker.

[Senate Bill 1440](#) died in the House Education Committee.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES & ENERGY

*** **Oil and Gas Leases** -- The Senate unanimously passed legislation to provide a formal method for landowners holding oil and natural gas leases to obtain a release from the lease upon its termination or cancellation.

Proponents of [House Bill 402](#) said the lack of a formal process for addressing this need has led to unnecessary delays that prove to be a significant barrier to a landowner simply attempting to continue to try and develop the natural resources under their property.

The legislation is aimed at providing a process for addressing situations where a lease has expired, contains no renewal clause, and the landowner would like to sign a lease with a new natural gas development company.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 152](#) of 2014

*** **Updating Clean Streams** -- The Senate voted 41 to 8 to pass [House Bill 1325](#), which amends the Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Act to satisfy anti-degradation requirements of the state's 1937 Clean Streams Law.

Under the bill, official plans and revisions for individual on-lot sewage systems and community on-lot sewage systems must satisfy the anti-degradation requirements. The measure also stipulates that permits for individual on-lot sewage systems and community on-lot sewage systems — when designed and approved in accordance with regulations — satisfy the anti-degradation requirements.

The measure was enacted as [Act 41](#) of 2013.

*** **Gas Production Tracking** -- The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 2278](#), which changes the production reporting requirements for unconventional well operators from twice a year to monthly.

Under the bill, the Department of Environmental Protection must post the production reports on its website. The first monthly report is required by March 31, 2015.

The intent of the bill is to allow better tracking of production with royalty payments to make sure land owners are getting what they agreed to.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 173](#) of 2014.

*** **Greenhouse Gas Regulation** -- By a vote of 31-17, the Senate passed [House Bill 2354](#), establishing the Pennsylvania Greenhouse Gas Regulation Implementation Act.

The legislation requires the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to submit a state plan to both chambers of the General Assembly for approval through a concurrent resolution process before sending it to the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The legislation requires DEP to hold public hearings in areas specifically affected by the regulation, and it includes specific considerations that must be taken into account in developing the plan, including:

- How best to avoid “stranded investments” in affected power plants.

- The importance and necessity of having a diverse generation fleet to ensure electric reliability.
- The requirement that the components of the state plan be based on a least-cost compliance approach to help shield consumers from electricity cost hikes as a result of the EPA rule.

Some lawmakers were concerned that a lack of a state plan could have disastrous consequences for the state's electric generation and coal extraction industries. While the EPA managed to develop this rule without Congressional authorization, the bill sees to it that the Pennsylvania General Assembly is the final arbiter of how Pennsylvania approaches greenhouse gas regulation.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 175](#) of 2014.

*** **Stream Setbacks** --The Senate voted 27-22 for [House Bill 1565](#), which amends the Clean Streams Law by easing setback regulations on those who seek erosion and sedimentation approvals.

The legislation clarifies that vegetated and forested areas placed near waterways that provide shade and partially protect waterways from the impact of nearby land uses are not required under the act, but may be used, rather than setbacks, to minimize pollution from erosion and sedimentation.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 162](#) of 2014.

*** **PennVEST Storm-water Projects** -- The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 196](#), which amends the law that created the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority (PennVEST) to allow the authority to fund storm-water management projects.

Previously, application of PennVEST grants and loans was limited to fresh water or sewer projects.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 16](#) of 2013.

*** **Gas Lease Guarantees** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 259](#), which invalidates drilling leases unless the lessor is guaranteed at least a one-eighth royalty of all severed natural gas or oil.

The legislation also requires that the lessor's check stub include detailed information ranging from severance and production taxes to the total barrels of oil or mcf of gas purchased.

The House passed the bill with amendments. The Senate concurred in the amendments 48-2, and the bill was signed into law as [Act 66](#) of 2013.

* **Natural Gas Market** -- The Senate passed a pair of bills intended to create a larger in-state market for Pennsylvania's growing supply of natural gas, especially in underserved rural areas.

- [Senate Bill 738](#), called the Natural Gas Consumer Access Act, which would have required natural gas distribution utilities to submit analysis of natural gas use in Pennsylvania and plans for future expansion including costs to consumers. The Public Utility Commission would have reviewed the plans. The bill passed by a vote of 48-2.

- [Senate Bill 739](#) would have amended the Alternative Energy Investment Act to provide for \$20 million for grants to schools, hospitals and small businesses to obtain access to natural gas service. The funding would have come from existing, under-utilized programs. Grants made under the bill would have provided up to half of the cost of a project. The bill passed 38-12.

Opposition to both bills centered on recent natural gas explosions in urban areas caused by aging and obsolete gas lines. Opponents said gas distribution utilities should be required to assure safety of existing gas lines before focusing on expansion.

Both bills died in the House.

*** **Low Reid Vapor Pressure (RVP) Gasoline** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1037](#), which ends the mandate on motorists in southwestern Pennsylvania to purchase a more expensive blend of gasoline.

[Senate Bill 1037](#) eliminates the statutory requirements for low Reid Vapor Pressure (RVP) gasoline in Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Washington and Westmoreland counties during the summer months. This “summer gas” was routinely more expensive than gasoline sold in other regions of Pennsylvania and also in neighboring Ohio and West Virginia.

Since 1999, the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and federal Environmental Protection Agency required that gasoline sold between May 1 and September 15 in the seven-county Greater Pittsburgh Area have a lower RVP (7.8psi). Regular gasoline has an RVP of 9.0.

The bill adds language to the Air Pollution Control law requiring DEP to initiate the process of amending the federally-mandated State Implementation Plan within 60 days and to repeal the state regulation of summer gas upon federal approval.

Bill proponents claim motorists in the impacted counties often paid 10 to 15 cents more per gallon for gas than those in neighboring counties and just across the border in Ohio.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 50](#) of 2014.

*** **Railroad Material Theft** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1077](#), which is aimed at stopping the theft of railroad materials.

The measure restricts scrap processors and recycling facilities from buying railroad property from individuals who cannot properly document the items. It also adds “railroad materials” to the list of restricted resources in the Scrap Metal Theft Prevention Act of 2008.

The bill passed nearly unanimously in the House and was signed into law as [Act 79](#) of 2014.

*** **Aggregate Advisory Board** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1155](#), which establishes a 13-member Aggregate Advisory Board to advise on surface mining issues such as experimental mining practices, alternate methods of backfilling, pollution liability, reclamation plans and bonding rates.

The board is chaired by the secretary of the state Department of Environmental Protection and prepares an annual report for the House and Senate committees on Environmental Resources and Energy.

The bill passed the House unanimously and was signed into law as **Act 137 of 2014**.

* **Oil and Gas Regulation** -- The Senate voted unanimously to approve a three-bill oil and gas lease protection package dealing with natural gas drilling.

- [Senate Bill 1236](#) would have allowed royalty interest owners the opportunity to inspect records of a gas company to verify that they received proper payment for the use of their land.
 - [Senate Bill 1237](#) would have prohibited a gas company from retaliating against a royalty interest owner by terminating their lease agreement or ceasing development because a landowner questions the accuracy of the royalty payments.
 - [Senate Bill 1238](#) would have required a gas company to record a satisfaction piece in the county Recorder of Deeds office where the oil and gas well is located within 30 days upon expiration, termination, or forfeiture of the oil and gas lease. This action would have released the gas company's interests in the oil and gas and is said to be similar to what a mortgage company does after a mortgage is paid in full.
- All three bills died in the House.

*** **Regulating Lead Content** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1254](#), which lowers the allowable lead content in plumbing systems.

Under the bill, the state's new definition of "lead free" lowers the maximum lead content in plumbing products from 8 percent to 0.25 percent. The measure complies with a 2011 federal drinking water act (effective on January 4, 2014) that also changed the definition of "lead free."

The bill passed the House and was signed into law as **Act 55 of 2014**.

* **Crude Advisory Council** -- By a vote of 49-1, the passed [Senate Bill 1310](#), which would have established the 17-member Pennsylvania Grade Crude Development Advisory Council.

The council would have made recommendations on existing technical regulations promulgated under 58 Pa. C.S. (relating to oil and gas) and policies implemented by the Department of Environmental Protection that impact the conventional oil and gas industry. The council would also have reviewed and commented on any technical regulations proposed under the Oil and Gas Act.

The council would have issued a report and distributed it to the Department of Environmental Protection, the legislature, and the governor.

The bill died in the House.

*** **Nuclear Construction Fees** -- The Senate unanimously passed a bill to raise the fee for each person who has a nuclear power reactor construction permit or operating license from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The previous fee, set in 2007, was \$550,000. [Senate Bill 1355](#) increases the annual fee to \$650,000. The new fee applies to annual fees due on and after July 1, 2015.

Fees collected by the Department of Environmental Protection are deposited in a restricted account known as the "Radiation Protection Fund" and appropriated by the department for carrying out its duties.

The bill passed the House and was signed into law as [Act 190 of 2014](#).

* **Mineral Development** -- The Senate voted 49-1 in favor of [Senate Bill 1443](#), which would have changed Act 147 of 2012 as it relates to the development of indigenous mineral resources.

Senate Bill 1443 would have changed the definitions of “state-owned land” and “state system land” to cover surface and subsurface land, as well as coal, oil, natural gas, coal bed methane, limestone and other mineral rights owned by the commonwealth.

The bill died in the House.

* **Regulating Non-Recycled Wasted** -- The Senate voted 49-1 in favor of [Senate Bill 1481](#), which would have revised the Solid Waste Management Act to further govern the transportation, storage, collection, treatment, processing, and disposal of waste that cannot be recycled.

This bill also would have required municipalities to submit plans for municipal waste management systems in their jurisdictions.

The bill died in the House.

FINANCE

*** **Philadelphia Delinquent Taxes** -- The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 388](#) to give the City of Philadelphia more leverage in collecting delinquent taxes from property owners. Before the new law, city officials could place a lien on a property for unpaid taxes, but that was often ineffective, especially if the property in question is worth less than the taxes owed. The city can now place a lien on any property owned by the same person or entity within the same county.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 93 of 2013](#).

*** **Philadelphia Property Tax Relief** -- The Senate voted 48-2 to approve [House Bill 390](#), which provides property tax relief for long-term owner-occupants in Philadelphia based on financial need or age.

Although Philadelphia already has authorization to provide relief under the First and Second Class County Property Tax Relief Act, it was unable to take a resident’s financial need or age into consideration.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 94 of 2013](#).

*** **Philadelphia Property Tax Installments** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 391](#) to allow the City of Philadelphia to collect property taxes through installment payments. With the new law, the city may now enter into written agreements with any taxpayer to facilitate the collection of taxes. The city would have the authority to determine program eligibility and how often installments are collected.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 106 of 2013](#).

*** **Pennsylvania Tax Code** – The voted 47-2 to adopt [House Bill 465](#), which guides spending by the governor and legislature.

Additionally, the new law exempts volunteer fire companies and volunteer rescue companies from the realty transfer tax when merging or consolidating or just conducting a normal sale or acquisition of real estate.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 52](#) of 2013.

*** **RACP Reform** – The Senate voted 49-0 to approve [House Bill 493](#), which reduces the amount of the state’s debt from \$4.05 billion to \$3.45 billion.

The law also makes several changes to the RACP program and the capitol project itemization process, and it clarifies the definition of “capital project” and adds a new definition of “community asset project.”

The bill was signed into law as [Act 77](#) of 2013.

*** **Allegheny County Pension Reform** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 546](#), which would change the pension rules for future employees of Allegheny County.

With the legislation, new county workers enrolled in the Allegheny County retirement system would be unable to use overtime to calculate their pension benefits. The calculation for retirement also would become the average monthly compensation received by the county employee during the highest 48 months of the last 8 years of employment on a bi-weekly basis. Also, the new measure would require a future worker to be employed 10 years (up from 8 years) before vesting in the county pension system.

The bill was enacted as [Act 125](#) of 2013.

*** **Construction Permit Extensions** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 784](#) to amend the Fiscal Code concerning permit extensions that directly deal with development or construction projects.

The new law automatically extends permits approved by July 2, 2013, by a state agency, until July 2, 2016. It also covers exceptions, fees, and notice requirements. Additionally, the measure suspends the timeframe of already-approved permits. And it allows for a different set of suspension requirements for Philadelphia and provides for limitations on the suspension power. The intent of the law is to aid in the recovery of residential construction and Pennsylvania’s economy by coordinating permit approval timeframes with available financing during difficult economic conditions.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 54](#) of 2013.

*** **Local Tax Enabling Act** -- The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 1172](#) to amend the Local Tax Enabling Act by changing limitations of rates of specific taxes.

Under prior law, political subdivisions formed by a merger levy a mercantile or business tax if the tax was already in place in at least one of the political subdivisions participating in the merger. The new law includes a provision requiring the tax to be revenue neutral, meaning the subdivision is prohibited from collecting more funds than the year before the merger even if the post-merger revenues would have increased because of an expansion in the tax base.

This law limits the revenue-neutral provision to the first year following the merger. After the first year, political subdivisions may tap into the revenues generated from the mercantile privilege tax. The tax rate is locked at the revenue-neutral rate, but if the rate generates more revenue, the political subdivision would be permitted to collect that money.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 39 of 2013](#).

*** **Evansburg State Park Payments in Lieu of Taxes** -- By a vote of 49-1, the Senate passed [House Bill 1359](#), which allows Perkiomen Valley and Methacton school districts to continue to receive payments in lieu of taxes for Evansburg State Park.

The Forest Reserves Municipal Financial Relief Law had required the commonwealth to make payments in lieu of taxes as long as state-owned forest lands are leased at 90 percent or more of their fair market value for residential or commercial purposes and consist of 75 or more leased portions of land. In recent years, the number of leased parcels at Evansburg State Park fell to 65, ending payments.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 61 of 2013](#).

** **Purely Public Charities** – The Senate voted 30-20 to approve [Senate Bill 4](#), which would create an amendment to the state constitution clarifying that it is the legislature’s sole responsibility to write laws determining the qualifications of purely public charities.

The legislation was in response to a state Supreme Court ruling denying public charity status to Pike County’s Camp Masivtah. The ruling opened the door to the possibility of the court questioning organizations’ charity status.

The measure must be approved in two consecutive legislative sessions by the General Assembly. Following House approval, it has been filed with the Secretary of the Commonwealth as **Pamphlet Laws Resolution #2**.

*** **Liquid Fuels Tax** – The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 492](#), which amends the Liquid Fuels Tax Municipal Allocation Law (Act 655 of 1955), to allow for earlier remittance of liquid fuels formula monies due to municipalities.

The measure changes the payment dates of liquid fuels funds due to municipalities to March 1 each year instead of April 1. In prior years, governors had authorized earlier payments to help cash-strapped municipalities with depleted budgets due to harsh winters. This bill makes such earlier payments permanent. The measure was enacted as [Act 42 of 2013](#).

*** **Agriculture High Tunnels** -- The Senate unanimously approved **Senate Bill 638**, which makes the “high tunnels” or “hoop houses” that farmers and other agriculture industries use to extend their growing seasons or store straw and other items exempt from real estate taxes. The legislation declares that the structures are not permanent and should not be taxed.

The bill was enacted as [Act 130 of 2013](#).

*** **Scranton Pension Military Buyback** -- The Senate unanimously approved legislation to help veterans who are employed by the City of Scranton more quickly participate in its pension program.

[Senate Bill 703](#) amends the Scranton Police and Firemen's Pension Law so city employees can buy military service credits and apply them to their retirement benefits without having to wait three years, which is the requirement of current state law. The changes would achieve parity with workers from other cities across Pennsylvania.

A state commission determined that the proposal will not add to Scranton's cost for operating the pension system because of the military service credits.

When an eligible member decides to purchase non-intervening military service credits, he or she erases the city's expense. That payment is equal to the amount the member would have contributed had he or she been a member of the pension fund during their military service, plus the equivalent of the city's contributions that otherwise may have occurred during that service.

The bill was enacted as [Act 64 of 2014](#). A companion bill, [Senate Bill 704](#), which would have also changed the Scranton City Employee Pension Law, died in the House.

*** **Military Leaves of Absence** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 797](#), which amends state law to comply with federal law governing military leaves of absence, and [Senate Bill 798](#) to keep PSERS in compliance with federal law on military leaves of absences.

To maintain its tax-qualified status, PSERS (Pennsylvania School Employees' Retirement System) must have these changes for leaves commencing on or after July 1, 2013. SB 798 amends the Public School Code, while SB 797 makes changes to the PSERS and PA Military and Veterans codes.

Senate Bill 797 is now [Act 32 of 2013](#). Senate Bill 798 is [Act 33 of 2013](#).

* **PA Fiscal Code Placeholder** -- The Senate unanimously approved an amended version of [Senate Bill 1043](#), which was targeted for possible use as an alternative legislative vehicle for passing the state's fiscal code. Largely considered an integral part of the state budget legislation, the fiscal code provides the necessary instructive language and legal authorization to spend budgeted state dollars.

The measure died in the House, and [House Bill 465](#) ultimately became the legislation for the state's fiscal code.

*** **Organ and Bone Marrow Donation** -- The Senate unanimously passed a bill that extends the Organ and Bone Marrow Donor Act of 2006, which was to sunset in 2010. The law grants a non-refundable tax credit to employers who provide a paid leave of absence to employees donating an organ or bone marrow.

Because act lapsed in 2010, [House Bill 46](#) was needed to reauthorize it.

The tax credit would be equal to:

- The amount of the employee's compensation during the leave of absence;
- The cost of any temporary replacement that was hired to help in wake of the employee's absence;
- Miscellaneous expenses borne by the employer relating to the employee's absence.

The bill was enacted as [Act 193 of 2014](#).

*** **Expanded School Grants** -- The Senate unanimously passed legislation that expands the eligibility of the Education Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) programs to career and technical schools similar to other public schools.

With amendments, [House Bill 91](#) also combines the EITC and Educational Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit programs into one article in the Tax Reform Code and revises the implementation steps of each program. The bill also amends the definition of a contracting authority to permit a CRIZ pilot in a municipality.

It was signed into law as [Act 194](#) of 2014.

*** **Scranton Retirees** -- The Senate unanimously passed a bill to allow non-uniformed employees in Scranton to purchase military time toward their retirement.

The Second Class A City Employee Pension Law (Act 400 of 1959) previously held that a member of the pension system in second class A cities (Scranton), who is not a member of the pension system prior to being enlisted in the armed services, may only buy back retirement service credit for up to five years for prior military service, if he or she began employment with the city within three years after discharge from military service.

[House Bill 128](#) removes the three-year time frame within which members of the pension system in Scranton must begin working for the city to be eligible to buy retirement service credit for time spent serving in the armed forces.

This bill only applies to Scranton since it is the state's the only Second Class A city. The measure was enacted as [Act 58](#) of 2014.

*** **PTRR Eligibility Shield** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1067](#), which shields thousands of seniors from losing their Property Tax and Rent Rebate eligibility due to small Social Security cost of living (COLA) hikes.

The small Social Security COLA increases would have pushed numerous Pennsylvania seniors over the rent rebate income limit (\$35,000 for homeowners and \$15,000 for renters). For the 2013 benefit year, the state Department of Revenue will review denied claims and pay the rebates. The new law will help shield seniors from losing their benefits through 2016.

According to Senate research statistics, the moratorium will protect approximately 6,000 seniors in fiscal 2014-15, and up to nearly 9,000 by the 2016-17 fiscal year.

The bill was enacted as [Act 156](#) of 2014.

*** **Business Privilege Tax** -- The Senate voted 34-16 in favor of [House Bill 1513](#), which changes the Local Tax Enabling Act to make it less ambiguous for municipalities that want to levy a business privilege tax on local companies.

The bill deletes any areas of the current law that allow for double taxation.

The bill was enacted as [Act 42](#) of 2014.

*** **Internet Gambling** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2110](#), which requires that only the state legislature can authorize computer- or Internet-based games including simulated casino-style lottery games, video poker, video roulette, video slot machine, video blackjack and Keno.

It was previously argued that the state secretary of revenue could authorize the games without any legislative go-ahead.

The bill also permanently reduces the statutorily-mandated rate of return from 27 to 25 percent beginning after June 30, 2014.

This profit margin represents the minimum amount of lottery proceeds that must be dedicated to programs benefitting older Pennsylvanians, such as property tax relief (Senior Citizens Rebate and Assistance Act) and free or reduced fare transit service. The measure also requires the Department of Revenue submit annual plans for increasing profits.

Following House approval, the bill was signed into law as [Act 201 of 2014](#).

* **Local Taxes** -- The Senate voted 47-0 on [Senate Bill 491](#), which would have changed Pennsylvania law dealing with local taxes.

Had it become law, the proposal would have made farmer-estimated tax provisions the same as those used by the state Department of Revenue, change the due date of returns, add safe harbor estimated tax provisions and an income-based exception to estimated tax requirements, and drop duplicative declaration of income requirements.

The bill died in the House Finance Committee.

* **Military Tax Exemption** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 803](#), which would have exempted all active-duty military from the local earned income tax.

The bill would have exempted all active-duty military from the tax, regardless of whether the income was earned in Pennsylvania or not.

The measure died in the House.

* **Pension Reform** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 922](#), which would have reformed the state's public pension systems.

The proposal would have rebalance obligations to PSERS (Public School Employees' Retirement System) and SERS (State Employees' Retirement System) by reducing the increase allowed in the collars. It would also have placed new hires into a defined contribution plan.

Additionally, Senate Bill 922 would not have impacted affect the retirement benefits already earned by state employees, but would have changed future benefits for employment not yet earned, including reducing the multiplier, capping pensionable compensation to 110 percent of the average salary of the prior four years during final average earnings calculations, capping pensionable income at the Social Security wage base of \$113,700 (for 2013), and determining an employee's final salary by averaging their highest five years of compensation — whether earned before or after the effective date of the legislation.

The bill died in the House Finance Committee.

* **County Pension COLAs** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1078](#), which would have clarified that cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) in county pension plans do not need to be calculated retroactively to the date of the previous COLA approved by the county retirement board; and do not need to apply the cost-of-living index change for each year since such previous COLAs.

The measure was designed to remove a deterrent faced by some county pension boards hesitant to consider a COLA.

The bill died in the House.

GAME AND FISHERIES

*** **Nuisance Wildlife Control** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 891](#), which allows nuisance wildlife control officers to check their traps with remote electronic devices. By using such devices, officers save time by not being required to visit each of their traps to check for wildlife.

Nuisance wildlife control officers are responsible for dispatching “pest and nuisance wildlife” as designated by the Game Commission.

The measure requires the officers to physically check a trap within 24 hours if their electronic device malfunctions.

The bill was enacted as [Act 29](#) of 2013.

*** **Adult Mentored Hunting** -- The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 623](#), which enables the Game Commission to establish an adult mentored hunting program.

The bill was designed to encourage more people to try hunting. From 2006 to 2011, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service report revealed that the number of licensed hunters in Pennsylvania dropped from 945,892 to 933,208.

The bill allows the commission to waive the license cost for someone interested in the sport to accompany a licensed hunter on an outing. The program will likely be structured similar to the state’s successful mentored youth hunting program.

The legislation was enacted as [Act 7](#) of 2013.

*** **Definition of Swine** -- The Senate voted 32-16 in favor of [Senate Bill 644](#), which changes the definition of “wild animals” to exclude any species or variation of swine, pig or boar held in captivity.

Under the measure, the Pennsylvania Game Commission is no longer required to regulate and control such animals.

The bill was enacted as [Act 25](#) of 2013.

*** **Landowner Liability** -- The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 648](#), which amends Title 34 (Game) to protect landowners from liability for what hunters do on their property.

The bill amends Game Code to ensure that landowners who allow hunting on their property are not liable to be prosecuted for code violations committed by hunters the landowner permitted to hunt, unless the landowner willfully aids, abets, assists, attempts or conspires in the commission of the unlawful act.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 83](#) of 2013.

*** **Encampment Party Rosters** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 763](#), which removes the requirement that encampment parties of five or more post a camp roster that can be read from the outside.

Under the bill, parties hunting together for big game such as bear, deer, or elk are no longer be required to maintain and post a camp roster. The rosters were a requirement from long ago to help game wardens enforce the law. With modern electronics such as cell phones, GPS systems and computerized license records, bill proponents claimed the requirement was no longer necessary.

The measure was enacted as [Act 103](#) of 2013.

*** **Game Commission Terms** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 895](#), which limits the terms of state Game Commission members.

The measure reduces the term for members of the Game Commission's Board of Commissioners from 8 to 4 years, and provides for a maximum of three terms (12 years).

The bill also allows commissioners to serve no more than three consecutive terms. As amended, it limits the time a commissioner can serve past their date of departure to six months while a replacement is sought.

In addition, the bill changes the Senate's Game Commission confirmation language from a two-thirds vote (prompted by an Administrative Code action) back to the majority vote that was in place up until six years ago.

The bill was enacted as [Act 26](#) of 2014.

* **Beagle Training** -- The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 1068](#), which would have altered the requirements for those who train beagles for hunting in Pennsylvania.

The bill would have lowered the minimum acreage requirement for beagle trainers from 100 acres to 50, and would have abolished the requirement that hunters obtain a special license for hunting furbearers on club grounds.

The bill would also have allowed trainers to manage their own properties regarding big game hunting, and abolish the requirement to mark dog training areas with 10x12 signs. In addition, the bill would have provided for additional unlawful acts intended to curb vandalism in beagle training areas.

The bill died in the House.

*** **Free Licenses for Disabled Veterans** -- The Senate voted unanimously to approve [Senate Bill 1090](#), which reduces the hunting license fee for veterans rated at 60 percent disabled or above by the Veterans Administration.

The current fee for a hunting license is \$19. The bill would reduce that fee to \$1 for veterans in this category. Veterans rated at 100 percent disabled are currently provided hunting licenses at no cost.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 80](#) of 2014.

*** **\$1 Fishing License for Disabled Vets** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1102](#), which reduces the cost of a fishing license to \$1 for partially disabled war veterans.

A standard fishing license costs \$21. Previously, 100 percent disabled veterans qualified for a free fishing license. The measure adds Pennsylvania veterans who the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs classifies as 60 to 99 percent disabled. It is estimated that expanding the program will reduce Fish and Boat Commission revenues by \$129,000.

The bill was enacted as [Act 81 of 2014](#).

*** **Commission Terms of Office** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 798](#), which reduces the length of each term for members of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's Board of Commissioners from 8 to 4 years, while providing for a maximum of three terms (12 years).

Each member can hold office for three consecutive terms of 4 years and may continue to hold office for up to 6 months or until a successor is appointed and qualified, whichever comes first.

The bill was enacted as [Act 24 of 2014](#).

*** **Crossbow** -- The Senate unanimously approved legislation that allows the use of crossbows while game hunting. In 2012, the state Game Commission gave unanimous preliminary approval to a regulation change that made permanent the lawful use of crossbows in archery deer, bear and turkey seasons.

[House Bill 1144](#) gives that action the force of law. The bill was enacted as [Act 92 of 2014](#).

*** **Verbal Warnings** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1584](#), which gives waterways and wildlife conservation officers the discretion to issue written or verbal warnings in lieu of making arrests or issuing citations.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 8 of 2014](#).

*** **Elk Licenses** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2169](#), which reauthorizes the Elk Special Conservation License that had sunsetted on July 1, 2013.

Under this program, the Game Commission awards an Elk License to a sporting organization of its choice for auction. The group auctioning off the license retains administrative costs of the auction while the remaining proceeds are returned to the commission.

The bill also creates an elk hunting license for the Keystone Elk County Alliance. It provides the opportunity to hunt one elk.

The measure was enacted as [Act 116 of 2014](#).

*** **Body Cameras** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2178](#), which enables state Game Commission and Fish and Boat Commission officers to use body cameras in the performance of their duties.

The bill limits access for both enforcement officers to the prescribed portion of the Wiretapping and Electronic Surveillance Control Act. It also requires each officer to be trained on the use of the body camera by an entity approved by the State Police prior to use in the field.

The bill was enacted as [Act 202 of 2014](#).

* **Unmanned Aircraft** -- The Senate has unanimously approved legislation that would have outlawed the use of unmanned aircraft to intentionally disturb or interfere with those who are hunting, fishing, or boating.

While there had not been any reported cases in Pennsylvania, drones had been used in Massachusetts to collect footage and disturb hunters. Illinois, Idaho, and Wisconsin all enacted similar legislation.

The legislation is comprised of two bills ([Senate Bill 1332](#) and [Senate Bill 1334](#)), which pertained respectively to the state's Game and Fish codes. Violators would have been committing a summary offense. Wildlife/waterways conservation officers, U.S. Fish & Wildlife officers, law enforcement and military personnel would have been exempt from the law.

The bills died in the House.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

*** **Tax Equalization Board** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 66](#), which puts the three-member State Tax Equalization Board under the purview of the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED).

Established in 1947 to compensate for the lack of assessment uniformity statewide in distributing school subsidies, the board determines the aggregate market value of taxable real property in each political subdivision and school district throughout the state for the prior calendar year.

The measure tasks DCED with providing administrative, legal and technical support.

The bill was enacted as [Act 2 of 2013](#).

* **LBFC Requirements** -- The Senate voted 47-1 in favor of [Senate Bill 1337](#), which would have ended certain recurring projects of the Legislative Budget & Finance Committee.

Three of the identified projects would have included: the performance audit of PennDOT, which is done every six years at a cost of \$500,000; a cost-benefit study of mental health insurance coverage required under Act 198-150 that is done every two years at a cost of \$100,000; and a \$500 annual study of the impact of slots on the state lottery.

Senate Bill 1377 died in the House State Government Committee.

JUDICIARY

*** **Mental Health Regulations** -- The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 21](#), which amends the state's Mental Health Procedures Act (MHPA) to:

- permit the court to appoint a licensed psychologist to conduct an incompetency examination ordered for an individual charged with a crime;
- permit a licensed psychologist retained by the defendant or the commonwealth to witness and participate in the examination; and

- permit the court to appoint a licensed psychologist for a defendant who is financially unable to retain one if the defendant has a substantial objection to the conclusions reached by the court's appointed expert.

The bill also amends the MHPA to permit the attorney for the commonwealth or defendant to call a licensed psychologist as a witness at trial or an incompetency hearing to offer opinion evidence on the individual's mental condition. A "licensed psychologist" is defined as an individual licensed under the Professional Psychologists Practice Act (Act 52 of 1972). The bill was signed into law as [Act 21 of 2014](#).

*** **Electronic Funds Transfers** -- The Senate voted 49-0 for [House Bill 22](#), which amends part of the state's commercial code dealing with funds transfers.

The bill also brings Pennsylvania into conformity with recent federal changes to the Electronic Fund Transfer Act. The measure focuses on highly technical language, but would change the section of state law called "Division 41 Funds Transfers of Pennsylvania's Commercial Code."

The bill was signed into law as [Act 49 of 2013](#).

*** **Unsworn Declarations** --The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 25](#), which addresses foreign unsworn declarations, in addition to clarifying and setting new standards for notaries public.

The bill provides for a standard form for foreign unsworn declarations, referring to a declaration made outside the United States, or within the United States in an area beyond the jurisdiction of federal law. An unsworn declaration is a written statement made to a legal authority where the person making the declaration has not taken any oath but can still be found guilty of perjury if the declaration is false.

The bill also addresses requirements for notaries public, such as their authority, the requirements by which they are bound, record keeping, forms and notices, and what they are prohibited from doing, in addition to creating new basic and continuing education requirements.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 73 of 2013](#).

*** **Harassment Upgrade** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 27](#), which toughens the charge of harassment by one degree if the defendant is found to be in violation of a protection from abuse order.

The bill is modeled on an existing statute that does the same for the crime of stalking. Previously, harassment was a summary offense punishable by up to 90 days in jail. Under this bill, harassment would become a third degree misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in jail.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 91 of 2013](#).

*** **NRA Lawsuits** -- The Senate voted 34-14 in favor of an amended [House Bill 80](#), which gives organizations such as the National Rifle Association (NRA) the authority to challenge local gun laws. It also amends state law prohibiting the theft of "secondary" metals like copper, wire or aluminum.

As it related to the NRA, House Bill 80 grants legal standing to so-called “membership organizations” that sue over local gun laws. If they win their case, the complainant may collect legal fees and other costs.

The governor approved the bill as [Act 192 of 2014](#).

*** **Animal Care Costs** -- The Senate voted 47 to 3 for [House Bill 82](#), which enables animal-rescue type organizations to recoup the costs of caring for an abused animal from its owner.

The “Cost of Care of Seized Animal Act” details the steps that can be taken by an organization that houses or cares for a seized animal. Under the bill, rescue and humane officials can petition a county court of common pleas to recoup their costs from the animal’s owner.

The \$15 per day “reasonable cost of care” can be waived if the matter involves only one animal and its owner can prove indigence. The bill also enables the owner to reclaim his or her costs and animal if they are not charged with cruelty to animals.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 50 of 2013](#).

*** **Internet Child Predators** -- The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 90](#), which will help investigators and prosecutors pursue child predators on the Internet.

Under previous law, investigators had to obtain a court order just to identify the subscriber of an Internet service who has transmitted child pornography or has anonymously engaged a child in a chat room to solicit sex. Under House Bill 90, they may get this information through an administrative subpoena.

To allay privacy concerns, the measure only enables police to obtain the IP address, name, address, and phone number of the subscriber; and only in child sex exploitation cases. Once they have this information, investigators are still required to get a court-ordered search warrant for additional information or to view anything on a person’s computer.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 151 of 2014](#).

*** **Coach Sex Assault** -- The Senate unanimously passed a bill that increases penalties for sports officials, volunteers or employees of non-profit sports organizations who sexually assault participants.

Under [House Bill 112](#), such an assault becomes a third degree felony with a maximum penalty of seven years in prison. Under the bill, a sports official is defined as: A person who supervises children participating in a sports program for a nonprofit association or a for-profit association, including, but not limited to, a coach, assistant coach, athletic trainer, team attendant, game manager, instructor or person who enforces the rules of a sporting event sponsored by a sports program of a nonprofit association or a for-profit association, including, but not limited to, an umpire or referee, whether receiving remuneration or holding the position as a volunteer.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 56 of 2014](#).

*** **Child Pornography Offenses** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 321](#), which increases the sentences for those who commit child pornography crimes.

The bill keeps the basic grading of offenses. Production is a second degree felony, dissemination and viewing are graded as a third degree felony for a first offense and a second degree felony for a second or subsequent offense. The bill also toughens sentencing for the offense if indecent contact with the child is depicted.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 105](#) of 2013.

*** **Child Abuse Hearings** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 414](#), which allows the courts access to child abuse information during custody hearings for children.

The bill requires the court to consider whether a person seeking custody or someone in that household has a history of child abuse. The court can also receive information on child protective services and it would be notified by the Department of Public Welfare if a child has been identified as a victim of abuse in the past.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 107](#) of 2013.

*** **Crime Victim Rights** -- The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 492](#), which gives a crime victim or their representative the right to appear personally before the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole to provide testimony on an inmate's application for parole.

The measure also entitles a victim to testify via video conferencing or other electronic means; and assures that their personal information (e.g. address, phone number) be confidential.

The House concurred in Senate amendments and the bill was signed into law as [Act 14](#) of 2013.

*** **Defining Small Estates** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 513](#), which increases the amount constituting a small estate from \$25,000 to \$50,000.

This bill allows estates valued at up to \$50,000 to be settled by petition. The bill also increases from \$3,500 to \$10,000 the amount banks are authorized to close out a small account without formal estate administration to release money for funeral expenses.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 35](#) of 2013.

*** **Identity Theft Protection** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 714](#), which better protects children from identity thieves.

The Federal Trade Commission says children's Social Security numbers are valuable to crooks because the victims don't often learn about the rip-off until they become adults.

The change in Pennsylvania's Crimes Code bumps the grading of the charge for a person accused of stealing a child's identity by one degree. Similar laws are already on the books for identity theft victims who are at least 60-years-old or are care dependent.

The legislation was signed into law as [Act 97](#) of 2013.

*** **Safe Havens** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1090](#), which adds police stations to the state's safe haven law.

The measure requires police officers working at the police station to accept a newborn from a parent seeking to relinquish the child. It would also require that the child be transported to a hospital for care.

The Safe Haven Law provides parents with a place to release their child safely without fear of legal penalty. It previously only applied to hospitals.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 91](#) of 2014.

* **Labor Dispute Harassment** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1154](#), which would have removed language from a 1937 law that allowed exemptions for people involved in labor disputes from engaging in certain forms of harassment.

The bill would have ended the exemption for those involved in labor disputes.

The exemptions were originally put in place to protect union picketers who might have been targeted by unscrupulous businesses for harassment during strikes, or stalking if they called their boss during a labor dispute.

The bill died in the House.

*** **Post-Trial Reporting** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1201](#), which updates Title 42 to include a comprehensive list of licensing boards to which mandated post-trial reports are made by district attorneys.

Since several of the boards of the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs have changed names, and new boards have been created, the bill correctly lists the boards to which these reports should be made.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 109](#) of 2013.

*** **Bath Salts and Synthetic Marijuana** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1217](#), which amends the Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act adding “Bath Salts” to the list of Schedule 1 substances.

The bill also updates language pertaining to synthetic cannabinoids and synthetic marijuana, defining them on a molecular level to better assist in prosecuting the use of these controlled substances since the formulas continue to change.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 40](#) of 2013.

*** **Laboratory Costs** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1274](#), which enables any county crime lab to petition a judge to charge a defendant for the laboratory costs associated with their prosecution.

Prior law only allowed Allegheny County, Philadelphia County and the Pennsylvania State Police to recoup laboratory costs from defendants. This measure would expand it to any county crime lab in Pennsylvania.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 112](#) of 2013.

*** **Access to Justice Account** -- The Senate voted 49-1 for [House Bill 1337](#), which amends the Judicial Code to increase funding to the Access to Justice Account.

Under previous law, there was a surcharge on all court filings of \$11.25. Of that amount, \$10.25 was deposited in the Judicial Computer System Augmentation Account, and one dollar was deposited into the Access to Justice Account. This bill reduces this surcharge to \$10.25, and permanently dedicates a separate \$2 surcharge to the Access to Justice Account. The net effect

on the court's computer augmentation fund is zero, while increasing funding for the Access to Justice Account.

The Access to Justice Account is used to fund the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network, which provides civil case legal services to the poor.

The bill also allows permanent court records to be copied using the latest technology, including electronic or digital means of copying.

Following House approval, the bill was enacted as [Act 113 of 2014](#).

**** Multiple Crimes Code Revisions** -- The Senate voted unanimously in favor of [House Bill 1357](#), which would have revised Title 18 and Title 75 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes to impose stricter penalties on a person pretending to be a law enforcement officer, a doctor, or any other public servant who is required to have a professional or occupational license.

Furthermore, the bill would have required that drivers with ignition interlock licenses to submit proof that every vehicle they own has ignition interlock devices.

The bill also would have punished people who sell emergency vehicles if they do not remove or permanently disable sirens and emergency flashing lights.

The bill went back to the House for concurrence, where it died.

***** Child Luring Penalties** -- The Senate unanimously passed legislation that increases penalties for those convicted of attempting to lure a child under 13-years-old into a vehicle or building.

Under prior law, attempted luring of a minor under 18 was a misdemeanor. [House Bill 1594](#) makes the attempt a felony if the child is under 13 regardless of whether the offender was aware of the victim's age. The change increases the possible sentence to up to 10 years in prison.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 116 of 2013](#).

**** Pigeon Shooting and Animal Consumption** -- The Senate voted 36-12 in favor of [House Bill 1750](#), which would have prohibited Pennsylvanians from consuming cat or dog meat.

The bill would also have prohibited the killing, selling of, or offering a dog or cat for the sole purpose of human consumption.

Violators would have been committing a first degree misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or imprisonment of up to five years. Subsequent offenses would have been felonies.

The bill was returned to the House with an amendment that would have also banned live pigeon shooting. The House failed to consider the amended bill.

***** Sheriff Training** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1772](#), which requires that all sheriffs receive and maintain education and training equivalent to that of deputy sheriffs. Newly elected sheriffs must satisfy the training requirement during their first term in office.

The Board of the Sheriff and Deputy Sheriff Education and Training will have the authority to revoke or reinstate certification. The board can reduce training hours for sheriffs

who have previous training or experience. Current sheriffs are grandfathered in for certification, but must satisfy continuing education requirements.

The bill was enacted at [Act 114 of 2014](#).

**** Reporting Requirements for Counselors** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1874](#), which would have required counseling services to annually notify the county district attorney and local police chief if they are providing services to sexually violent predators.

The Senate amended the bill to prohibit attorneys from testifying or disclosing their mental impressions, conclusions, opinions, notes, legal research or theories. Exceptions would have included waiver by their client or if the communication involved the commission of a crime of fraud.

The bill returned to the House, where it was reverted to a prior printer's number, passed and sent back to the Senate where it died.

***** Sex Offender Registry** -- The Senate unanimously passed legislation that will update the state's sexual offender registry law to both comply with federal law and a recent Supreme Court decision.

When Pennsylvania replaced the provisions of Megan's Law with the tougher, federal Adam Walsh Act, in 2012, the new law did not credit registrants with time spent on the registry under the previous law, an oversight to which the state Supreme Court objected.

[House Bill 1985](#) fixes the problem. The bill was signed into law as [Act 19 of 2014](#).

***** Rocco's Law** -- The Senate unanimously passed the House component of "Rocco's Law," legislation that toughens penalties against those who severely injure or kill a police dog. [House Bill 2026](#) was named after Rocco, a Pittsburgh canine officer that was stabbed while helping police apprehend a suspect. The dog later died from its injuries.

The bill, along with [Senate Bill 1261](#), would respectively amend Pennsylvania's Crimes Code and Dog Law to toughen penalties against anyone who severely injures or kills a police animal. The measure increases the seriousness of the crime from a third to a second degree felony. The second degree felony comes with a fine of \$25,000 and up to 10 years in prison.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 75 of 2014](#).

***** Revenge Porn** -- The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 2107](#), which amends the Crimes Code to add a provision banning so called "revenge porn" (spreading an intimate image without consent).

This bill defines the offender as someone with intent to harass, annoy or alarm a current or former sexual or intimate partner by spreading a visual depiction of that person nude or engaged in sexual conduct.

The bill makes the offense a second degree misdemeanor. If the victim is a minor, the offense escalates to a first degree misdemeanor.

The bill also amends the Judicial Code to add a civil cause of action for the offense. The court may award actual damages or \$500, whichever is greater; reasonable attorney fees and court costs; and any additional relief it deems necessary.

Following House approval, the bill was enacted as [Act 115 of 2014](#).

The Senate passed a similar bill, [Senate Bill 1167](#), which was prompted by the case of Allyson Pereira, who was 16-years-old when her ex-boyfriend published a nude photo of her online. That bill died in the House.

*** **Regulating Business** -- The Senate unanimously passed a bill that makes numerous changes to the way Pennsylvania regulates business entities. The measure makes various state laws more consistent.

[House Bill 2234](#) reorganizes significant portions of Title 15, and provides all business entity types the ability to engage in five fundamental transaction types: mergers, interest exchanges, conversions, divisions and domestications. Likewise, the bill consolidates provisions related to the registration of foreign business entities that do business in Pennsylvania.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 172 of 2014](#).

*** **Lease-Purchase Regulation** -- The Senate unanimously passed a bill to make the terms of lease-purchase agreement more transparent.

[House Bill 2345](#) amends Rental-Purchase Agreement Act to make the purchase price a simple matter of contract between the parties and requires that purchase agreement be accompanied by a straightforward chart showing the dollar amount required to exercise the option to purchase the rented property after each rental payment if rental payments are made as scheduled.

Under prior law, the price at which a consumer can exercise the right to purchase rented property under a rental-purchase agreement is subject to a confusing statutory formula of “an amount equal at a maximum to the amount by which the cash price of the leased property exceeds 50 percent of all rental payments made by the lessee.”

The bill was signed into law as [Act 185 of 2014](#).

*** **Preventing Child Abuse** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 28](#), intended to strengthen the state’s child abuse laws by amending Title 18.

The bill lowers the age of a perpetrator for simple assault from 21 to 18, broadens the definition of aggravated assault, makes stricter requirements to report child endangerment and creates a new offense if a person tries to interfere in a child abuse case. The changes increase penalties for child abuse and make it more difficult to obstruct justice in a child abuse case.

The bill passed the House and was signed into law as [Act 118 of 2013](#).

*** **School Bus Monitoring** -- The Senate voted 47-1 on [Senate Bill 57](#), which allows audio taping on school buses.

School districts were previously allowed to videotape school bus rides, but did not have the legal authority to record the audio of those trips.

The bill was enacted as [Act 9 of 2014](#).

*** **Curbing Human Trafficking** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 75](#), which provides comprehensive measures to combat human trafficking in Pennsylvania.

The measure focuses on more clearly defined sex and labor trafficking incidents and punishments; increases the fines and penalties for trafficking and involuntary servitude; adds

penalties for business entities, including license revocation and forfeiture of contracts; implements participation in the national human trafficking hotline; creates the Pennsylvania Council for the Prevention of Human Trafficking; increases training for first responders; and expands resources available to victim service providers.

The bill was passed by the House and signed into law as [Act 105 of 2014](#).

*** **Deficiency Judgment Reform** -- The Senate unanimously approved legislation that addresses deficiency judgments when real property collateral is located in more than one county by designating the Court of Common Pleas in one of the counties as the “deficiency court.”

Under [Senate Bill 84](#), the deficiency court is designated by the location where the collateral real property with the highest adjusted value. This court is the venue for the fair market valuation of all of the collateral real property located in Pennsylvania. The judgment creditor may petition the deficiency court to determine and fix the fair market value of all of the real property collateral.

The real property collateral is valued before any sheriff’s sale, but subject to redetermination at the request of either party to protect against changes in value. A petition for redetermination of the fair market value following a sheriff’s sale must be brought within six months.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 20 of 2014](#).

* **Consolidation of Statutes** -- In a continued attempt to consolidate statutes into comprehensive, organized codes of law, the Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 99](#).

The measure would have organized various statutes regarding administration of documents under Title 2 (Administrative Law and Procedure). The consolidated statutes and those already contained in Title 2 would not have been affected. Pennsylvania remains the only state to have not completely consolidated its statutes.

The bill died in the House.

* **DNA Collection** -- The Senate approved [Senate Bill 150](#), by a vote of 38-9, to change how information is collected and used in Pennsylvania’s DNA database.

The bill was approved by the Senate after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that it is constitutional for police to collect DNA samples from someone they’ve arrested, even if they are never formally charged with a crime or have never been convicted in the past.

The measure would have required people charged with criminal homicide and felony sex offenses to be DNA tested, made sure state DNA labs are in compliance with FBI standards, required DNA lab personnel to comply with FBI standards, prohibited the use of DNA records for human behavioral genetic research or for other identification purposes, allowed authorities to release the names of suspected criminals using only partial DNA matches, and required DNA records of people found not guilty or exonerated of crimes to automatically be purged.

The bill died in the House.

***** Codifying Nonprofit Corporations Law** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 304](#), which amends the Associations Code to finish the codification of Nonprofit Corporations law.

The 1988 Business Corporations Law only included a partial codification of Nonprofit Corporation law. This bill makes the language relating to nonprofit corporations consistent with the language relating to corporations.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 67](#) of 2013.

*** Processing Contraband** -- By a unanimous vote, the Senate passed a bill that would have created a uniform procedure for processing contraband collected by county probation and parole departments.

Under [Senate Bill 305](#), probation and parole departments would have listed all contraband abandoned for more than two years and reported it to the county treasurer. The treasurer would then have decided what items can be taken possession of, and the probation and parole departments would have retained control of the rest.

The bill died in the House.

***** Philadelphia Traffic Court Reform** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 334](#), which eliminates the Philadelphia Traffic Court from the Judicial Code and transfers its duties to the Philadelphia Municipal Court.

The legislation was prompted by a 2011 ticket-fixing scandal in which nine current and former judges were indicted.

Under the bill, the municipal court has a traffic division, which gets two more judge positions. In addition, the president judge has the authority to appoint hearing officers to hear traffic cases. Philadelphia has more than 158,000 ticket cases every year.

Previously, Philadelphia had a total of 122 judges, seven of whom were Traffic Court judges who were not required to be attorneys. No other county has a separate traffic court.

A companion joint resolution, [Senate Bill 333 \(Pamphlet Laws Resolution #1\)](#), would formally abolish the traffic court from the state's constitution. Senate Bill 334 was signed into law as [Act 17](#) of 2013.

*** Expungement Reform** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 391](#), which would have allowed expungement of conviction data for a range of lesser crimes.

Under the bill, a person would have asked the court to expunge his conviction record for a third degree misdemeanor or an offense that carries a maximum sentence of up to a year in prison if the person had been free of arrest or prosecution for seven years.

The measure also would have allowed expungement of a second degree misdemeanor if the person committed the crime when they were less than 25-years-old, or served less than two years in jail and were free of prosecution for at least 10 years.

The legislation included numerous exceptions to disqualify certain crimes from expungement, ranging from intimidating a witness to violating the state's firearms act.

The bill died in the House.

*** **Validating Conveyances** -- The Senate unanimously passed legislation validating conveyances and other legal instruments which have acknowledgements containing technical errors. [Senate Bill 419](#) validates acknowledgements for deeds and mortgages that are dated after 2005 and prior to 2013.

The law was last amended in 2005 and the General Assembly has customarily updated the provisions of Act 69 about every seven years. When a technical error exists in an acknowledgement, it makes subsequent transfers of property difficult unless the error is corrected by this type of legislation.

The bill passed the House and was signed into law as [Act 24 of 2013](#).

*** **Estate Law Amendments** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 428](#), which amends the Probate, Estates and Fiduciaries Code to allow for some of the residual funds from a beneficiary's account within a pooled trust to be distributed upon their death to other individuals with disabilities in need of services.

Under the bill, if there is an amount remaining that is not retained by the trust upon the death of the beneficiary, the trust pays from the remaining amounts in the account to the commonwealth and any other state that provided medical assistance an amount equal to the total amount of medical assistance paid on behalf of the beneficiary.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 186 of 2014](#).

*** **Crime Victim Rights** -- The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 508](#), which allows a crime victim or a member of the victim's family to testify directly before a member of the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole when the victim's offender is being considered for parole.

The previous law permitted a crime victim to present written or oral comments for parole board consideration, as well as to testify before a hearing examiner, but it did not allow for direct testimony before the board.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 150 of 2014](#).

*** **Powers of Attorney** -- The Senate unanimously approved a measure to address problems that were created by a Pennsylvania Supreme Court decision that had the potential to increase liability for third parties, including a family member, an attorney or a bank, when they accept powers of attorney in good faith.

The power to act legally on behalf of an individual may include the power to give away property and the power to acquire real estate. [House Bill 1429](#) clarifies the law regarding powers of attorney and provides immunity when third parties act in good faith.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 95 of 2014](#). A similar bill, [Senate Bill 620](#), passed the Senate unanimously but died in the House.

* **Estate Reforms** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 621](#), which would have made a number of amendments to the Probate, Estates, and Fiduciaries Code (Probate code).

One main amendment would have consolidated the Charitable Instruments Act of 1971 into the Probate Code, as Chapter 79. Another would have added Chapter 76 to the Probate Code, replacing powers of appointment measures that would have been repealed.

The bill died in the House.

*** **Protection for Abuse Victims** -- The Senate unanimously approved legislation that will allow victims of sexual abuse to file for court-ordered protection regardless of whether a criminal case is prosecuted.

Under prior law, orders of protection were available to sexual assault victims only if a criminal case has been initiated. Supporters of the bill noted that only a fraction of sexual assaults are reported to authorities and even when victims report, many cases are not prosecuted because of the burden of proof or problems with evidence.

[Senate Bill 681](#) allows a court to order a defendant from having any contact with the victim directly or through a third party. This same protection is currently available to victims of domestic violence.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 25 of 2014](#).

* **Copper Theft** -- The Senate unanimously passed legislation intended to address a rash of copper pipe and wire thefts across the state.

[Senate Bill 688](#) would have established the criminal offense of theft of secondary metal. The offense would have been graded as a third-degree misdemeanor when the value of the property is less than \$50; a second degree misdemeanor if the value is \$50 or more but less than \$200; and a first-degree misdemeanor when value is \$200 or more but less than \$1,000. The offense would have been a third-degree felony when the value is \$1,000 or more.

The bill died in the House.

*** **Custody Child Abductions** -- The Senate unanimously passed legislation to reduce the risk of custody-related child abductions.

[Senate Bill 689](#) allows parents to seek special protections from presiding courts if the opposite party in the case has exhibited risk factors for abducting the child. Risk factors include previous abduction attempts, use of aliases, stalking, or possession of forged identification documents.

The measure allows a judge to issue a Prevention of Abduction Order that could result in allowing police to take custody of a child to prevent abduction.

The bill unanimously passed the House and was signed into law as [Act 5 of 2014](#).

* **County Prison Boards** -- The Senate voted 49-0 to approve [Senate Bill 705](#), which would have given certain counties the option to not include their district attorneys on their prison boards.

The bill would have helped them avoid the perception of a conflict of interest and resulting legal bills. Because district attorneys must occasionally prosecute inmates, guards or employees of a prison on whose board they serve, the bill would have helped counties avoid expensive legal challenges that could happen due to this perceived conflict of interest.

The bill died in the House.

***** Retail Theft Loophole** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 731](#), which closes a loophole in the state's crimes code regarding retail thieves.

Previously, people convicted the second time for a retail theft that is classified as, at least, a second degree misdemeanor were treated under the law as having just one conviction — if they participated in an ARD (Accelerated Rehabilitation Disposition) program.

The legislation is a response to a state Supreme Court ruling stating that because a defendant participates in ARD — and state law does not specifically include ARD participation as counting towards prior offenses — the new offense should be handled as a first offense.

The bill amends state law to treat retail theft offenders the same, regardless of whether they participated in ARD.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 131](#) of 2013.

*** Multi-Agency Cooperation** — The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 777](#), which would have amended the Juvenile Act to create a mechanism whereby a county children and youth agency, the juvenile probation department and a court could have been provided records about a child that are held by other agencies.

This effort was designed to encourage the multiple agencies that are normally involved in child welfare and delinquency cases to share information and work together to achieve the best possible outcomes for children.

The bill died in the House.

*** Status of Stepchildren** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 835](#), which would have allowed stepchildren to share in any recovery obtained through a lawsuit alleging wrongful death.

Because it is common for a stepchild to be dependent on a stepparent for support, when the stepparent dies, the child is often left without sufficient financial support. Under current state law, an action may be brought to recover damages for the death of an individual caused by the wrongful act or neglect of another, but it does not provide for stepchildren.

The bill died in the House.

*** Framework for Organ Donation** -- The Senate voted 47-3 for [Senate Bill 850](#), which would have updated the "Donate Life PA Act," which governs organ and tissue donations.

The bill would have established a framework for public education about organ and tissue donations; clarified the methods for making anatomical donations; and updated the law to reflect the best clinical practices to support anatomical donations for transplantations.

The bill died in the House.

***** Possession of Ammonia Gas** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 865](#), which amends a section of the Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act to prohibit the possession or transportation of liquefied ammonia gas, precursors and chemicals for use in the manufacture of controlled substances, specifically methamphetamines.

A person convicted of a violation will be committing a felony, and subject to up to seven years in jail and a fine of up to \$15,000.

The measure unanimously passed the House and was signed into law as [Act 26](#) of 2013.

*** **Wiretaps and Surveillance** -- The Senate unanimously passed a bill to prevent the sunset of the state's Wiretap and Electronic Surveillance law, which was set to expire at the end of 2013.

[Senate Bill 867](#) would have extended the authority of the act until December 31, 2018.

The bill died in the House, but the Senate also passed the identical [House Bill 1356](#), which means that Pennsylvania's wiretap law will not sunset at the end of 2013.

The legislature failed to update the date of the law's sunset date when it approved other wiretap changes during the prior session. This proposal corrects that.

House Bill 1356 was signed into law as [Act 102 of 2013](#).

*** **Background Checks** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 894](#), which allows the Pennsylvania Board of Law Examiners to obtain FBI criminal background checks for applicants.

In the past, some applicants had to obtain criminal records from multiple states, and the process interfered with the application deadlines. This legislation simplifies the background check process for the board and for applicants by giving the FBI permission to exchange criminal history records with state officials.

The bill passed the House unanimously and was signed into law as [Act 43 of 2014](#).

*** **Aggravated Arson** - The Senate unanimously passed a bill that adds the crime of "aggravated arson" to the Crimes Code. Under [Senate Bill 1024](#), a person would commit aggravated arson if:

- Bodily injury results to a firefighter, police officer or other person actively engaged in fighting the fire;
- Serious bodily injury results to a civilian;
- More than three people were present inside the property at the time of the offense;
- The fire caused more than \$1 million in property damage; and
- The arsonist used, attempted to use or possessed an explosive or incendiary device.

The Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing will determine new penalties. The bill unanimously passed the House and was signed into law as [Act 16 of 2014](#).

*** **Preventing Drug-Overdose Deaths** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1164](#), which provides conditional immunity for those who come to the aid of someone suffering from a drug overdose.

Under the bill, good Samaritans can be immune from prosecution if law enforcement only became aware of a person's criminal liability because of their role in helping or reporting someone in the throes of a drug overdose. A drug overdose is deemed an "acute" medical condition that could be dangerous or deadly.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 139 of 2014](#).

* **Police Video** -- The Senate unanimously passed a bill that would have expanded the exemptions to Pennsylvania's wiretap law that apply to police officers recording their interactions with the public.

Current law extends the exemption only to cameras mounted in a police car. [Senate Bill 1168](#) would have extended that exemption to a camera mounted on horses, bicycles, motorcycles or on the officer's person.

The bill died in the House.

*** **Juvenile Record Expungement** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1197](#), to strengthen the state's juvenile justice system.

The legislation gives juveniles the same protections in the Philadelphia Municipal Court or county courts of common pleas as those who appear in juvenile court. The bill also clarifies provisions of Juvenile Act on record expungement; transfer juvenile case dispositions from the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts to the State Police; and requires certain juvenile sex offenders to register in accordance with the federal Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act.

Lawmakers said the wider latitude on expungement would give more juveniles a "clean record" and greater opportunity as they apply for jobs, college or the military.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 138](#) of 2014.

* **Rural County Prison Boards** -- By unanimous vote, the Senate passed a bill that would have loosened the regulations on prison board meetings in five rural counties. [Senate Bill 1325](#) would have allowed the boards in 8th Class Counties (Cameron, Forest, Fulton, Montour, Potter, and Sullivan) too meet quarterly instead of monthly, and not necessarily at the county prison.

The bill died in the House.

* **Consolidating Statutes** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1341](#), which would have combined several different laws into Title 44 (Law and Justice) of the Consolidated Statutes.

Some of these acts included the Commission on Crime and Delinquency, Deputy Sherriff's Education and Training Act and Crime Victims' Act. The obsolete Senior Citizen Advisory Act would also have been repealed.

The bill died in the House.

* **Gift Cards in Lieu of Community Service** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1367](#), which would have banned the practice of persons being allowed to purchase gift cards in lieu of performing community service.

Apart from concerns over the potential for official abuse, lawmakers said the practice benefits those who can afford gift cards over defendants of lesser means.

The bill died in the House.

*** **Asbestos Liability Limits** --The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1422](#), amending the judiciary code to clarify how liable a business is for an asbestos claim.

This bill applies to businesses that purchased or merged with a business that is sued for asbestos exposure. Under the bill, the new parent business, which was not in charge at the time of the damage, cannot be sued for more than what the original company (responsible for the asbestos damage) was worth.

Under previous law, there was no limit to the amount of the liability.

The limit on liability does not apply in the following cases:

- if the asbestos damage lawsuit was placed on or before January 1, 1972;
- if the lawsuit does not relate to asbestos;
- if an insurance business purchased the original company;
- or if the new parent business continued in asbestos marketing after the merge or consolidation.

Asbestos is a heat-resistant mineral that was often used in insulation, until it was discovered that it could cause illness and cancer.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 112](#) of 2014.

LABOR & INDUSTRY

*** **Mechanics Liens** – The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 145](#), which amends the Mechanics' Lien law to create certain exceptions for liens filed by subcontractors.

With the change, subcontractors are not able to file a lien against a homeowner if the owner already paid the contractor in full for the contract price, or if the property is a townhouse that is a primary residence for the homeowner.

Also, if the owner of the property only paid the contractor in part, the lien imposed by the subcontractor could not total an amount larger than unpaid portion.

The bill was signed by the governor as [Act 117](#) of 2014.

*** **Mechanics Liens** – The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 473](#) to amend the Mechanics' Lien Law and create a "State Construction Notices Directory" to serve as a central statewide system for filing construction notices.

The measure applies to any project costing at least \$1.5 million. The filing of a Notice of Commencement on a project will not be mandatory by the property owner. Each notice filed with the directory will be searchable by owner name, contractor name, property address and unique ID number.

A subcontractor's failure to file a notice can result in the loss of lien rights.

House Bill 473 was signed into law as [Act 142](#) of 2014.

*** **Unemployment Customer Service** - After widespread complaints about system failures and tied-up phone lines, the Senate unanimously passed legislation to improve services in Pennsylvania's unemployment compensation system.

[House Bill 26](#) creates the Service and Infrastructure Improvement Fund through the Department of Labor and Industry. It will take a portion of employee contributions into the unemployment system, upgrade services and avoid long delays for unemployed workers seeking benefits. The bill was signed into law as [Act 34](#) of 2013.

* **Unemployment Compensation** – The Senate voted 49-0 in favor of [Senate Bill 297](#), which would have amended the state unemployment compensation law to prevent "triple dipping" by former state employees who work as annuitants for the commonwealth, collect their pensions *and* collect unemployment.

Annuityants are allowed to work no more than 95 days in a calendar year. Some 1,600 part-time employees and 450 individuals collected unemployment after exhausting their 95 days in 2010 and 2011 at a cost of nearly \$2 million.

The bill died in the House Labor and Industry Committee. Similar legislation, [House Bill 421](#), was enacted.

* **Corrections Officers** – The Senate voted 48-2 in favor of [Senate Bill 476](#), which would have established a “corrections officers’ bill of rights.”

The proposal followed a case at SCI-Pittsburgh that involved eight corrections officers who were suspended without pay and benefits for almost a year and did not have the ability to appeal or defend themselves.

The bill of rights would have defined certain privileges and provided corrections officers with the ability to appeal during disciplinary proceedings.

The bill died before the House Labor and Industry Committee.

* **Unemployment Service Center Improvements** - The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 928](#), which would have established a Service and Infrastructure Improvement Fund over the next four years to improve the infrastructure of and services provided by the state’s Unemployment Compensation Service Centers.

The bill would redistribute a portion of employee wage contributions to the new restricted account administered by the state Treasury. Contributions to the new fund over the next four years could have totaled over \$100 million. Currently, 95 percent of the wage contributions go to the Unemployment Compensation Fund, and 5 percent to the Reemployment Fund.

The bill died before the House Labor & Industry Committee.

*** **Boilers and Vessels** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 802](#) to improve safety requirements and standards for boilers.

The changes, reflected in the state’s “Boiler and Unfired Pressure Vessel Law,” mean more modern standards will allow companies to use today’s boiler technology, which was not specified – nor allowed – under existing law.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 104](#) of 2013.

*** **Standards for Modular Buildings** - The Senate unanimously passed legislation that compels the state Department of Community and Economic Development to create standards for construction, installation and inspection of commercial modular buildings.

[House Bill 124](#) instructs the DCED to develop the regulations to be consistent with the requirements of the Pennsylvania Construction Code Act.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 8](#) of 2013.

*** **Unemployment Triple-Dipping** - The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 421](#), which bans retired state employees from collecting unemployment after their work ends as temporary employees.

The measure closes an unemployment compensation loophole, called “triple dipping,” which enabled some retirees to collect their pension, annuitant pay and unemployment compensation. From 2010-12, triple-dipping unemployment claims cost Pennsylvania an estimated \$2.8 million.

The bill was enacted as [Act 75 of 2013](#).

*** **Construction Customer Protection** - The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 145](#), which amends the Mechanics’ Lien law to eliminate lien rights for subcontractors who perform work on residential property if the property owner has already paid the prime contractor in full.

The legislation is designed to protect property owners from corrupt business practices. If a subcontractor files a lien, the homeowner or tenant can file a petition or motion with the court to throw it out if the homeowner or tenant has paid the full contract price to the contractor.

When the homeowner or tenant has only paid part of the contract, the measure directs the court to reduce the amount of lien to the amount still owed on the contract.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 117 of 2014](#).

*** **Boiler Safety** - The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 802](#) to improve safety requirements and standards for boilers.

The changes will be reflected in the “Boiler and Unfired Pressure Vessel Law.” The more modern standards will allow companies to use today’s boiler technology, which was not specified – or allowed – under existing law.

The legislation was signed into law as [Act 104 of 2013](#).

* **Construction Standards** -- The Senate voted 47-1 in favor of [Senate Bill 1023](#), which would have required the Uniform Construction Code Review and Advisory Council to re-review the 2012 codes adopted by the International Code Council (ICC) and to consider code modifications.

In 2012, the council met to review the codes adopted by the ICC, but decided not to adopt them, leaving 2009 codes in place. This legislation would have allowed the council to review 2012 codes again before the ICC adopts new codes. It also would have increased the size of the council from 19 to 20 members.

Senate Bill 1023 would have also increased the state’s building permit fee from \$4 to \$5 to establish an education and training account from which members could receive reimbursement for travel, hotel and other expenses.

The bill was laid on the table by the full House Oct. 6 and no other action was taken.

* **Workers’ Compensation** – By a narrow 25-23 party-line vote, the Senate passed [Senate Bill 1195](#), which would have made changes to the worker’s compensation system and tightened requirements for workers to collect. The proposed change would have saved the state as much as \$1.5 million annually.

Senate Bill 1195 would have required workers to file claim petitions within 180 days of an incident and required proof of wages before filing a claim.

Opponents of the proposal said new requirements would have made it harder for employees working for out-of-state employers to provide proof they are not covered by the other state to apply for workers' compensation here.

Senate Bill 1195 died before the House Labor & Industry Committee.

*** **Whistleblower** – The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 118](#), which extends the state's whistleblower law to cover private-sector company employees who report fraud, waste, or abuse of public dollars. It also increases the fine for public and private sector entities that retaliate against an employee from \$500 to \$10,000.

A companion piece to [House Bill 185](#), [House Bill 118](#) was signed into law as [Act 87 of 2014](#).

*** **Whistleblower** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 185](#), which changes the state's whistleblower law to include employees of the General Assembly and its agencies.

A companion piece to [House Bill 118](#), [House Bill 185](#) is designed to prevent employers who retaliate against employees who report waste, fraud or abuse of public dollars. House Bill 185 was signed into law as [Act 88 of 2014](#).

*** **Rx Workers Comp Reimbursement** – The Senate voted 48-0 in favor of [House Bill 1846](#), which regulates and reforms the practice of physician dispensing of prescription drugs within the Pennsylvania workers' compensation system.

Among other things, the change establishes a maximum reimbursement rate of 110 percent for physician-dispensed drugs, limits physician dispensing to drugs patients need during the first five days following initial treatment, and decreases costs in the workers' compensation system.

The governor signed the bill into law as [Act 184 of 2014](#).

*** **Employment Agency Law** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1980](#) to repeal the 1941 statute that created the Pennsylvania Employment Agency Law.

Employment Agency Law requires employment agencies to be registered with the state, but House Bill 1980 was passed to recognize the proliferation of online, multi-state agencies, such as Monster.com.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 102 of 2014](#).

*** **Maritime Workers** – The Senate voted 46-0 to approve [House Bill 2081](#) and stop the practice of injured maritime workers filing two workers compensation claims when they are injured on the job.

Maritime employers in Pennsylvania are mainly located along the Delaware and Allegheny rivers and Lake Erie.

The elimination of this dual coverage dilemma is expected to save employers thousands of dollars. New Jersey, Virginia, Maryland, Ohio, Mississippi, Missouri and Louisiana have passed similar laws.

House Bill 2081 was signed into law as [Act 63 of 2014](#).

LAW AND JUSTICE

*** **Westmoreland County Park Police** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 374](#), which adds the Westmoreland County Park Police to the list of police officers that must receive training from the Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission.

Under the bill, the county is responsible for the agency's training costs.

This bill was signed into law as **Act 18 of 2014**.

* **Parks Training** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 59](#), which would have required that the Westmoreland County Parks Police Force receive training from the Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission (MPOETC).

MPOETC administers courses of study for basic and in-service training and provides certification for municipal police officers, the Capitol Police, deputy sheriffs in Allegheny County, campus police and street railway police. This measure would have included the Westmoreland County Parks Police Force, established in 1995, under that same requirement.

The bill died in the House. However, [House Bill 374](#), which contained many of the same provisions, was enacted.

*** **State Police Officers** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 579](#), which increases the maximum legally allowable number of enlisted Pennsylvania State Police officers from 3,940 to 4,310.

The need to increase the complement was attributed to the department's expanding law enforcement responsibilities.

The measure exempts state police officers assigned to the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission, gaming enforcement and liquor enforcement from being counted as part of the complement. Finally, the measure removes the requirement that the state police provide underwater search teams in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia.

This bill was signed into law as **Act 43 of 2013**.

* **Medical Marijuana** -- The Senate voted 43-7 for [Senate Bill 1182](#), which would have allowed physicians in Pennsylvania to recommend medicinal cannabis to patients who need it for medical treatment.

The so-called "medical marijuana bill" would have made the drug legally available in certain forms at licensed care centers for patients who have a recommendation from their doctor. The entire regulatory process, which would have been overseen by the departments of Health and Agriculture, would have started at the growth of plants to the administration of the medicine to the patient.

Proponents argued that the drug can be beneficial to many patients and that the decision on its use should be between the patient and their doctor. Opponents argued that federal Food and Drug Administration approval and more research on the medical value of the drug should come before its legalization.

Researchers are examining the possible therapeutic uses of THC, CBD, and other cannabinoids to treat autoimmune diseases, cancer, inflammation, pain, seizures, substance use disorders and other psychiatric disorders.

The bill died in the House Judiciary committee.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

*** **3rd Class Cities** -- The Senate voted 48-0 in favor of [Senate Bill 497](#), which modernizes Pennsylvania's Third Class City Code.

The legislation deletes obscure language and updates with laws and case law that have been enacted during the past 79 years. Specifically, according to The Pennsylvania Municipal League, the measure authorizes a council to create the position of city administrator or manager, authorizes a council to appoint a firm rather than an individual for the positions of engineer and solicitor, separates the duties of city controller and transfer auditing and financial reporting to an appointed independent auditor, allows a mayor to appoint a police chief and fire chief from outside a department if no qualified officer from within applies, increases general tax levies to 30 mills; and adds a 5 mill tax for street lighting.

Senate Bill 497 was signed into law as [Act 22](#) of 2014.

*** **Allegheny County Medical Examiner** – The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1185](#), allowing the Allegheny County Medical Examiner to use funds collected from autopsy, inquisition, or coroner's reports to defray the expenses of staff, equipment and supplies used to determine the cause and manner of death. They can also use the funds for other specified administrative expenses.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 121](#) of 2014.

*** **Municipal Storm Water Authorities** – The Senate voted 49-1 for [Senate Bill 351](#), which allows municipalities to be in charge of storm water planning and management.

The law came into being after several municipalities expressed interest in creating storm water authorities that could help create a source of funding for storm water management and projects. The authorities may also now provide incentives for private storm water management to reduce costs for local governments and taxpayers.

The bill has been signed into law as [Act 68](#) of 2013.

*** **Bid Limits** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 583](#), which increases the bid threshold for local economic development authorities.

The law increases the size of contracts that authorities can enter into without accepting bids under the Economic Development Financing Law from \$10,000 to \$18,000.

The bill has been signed into law as [Act 44](#) of 2013.

*** **PA Fiscal Code** -- The Senate unanimously approved the state's 2013-14 fiscal code legislation to implement necessary legal language and authorization to spend state revenue.

Normally, passage of the fiscal code legislation is accomplished with little fanfare. However, House Republicans inserted a controversial provision into [Senate Bill 591](#) indicating it was the “intent” of House and Senate Republican leaders to pass legislation legalizing high-interest payday loans in Pennsylvania.

When the amended bill returned to the Senate, Democrats and Republicans quickly agreed to amend the legislation and discard the payday loan language – prompting the House to make a hasty return from its summer recess and consider the budget-related legislation in mid July.

The bill has been signed into law as [Act 71 of 2013](#).

*** **Jury Commissioners** -- The Senate approved [Senate Bill 808](#) by a vote of 38 to 12. The new law allows most Pennsylvania counties to eliminate the position of jury commissioner.

County commissioners in third- through eighth-class counties may eliminate the position by passing a resolution by a majority vote. Current officeholders are allowed to serve out the remainder of their term.

The law is largely designed to help counties save money, and is similar to a 2012 law that eliminated the position in most counties. However, that law was overturned by the state Supreme Court on procedural grounds.

The bill has been signed into law as [Act 4 of 2013](#).

*** **2nd Class Township Budget Reserves** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1046](#), which gives second class townships the legal authority to direct as much as 25 percent of their general fund budgets to operating reserve accounts.

With nearly half of Pennsylvania’s residents living in second class townships, officials had been limited to directing just 5 percent of their budgets to operating reserves, which are special accounts used by second class townships to minimize the impact of future decreases in revenue.

The change from 5 percent to 25 percent helps townships better prepare for weather-related emergencies and improve their standing in the eyes of bond rating companies.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 133 of 2013](#).

*** **County Code** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 163](#), which amends the County Code to allow counties that advance from fifth class to fourth class to maintain the same configuration of row offices.

The measure provides counties with flexibility in the timing of row office reconfiguration. Before the new law, specific times were mandated. The new law prevents counties from paying additional costs by splitting offices like clerk of the court/prothonotary.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 51 of 2013](#).

*** **Erie County Convention Center Authority** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 326](#), which increases the Erie County Convention Center Authority from nine to 11 members. The change also requires the attendance of six members to reach a quorum. Erie County Council will appoint seven of the 11 members, while the mayor will appoint two and the governor, two.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 27 of 2013](#).

* **Allowable Municipal Investments** – The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 1207](#) which would have expanded the types of allowable investments by municipalities. Under current state and local regulations, municipalities are generally limited to safe, but low-yielding instruments.

Senate Bill 1207 would have added money market instruments – such as commercial paper, negotiable certificates of deposit, bankers' acceptances, and corporate notes – to the authorized list of investments for local governments.

The bill died before the House Local Government Committee.

*** **Storm Water Management** – The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1255](#) to allow local storm water authorities to establish programs relating to storm water best management practices.

Local storm water authorities were established in 2012 to comply with state regulations in dealing with flooding and pollution problems.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 123 of 2014](#).

*** **Developer Fees** – The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 1052](#) to give municipalities more flexibility in spending money collected from developers who pay fees rather than provide recreational facilities in their developments.

Before the change, state law (Section 503 of the Municipalities Planning Code) only allowed developers to use fees to pay in lieu of providing recreational facilities to be used only for the purpose of providing park or recreational facilities accessible to the development.

House Bill 1052 was signed into law as [Act 135 of 2014](#).

*** **Philly Cigarette Tax** – The Senate voted 38-12 to approve [House Bill 1177](#) and give the City of Philadelphia the legal authority to increase its tax on packs of cigarettes by \$2.

The money will be used to supplement local school district funding.

House Bill 1177 was signed into law as [Act 131 of 2014](#).

*** **2nd Class Township Ordinance Filings** – The Senate voted 48-0 to approve [House Bill 1529](#) and amend state law dealing with how second class townships file and record ordinances.

The change allows the electronic filing of ordinances by a method of the township's choosing. The county in which the township is located may then store the ordinances electronically, provided the public is able to access them during business hours. An email copy of the transmitted ordinance is required to be retained by the township.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 2 of 2014](#).

*** **Local Tax Collections** -- The Senate voted 40-9 in favor of [House Bill 1590](#), which changes the Local Tax Collection Law by:

- requiring anyone submitting a nomination petition to include a criminal history check done by state police, and

- mandating completion of the education program offered by the Department of Community and Economic Development before an individual may take the oath of office as a tax collector.

Before the change, anyone in Pennsylvania could have run to become a tax collector, and the education program offered by the Department of Community and Economic Development was optional.

House Bill 1590 was signed into law as [Act 164 of 2014](#).

*** **Borough Code** – The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1719](#) to consolidate the state’s borough code, Titles 8 and 44, and make many definition changes. The Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs called the new law the second step toward modernizing the state’s Borough Code (Act 43).

Supporters of the law say it will provide better guidance for local government officials. The bill was signed into law as [Act 37 of 2014](#).

*** **Act 47** -- The Senate voted 43-5 for [House Bill 1773](#), which amends the state’s Municipal Financial Recovery Act, more widely known as Act 47.

The new Act 47 creates a two-year “early intervention” segment of the recovery program that delivers preference to Act 47 communities in any grant process. The Act 47 program then runs for 5 years with a possible 3-year extension.

Bankruptcy or state receivership are now options as is emergence from the program. Only six communities have been able to lift themselves out of the commonwealth’s oversight since the law went into effect in 1987.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 199 of 2014](#).

*** **Third Class Cities** -- The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 497](#), which updates and re-codifies the Third Class City Code.

The statute provides new definitions, clarifies confusing language, and creates several new rules relating to the conduct of third class city governing bodies.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 22 of 2014](#).

* **Local Row Office Composition** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 744](#), which would have given counties greater control over the makeup and responsibilities of local row offices.

The bill would have given counties that grow from the fifth class to the fourth class — based on population gains — the option to maintain current configurations indefinitely. It would also have given counties the flexibility to decide whether to add new row offices.

Pennsylvania counties are divided into eight classes based on population. The County Code currently mandates that any county that advances from the fifth class to the fourth class must increase its number of elected row offices.

The bill died before the House Local Government Committee.

* **Municipal Code Publication** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 935](#), which would have amended Title 45 (Legal Notices), providing for electronic publication of municipal codes by the Local Government Commission.

The bill would have allowed the Local Government Commission to publish online the municipal codes of third class cities, first and second class townships, counties and boroughs. These codes would be kept on a website maintained by the commission and accessible to the public.

The bill died before the House Local Government Committee.

*** **1st Class Township Filing Requirements** -- The Senate voted 48-0 in favor of [Senate Bill 1081](#), which amends the First Class Township Code to change the filing requirements for township ordinances.

The new law gives first class townships the permission to file ordinances electronically with the county where they are located. Counties are now allowed to store the ordinances electronically, but must still make them available to the public. Townships must retain a printed copy of the email and ordinance they sent to the counties.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 11 of 2014](#).

* **2nd Class Township Filing Requirements** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1082](#), which would have amended the Second Class Township Code to change the filing requirements of township ordinances.

As with its companion, Senate Bill 1081, the bill is written to allow second class townships to file ordinances electronically with their home counties.

The bill died before the House Local Government Committee.

*** **Renter Protection** -- The Senate voted unanimously in favor of [House Bill 1796](#) to ensure that all victims of abuse and crime may contact police or emergency assistance without penalty.

Several municipalities had enacted ordinances that penalized residents or landlords when police are contacted about an incident at their property. The consequence of these ordinances was that victims of domestic violence faced possible eviction or other penalties for making an emergency call for help.

The new law prohibits municipal ordinances from penalizing a resident or landlord who seeks police or emergency assistance at their property.

House Bill 1796 was signed into law as [Act 200 of 2014](#).

*** **Municipalities Planning Code** -- The Senate voted 49-1 in favor of [House Bill 515](#), which amends the Municipalities Planning Code to modify the notification requirements for meetings designed to discuss changes to ordinances.

In addition to ordinances, the measure applies to zoning maps, sub-division and land development ordinances. It also adds a requirement to mail notices of meetings to anyone requesting a notice, provided the request was made in writing and the necessary self-addressed stamped envelopes are provided. The notice can also be mailed electronically.

The law benefits absentee land and mineral owners who may not be aware of proposed actions that could affect their property.

The bill has been signed into law as [Act 36 of 2013](#).

*** **2nd Class Township Purchasing** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 668](#), which allows second class townships to purchase used municipal equipment from other government bodies.

Before the change, municipal officials had to advertise and bid contracts over \$10,000 unless they were purchasing equipment from a public entity. This law expands that exception to cover any government entity.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 95 of 2013](#).

*** **1st Class Township Purchasing** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 669](#), which allows first class townships to purchase municipal equipment from other government bodies.

Before the change, municipal officials had to advertise and bid contracts over \$10,000 unless they were purchasing equipment from a public entity. This law expands that exception to cover any government entity.

The bill has been signed into law as [Act 96 of 2013](#).

*** **Construction Permit Extensions** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 784](#), which amends the Fiscal Code concerning permit extensions that directly deal with development or construction projects.

The law automatically extends permits approved by July 2, 2013, by a state agency, until July 2, 2016. It also covers exceptions, fees, and notice requirements.

The measure also suspends the timeframe of already approved permits, and it allows for a different set of suspension requirements for Philadelphia and provides for limitations on the suspension power. The intent of the law is to aid in the recovery of residential construction and Pennsylvania's economy by coordinating permit approval timeframes with available financing during difficult economic conditions. Similar legislation passed last year.

The bill has been signed into law as [Act 54 of 2013](#).

*** **1st Class Township Code/Cops/School Boards** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1193](#), which amends the First Class Township Code to allow police officers to serve on their local school board.

The change gives police officers the option to seek office on a local school board, provided they do not campaign in uniform, when on duty, or when using township property. It also dictates that police officers cannot serve as school police officers if elected to a school director position.

The bill has been signed into law as [Act 99 of 2013](#).

*** **Municipal Codes** -- The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 1225](#), which allows for the electronic publication of municipal codes.

The law authorizes the Local Government Commission to replace printed copies with electronic copies of the Third Class City Code, the First and Second Class Township Codes, the County Code and the Borough Code.

The bill has been signed into law as [Act 110](#) of 2013.

*** **Open Space Tax Revenue** -- The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 1523](#) that will allow municipalities more latitude in spending revenue generated by an Open Space Tax, authorized by the legislature in 1967. Before, municipalities could only use revenue from the tax on costs associated with acquiring land.

The measure will allow certain percentages of the tax revenue to be spent on open-space planning, improvements or maintenance.

The bill has been signed into law as [Act 115](#) of 2013.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE

*** **2014-15 Fiscal Code** -- In a narrow 26-24 vote, the Senate approved [House Bill 278](#), the state's Fiscal Code.

Originally enacted in 1929, the fiscal code defines the powers and duties of the various departments, boards, commissions and row offices as to the collection of taxes and money due to the state as well as disbursement of state dollars.

Senate Democrats, who also opposed the fiscal 2014-15 budget, criticized Republicans for combining all of the various code bills. Some of the key provisions:

- suspend the transfer of funds to the Rainy Day Fund;
- transfer \$225 million of tobacco venture assets to PSERS (Public School Employees' Retirement System);
- transfer \$17 million from the Horseman's Fund;
- detail legislative intent language for gleaning \$95 million in state forest leases;
- transfer from Gaming Capital Money and excess law enforcement grants;
- reduce Small Games of Chance licenses from \$2,000 to \$500;
- and hike the judicial surcharge by \$10.

Before signing the bill into law as [Act 126](#) of 2014, the governor line-item vetoed the measure. He slashed millions in budget spending, including \$65 million from the General Assembly's line item. No governor had ever line-item vetoed the Fiscal Code. This compelled legislative leaders to file a Commonwealth Court suit in November of 2014, claiming that the governor's line item vetoes lacked proper notice and intruded on legislative authority.

*** **Background Clearances** -- The Senate voted unanimously in favor of [House Bill 435](#), which expands and enhances background clearance requirements for those who work with children or volunteer in a role where they supervise children.

This bill expands the scope of those required to receive background clearances, requires that clearances be renewed every 24 months, and requires employees and volunteers to

disclose arrests and convictions that would affect their ability to work or volunteer with children.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 153](#) of 2014.

*** **Non-Prescription Drug Restrictions** - The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 602](#), which adds Pennsylvania to the National Precursor Log Exchange (NPLEx) program, a multi-state electronic sales blocking system funded by the manufacturers of medicines containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine (PSE).

State and federal law limits the amount of non-prescription ephedrine and pseudoephedrine consumers can buy to prevent the diversion of these substances for meth production. States, however, needed an effective way to enforce those limits statewide and across state borders. NPLEx is available to any state that mandates real time, statewide electronic blocking of illegal PSE sales.

The measure also requires that nonprescription products containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine be kept behind the counter or in a location where customers do not have direct access. To purchase these products, customers need to show a valid government-issued photo ID. The retailer must keep record of the customer's identity and submit the information to the NPLEx program.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 53](#) of 2013.

*** **Department Name Change** -- The Senate voted unanimously to approve [House Bill 993](#), which changes the name of the Department of Public Welfare to the "Department of Human Services (DHS)."

To control costs, any official actions already in effect (including licenses, contracts, and deeds) will not be altered. In addition, badges, licenses, contracts, deeds, stationary and signage will not be changed until all of the existing supplies are used.

A toll-free DHS fraud tip line and email address will be established. The governor will receive an annual report on the tip line activity. Businesses that accept food stamps or medical assistance are required to post a sign for the tip line. Failure to do so could bring a maximum fine of \$500 for the owner, manager or provider.

The bill was enacted as [Act 132](#) of 2014.

*** **2013-14 Welfare Code** - After 40 senators supported a negotiated and conditional plan to accept federal funds to provide health insurance coverage to more than a half-million Pennsylvanians, many Republicans reversed course when the House stripped the provision from the Welfare Code portion of the 2013-14 state budget.

The Senate voted 40-10 to approve [House Bill 1075](#) after Senate Democrats successfully inserted a provision to expand its Medicaid program with funding from the federal Affordable Care Act (Obamacare). The Senate version of the bill also contained language changing the name of the Department of Welfare to the "Department of Human Services." Claiming that the two measures should have been considered as stand-alone bills, both provisions were stripped out in the House Rules Committee. The House approved the amended version of the legislation by a partisan vote of 108-94.

Over the objection of Senate Democrats, numerous Senate Republicans abandoned their support for the Medicaid provision and voted to concur, 27-22. The stripped-down bill was then sent to the governor's desk without the health-care provision or name change.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 55 of 2013](#).

*** **Hospital Licensing Redundancy** - The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 1190](#), which amends the Health Care Facilities Act to eliminate redundancies from the hospital license inspection process.

Previously, hospitals in Pennsylvania were required to be inspected by the Department of Health to receive a license. In addition, hospitals could elect to be inspected by professional organizations to receive accreditation. Because both inspections reveal the same information about a hospital, this legislation eliminates the extra inspection that costs hospitals time and money.

The measure allows the state to grant a “deemed status” license to hospitals accredited by an approved national accrediting organization, which eliminates duplicate inspections by the Department of Health. Hospitals that are not accredited must still undergo license inspections.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 60 of 2013](#).

*** **Tanning Beds Regulation** -- The Senate voted 40-9 for [House Bill 1259](#), which regulates tanning beds in Pennsylvania and bans people younger than 16-years-old from using them.

In addition to the ban, the bill requires every tanning facility to register with the state and pay an annual fee of \$150 for less than two beds or \$300 for up to 10 beds; force inspections and require safety standards; require parental consent for 17-year-olds; and, mandate a notice that alerts consumers to the carcinogenic risk of using the devices.

Companies that violate the regulations are subject to penalties between \$250 and \$1,000.

The governor enacted the bill as [Act 41 of 2014](#).

*** **Pulse Oximetry Screening** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1420](#), which requires pulse oximetry screening for newborn children.

Pulse oximetry screening will be required before a newborn leaves the hospital to check for Congenital Heart Defect (CHD). The screenings are noninvasive and take less than 10 minutes.

CHDs are structural heart defects that often are associated with hypoxemia among infants during the newborn period and typically require some type of intervention – usually surgical – early in life. If left untreated, CHDs can cause severe disability or death.

By placing a scanner across the infant's foot, a pulse oximetry screening quickly determines the amount of oxygen in their blood.

House Bill 1420 was signed into law as [Act 94 of 2014](#).

*** **Whooping Cough Literacy** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1567](#), which allows health care facilities to educate parents and other adult family members present about immunizations for pertussis, also known as whooping cough.

The measure also requires the state Department of Health to make printable publications concerning pertussis and information on vaccinations available on its website. The publications are to include recommendations that pregnant women, family members and caregivers receive vaccinations against pertussis to protect newborns from transmission.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 163](#) of 2014.

*** **Lysosomal Storage Disorders** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1654](#), which adds six Lysosomal Storage Disorders (LSDs) to the list of genetic diseases that hospitals must screen infants for in Pennsylvania.

Previously, the six LSDs were not part of the screening regiment for newborns. The six LSDs include: Krabbe, Fabry, Pompe, Niemann-Pick, Gaucher and Hurler Syndrome.

The bill was enacted as [Act 148](#) of 2014.

*** **Patient-Centered Medical Home Advisory Council** -- The Senate voted 48-0 in favor of amendments to [House Bill 1655](#), which creates the Patient-Centered Medical Home Advisory Council.

The council will advise the Department of Human Services on how Pennsylvania's Medicaid program can increase the quality of care while containing costs.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 198](#) of 2014.

*** **Consent for Treatment of Breast Disease** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1656](#), which repeals an outdated law that requires women to sign a separate consent form for the treatment of breast disease.

Previous law required patients to sign a "Consent for Treatment of Breast Disease" form when undergoing a breast biopsy to authorize any procedures deemed necessary to limit the use of general anesthesia. Since patients are no longer given general anesthesia when undergoing a breast biopsy, the signed consent form is no longer necessary.

Acknowledging the medical advancements made in the past 30 years, the bill ends the requirement for patients to sign a needless form.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 3](#) of 2014.

*** **Hospital Notification on Insurance Status** -- The Senate voted unanimously for [House Bill 1907](#), which establishes the Hospital Observation Status Consumer Notification Act.

The legislation requires hospitals to provide oral and written notice to a patient on their outpatient status, and the impact that the outpatient status will have on their insurance coverage after they have spent a full day in the hospital outside of the emergency department.

There had been a growing trend in the hospital industry to use "observation status" when classifying patients receiving care in the hospital after evaluations in an emergency room. Part of this was to avoid admission and audit scrutiny by the federal government.

The stakes become larger for senior citizens on Medicare since a hospital admission of at least three days is required before Medicare will pay for subsequent skilled nursing care or rehabilitation in a nursing home. If a patient is in the hospital for three days before going to a nursing home, and one of those days was on "observation," Medicare will not cover the nursing

home expenses. The problem was caused by some hospitals not making this “observation status” distinction known to patients.

The bill was enacted as [Act 169 of 2014](#).

*** **Downs Syndrome Prenatal Education** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2111](#), which requires health care practitioners to provide up-to-date information on Downs Syndrome to expectant parents of a child who tests positive for the genetic disorder.

Under the bill, called “Chloe’s Law,” information provided includes: physical, developmental, educational and psychosocial outcomes, life expectancy, clinical course, intellectual and functional development, treatment options and contact information for supportive services and other parental resources.

The information will also be made available by the Department of Health on its website.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 130 of 2014](#).

*** **Community Based Health Care** - The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 5](#), which establishes a community-based health care program within the Department of Health.

This legislation expands and enhances existing resources to provide health care for the uninsured, and it establishes a program in the Department of Health to provide grants to community-based health care clinics that provide “medical homes” for the uninsured.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 10 of 2013](#).

*** **Newborns Affected by Substance Abuse** - The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 29](#), which increases the monitoring of newborns suffering from prenatal exposure to illegal substances.

The bill requires health care providers to report signs of a mother’s illegal substance abuse, withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal exposure and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder to the County Children and Youth Agency. The agency must then perform a risk assessment to determine whether a newborn needs child protective services.

The bill was enacted as [Act 4 of 2013](#).

*** **Lyme Disease** - The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 177](#), the Lyme and Related Tick-Borne Disease Surveillance, Education, Prevention and Treatment Act.

The legislation raises public awareness about the dangers of and ways to prevent, diagnose and treat Lyme disease and related maladies. It is also aimed at ensuring that medical professionals, insurers, patients and governmental agencies are educated about treatment options; medical professionals provide patients with sufficient information about treatment options to enable patients to make an informed choice; and that Pennsylvania government agencies provide unbiased information on multiple standards of care.

The legislation directs the Department of Health to establish a 20-member task force on Lyme disease and related tick-borne diseases to investigate and make recommendations.

The bill was borne out of Pennsylvania’s high number of Lyme disease cases. From 2006 to 2011, total reported cases of Lyme disease in Pennsylvania more than doubled. During 2010, Pennsylvania ranked first in the nation with 3,805 confirmed and probable cases, and according

to provisional numbers for 2011, an additional increase to 7,484 cases was expected, which again would rank Pennsylvania first in the nation.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 83 of 2014](#).

*** **Breast Cancer Detection** - The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 358](#), which requires health care workers to notify patients of their breast density after each mammogram. The additional reporting requirement alerts patients who might be at a higher risk of breast cancer going undetected in normal screenings.

Mammogram films of breasts with higher density are harder to read and interpret than those of less dense breasts. Because of this, the measure requires health care workers to provide mammogram patients with a notice that explains the possible complications that could arise when trying to diagnose cancer in someone with dense breast tissue.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 86 of 2013](#).

* **Generic Equivalent Drug Law** -- The Senate voted 44-6 to approve [Senate Bill 405](#), which would have amended the Generic Equivalent Drug Law so that biologically similar drugs could have been substituted for brand name drugs by a pharmacy.

A generic drug could only have been substituted:

- if the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved it;
- the doctor prescribing the brand name biological product did not specifically deny the generic brand;
- the doctor would have received notification of the substitution within 72 hours;
- and the record of the substitution would have been kept for two years by both the pharmacist and doctor.

The state Department of Health would have overseen and enforced the change, as well as publicized information on which drugs could have been interchanged.

The bill died in the House.

*** **Laboratory Standards** -The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1042](#), which holds out-of-state laboratories to the same standard and requirements as in-state labs.

Previous state law prevents the placement of paid or unpaid staff from one provider's office in another provider's office, but a loophole in the Clinical Laboratories Act of 1951 had meant that out-of-state federally licensed labs could have placed phlebotomists or specimen collectors in physicians' and other health-care provider's offices more cheaply and without fear of sanction.

The bill passed unanimously in the House. It was signed into law as [Act 122 of 2013](#).

*** **Statewide Prescription Drug Database** -- The Senate voted 46-2 in favor of [Senate Bill 1180](#), which establishes a statewide prescription drug database.

The database is designed to be a tool to help doctors better deal with patients who are doctor shoppers — patients who bounce from physician to physician looking to obtain and abuse prescription drugs.

Pennsylvania has the dubious distinction of being one of the top 10 states for drug overdose rates per capita — as 15 out of every 100,000 people die each year. Prescription drugs account for about 75 percent of those deaths.

The governor signed Senate Bill 1180 into law as [Act 191](#) of 2014.

* **Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1267](#), which would have reauthorized the Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council (PHC4) until June 30, 2017.

Originally formed in 1986, the PHC4 was set to expire on June 30, 2014. The council is an independent state agency formed to address rapidly growing health care costs. The council's strategy to contain costs is to stimulate competition in the health care market. In 1989, the act was amended to task the council with collecting data on the quality and cost of health care, study access issues for the uninsured and work with the legislature on reforms.

The bill died in the House.

STATE GOVERNMENT

*** **Procurement Reform** -- The Senate unanimously passed a procurement reform bill that will curtail investment in Iran's energy sector.

[House Bill 201](#) was originally drafted as a bill to reform the state's procurement process by prohibiting a state employee from evaluating a contract proposal submitted by the employee's former employer for two years. An amendment was inserted that bars any company that invests more than \$20 million in Iran's energy sector from entering into a state procurement contract worth more than \$1 million through the Pennsylvania Department of General Services.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 149](#) of 2014.

*** **Tax Reporting for Charities** -- The Senate voted 48-0 in favor of [House Bill 359](#), which changes the tax reporting period for Pennsylvania charities.

The new law moves the commonwealth's reporting deadline to match the federal law, which is the 15th day of the fifth month after the end of a charity's fiscal year.

The governor approved House Bill 359 as [Act 141](#) of 2014.

*** **Green Technology** -- The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 1672](#), which creates the State Agency Green Technology Implementation Act to identify new ways to reduce costs and improve efficiency by testing and procuring new, energy efficient technologies within state agencies. The act directs the Department of General Services to enact criteria for the program.

The bill was enacted as [Act 165](#) of 2014.

*** **Official State Aircraft** -- The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 1989](#), which designates the Piper J-3 as the Official State Aircraft.

The Piper J-3 Cub is a small aircraft recognizable by its famous yellow fuselage and black trim. It was built exclusively in Lock Haven, Clinton County, between 1937 and 1947 by Piper

Aircraft. The aircraft was modified and used by the U.S. Armed Forces during World War II for reconnaissance and as a hedgehopper during combat.

House Bill 1989 was enacted as [Act 73 of 2014](#).

*** **Supplemental Payments** -- The Senate voted 48-0 for [House Bill 2481](#), which allows the Pennsylvania Treasury to process other states' supplemental payments for eligible participants who are also receiving supplemental security income payments from the Social Security Administration.

The proposal grants legal permission to the commonwealth to enter into contractual arrangements with other states. Supporters said House Bill 2481 will generate millions in revenue for Pennsylvania.

Following House concurrence, the bill was enacted as [Act 204 of 2014](#).

* **Online Voter Registration** - The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 37](#), which would have allowed Pennsylvanians to register to vote online.

The measure would have also allowed voters to change their party registration, address, or name online. Under the proposal, citizens could have registered to vote anytime. However, if they registered late for an upcoming election, their registration would not have taken effect until the beginning of the next registration period.

Lawmakers claimed that such a system would be simpler, convenient and encourage greater voter participation.

The bill died in the House.

* **Electronic Campaign Filing** - The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 120](#), which would have required candidates to file all campaign reports electronically. The bill would also have imposed additional registration and reporting requirements.

Under the bill, beginning in February 2014, all campaign finance reports and statements would have needed to have been filed electronically. Proponents said an electronic system would be more efficient and less expensive.

The bill would have added a new section that clarifies what financial amounts trigger the need to file certain reports. The legislation would also have increased the penalty for a late filing fee from \$10 to \$25, and hike the maximum fee for a single report from \$250 to \$500.

The bill died in the House.

* **Lobbyist Registration** – The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 308](#), which would have required the Department of State to post on its Lobbyist Disclosure website all lobbying registration and reporting documents it receives within seven days of the filing.

Aimed at improving transparency in state government, the bill would have made internet publication of all lobbying documents timelier. In the past, posting on the department's website took several months after lobbyist disclosure documents were completed and filed.

The bill died in the House.

*** **Voting Standards** -The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 436](#), which amends the Pennsylvania Election Code to remove the sunset date for voting standards adopted by the previously-created Voting Standards Development Board.

This change allows the current federally-required voting standards to remain in place. Otherwise, the current voting standards would not have applied to elections held after 2012.

The bill passed unanimously in the House and was signed into law as [Act 6 of 2013](#).

* **Right to Know law** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 444](#), which would have changed Pennsylvania's Right to Know law to, among other things, give the public greater access to information associated with the commonwealth's four state-related universities.

Senate Bill 444 would have expanded the information available from state-related universities, improved the appeals process for requestors, established a new fee structure for commercial requests and made other important changes.

Temple, Penn State, Pitt and Lincoln would have been required to create searchable, sortable and downloadable online databases covering budget, revenue and expenditure data; the number of employees and aggregated, non-personal employee data; and the number of students and aggregated, non-personal student data.

The state-related schools would have also been required to post information about contracts on their websites if their value is greater than \$5,000. Most universities would also have had to report their top 200 employee salaries.

The bill died in the House State Government Committee.

*** **Electronic Records** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 601](#), which defines "electronic records" and provides uniformity in the areas of designation, authentication, preservation and access.

Electronic records – or entities that work with electronic records – named in the bill include exclusive publications, publishers that put out legal material in electronic records, authenticated state documents and other states' authentic electronic records.

Publishers of legal electronic records must ensure their integrity, provide for backup and disaster recovery and make sure they are always usable.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 133 of 2014](#).

* **Official State Aircraft** -- The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 602](#), which would have designated the Piper J-3 as the Official State Aircraft.

The Piper J-3 Cub is a small aircraft recognizable by its famous yellow fuselage and black trim. The aircraft was modified and used by the U.S. Armed Forces during World War II for reconnaissance and as a hedgehopper during combat.

The bill died in the House. However, [House Bill 1989](#) contained the same language and was enacted as [Act 73 of 2014](#).

* **Official Brass Band** - The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 885](#), which would have designated and adopted Pittsburgh's River City Brass Band as the "official brass band of Pennsylvania."

Founded in 1981, the band regularly performs 42 concerts each season in southwestern Pennsylvania and another 20 to 30 special concerts throughout the United States.

The bill died in the House.

*** **Notary Public** -- By a vote of 48-2, the Senate passed [Senate Bill 1001](#), eliminating the need for a state senator to endorse a constituent's application to become a notary public.

Pennsylvania was one of only three states that had such a requirement. The bill was signed into law as [Act 119 of 2014](#).

*** **Eminent Domain** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1096](#), which clarifies that a property owner can be reimbursed up to \$4,000 "per property" that is acquired through eminent domain.

Previously, a property owner could only be reimbursed up to \$4,000. Such payment is provided for reasonable expenses incurred for appraisal, attorney and engineering fees.

If the taking is for an easement related to underground piping for water or sewer infrastructure, the bill specifies that reimbursement is limited to \$1,000.

The bill was enacted as [Act 120 of 2014](#).

* **History Code** -- The Senate voted unanimously for [Senate Bill 1253](#), which would have updated the History Code, as well as update the duties of the PA Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC).

Under the bill, PHMC could have sold or disposed of property that had been on loan for over 21 years if they would have tried to make contact with the lender and had not been able to.

Also, the PHMC would have overseen and maintained the State Archives, commonwealth records, local government records and older public records.

Lastly, any public record that is at least 75-years-old and sealed from public disclosure would have been made public unless specifically prohibited by law. This would have applied to any item currently in the custody of the State Archives and any item placed in the archives going forward. The PHMC website would have been required to have a notice with the new policy.

The bill died in the House State Government committee.

* **Public Official and Employee Ethics Act** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1327](#), which would have amended the Public Official and Employee Ethics Act to prohibit a public official or employee from accepting a cash gift from a lobbyist, principal, or other person seeking to influence official action from the public official or employee.

Under the bill, public officials and employees would also have been prohibited from soliciting cash gifts.

The bill was spurred by a "sting" investigation in Philadelphia where several state lawmakers allegedly accepted cash from a confidential informant. The investigation was later deemed flawed and the Attorney General decided against prosecution.

[Senate Bill 1327](#) would have banned cash, check, money orders, prepaid cards, gift certificates and gift cards. Lawmakers, government officials and employees who accept \$250 or

more from anyone seeking to influence public policy could have faced a felony and up to five years in jail. Smaller amounts would have constituted a misdemeanor. The legislation differentiated cash gifts from properly reported political contributions.

The bill died in the House State Government committee.

TRANSPORTATION

**** Transportation Funding** - The Senate approved [Senate Bill 1](#), which would have increased Pennsylvania's annual transportation investment by \$2.5 billion by lifting the cap on the Oil Company Franchise Tax and increasing fees for vehicle registration and drivers licenses.

The legislation would have provided additional dollars for the state's highways, bridges and 36 transit agencies, plus provide investment for rail, aviation, ports, and bicycle/pedestrian facilities and projects. The plan also contained modernization proposals advanced by the Transportation Funding Advisory Commission.

The bill was referred to the House where negotiations led to House approval of a measure that was then amended by the Senate into [House Bill 1060](#).

By a vote of 43-7, the Senate approved [House Bill 1060](#). Senate Democrats objected to the amendment because of a provision raising the threshold for prevailing wage requirements on certain projects, but most voted in favor of the final bill, citing the urgent public-safety and job benefits.

The enacted plan will generate an additional \$2.4 billion annually within five years to build and maintain roads, bridges, highways and mass transit systems. In addition, the measure creates a \$144 million pool of funds for multi-modal projects.

A total of \$1.7 billion is earmarked by year five for highway and bridge projects. Another \$497 million is targeted for mass transit and \$144 million for multi-modal projects.

The average cost to the consumer is approximately \$132 per year or \$2.53 per week. Some other estimates suggest that the cost will be a bit higher at \$3 per week. Either way, the increased costs on the front end will save at the back end in lower maintenance and delays.

While Senate Bill 1 died in the House, the House concurred in the Senate version of [House Bill 1060](#), which was signed into law by Gov. Corbett as [Act 89](#) of 2013.

***** Motorcycle Licensing** - The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 892](#), which restricts the number of times a person can apply for a motorcycle learner's permit to no more than three times in five years.

Previously, a motorcycle learner's permit was valid for one year or until the permit holder had failed the examination three times within a one year period.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 26](#) of 2013.

***** Electric Vehicles** - The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 83](#), which allows for the use of Neighborhood Electric Vehicles (NEV) on certain highways.

Under the bill, NEVs must comply with federal low speed vehicle safety standards. Also, they must be equipped with brakes, an odometer, speedometer, the manufacturer's vehicle identification number, windshield wiper, horn and battery charge indicator.

By local ordinance, the vehicles can only travel and cross roads where the speed limit is up to 35 MPH. An ordinance can forbid the use of NEVs on certain roads. An NEV is considered a passenger car and must be titled, registered and have the proper restraint systems. The operator is required to hold a driver's license.

The bill was enacted as [Act 177 of 2014](#).

*** **Military Licensing Exemptions** - The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 277](#), which allows members of the armed forces with at least two years experience driving commercial vehicles to bypass the skills test required to obtain a commercial driver's license. Previously, military personnel could bypass the test with two years experience driving commercial vehicles, only if the two years of experience immediately preceded the application for the CDL.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 82 of 2013](#).

* **Milk Truck Limitations** - The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1010](#), which would have increased weight limits for trucks carrying certain milk products.

Currently, Pennsylvania dairy operations are at a competitive disadvantage because neighboring New York allows skim and condensed milk in 95,000-lb. gross weight trucks, yielding a 60,000-lb. net loads. Without an overload permit, Pennsylvania dairy operations are limited to 80,000 lb. gross weight trucks. The weight differential between states forces Pennsylvania dairy operations to use smaller loads, which results in higher cumulative costs for hauling and unloading.

This competitive disadvantage has prevented Pennsylvania dairy farmers from obtaining contracts at New York yogurt plants because it takes 16 trucks as opposed to 13.

The bill died in the House.

*** **Port Authority Restructuring** - The Senate voted 38 to 19 in favor of [Senate Bill 700](#), which restructures the governance board of the Port Authority of Allegheny County and initiates a study over the possibility of consolidating and privatizing the authority.

Under the bill, the authority would be expanded from nine to 11 members.

Opponents of the bill argued that the legislation would unjustly reduce the Allegheny County Executive to having only one appointment to the governance board, despite the fact that he has a greater authority role than others who make appointments.

Another point of contention was with the inclusion of privatization language. Many lawmakers deemed this as unnecessary since the board currently contracts with private carriers when it is deemed profitable. They also criticized the privatization prospect since a privately-operated authority would no longer be tax exempt or capable of pulling down federal dollars.

The Senate concurred in House amendments by a vote of 31-18 and the bill was signed into law as [Act 72 of 2013](#).

*** **DARE Program Funds** -- The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 89](#), which sends unused funds from the DARE drug abuse prevention program to provide grants for Child Advocacy Centers.

In the 2011-2012 budget, the DARE program was defunded at the recommendation of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. It concluded that DARE was not an effective drug prevention program. However, approximately \$400,000 in proceeds from the sale of special DARE license plates remains in the fund.

The bill transfers that money to the commission for the grants.

The measure was enacted as [Act 27 of 2014](#).

*** **Fire Department Vehicles** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 241](#), which expands the definition of “fire department vehicle” in the state Vehicle Code to include a vehicle owned or leased by a fire relief association.

Previously, PennDOT would not issue an emergency vehicle tag to a tanker truck or other fire apparatus owned by a fire relief association. PennDOT insisted that to qualify for emergency vehicle plate the vehicle had to be in the fire company’s name.

House Bill 241 allows a fire department vehicle owned by a fire relief association to receive an “emergency vehicle” plate.

The measure was enacted as [Act 140 of 2014](#).

*** **Electric Bicycles** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 573](#), which legalizes neighborhood electric vehicles and pedal-assist electric bicycles in the state vehicle code.

The measure defines neighborhood electric vehicles as four wheel electric vehicles with a maximum speed of 25 miles per hour that comply with federal safety standards.

The new law defines pedal-assist bicycles as bicycles, not mopeds or scooters, and requires that they be equipped with operable pedals, an electric motor 750 watts (1 horsepower) or less, weigh a maximum of 100 pounds, and be capable of a top speed of not more than 20 mph. It also requires that the rider be at least 16-years-old.

The bill was enacted as [Act 154 of 2014](#).

*** **Appalachian Trail License Plate** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 770](#), which allows for the creation of an Appalachian Trail license plate for cars and trucks not more than 14,000 pounds or a motor home.

Proceeds from the new plate will be used by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy for trail maintenance and improvements.

The governor signed SB 770 into law as [Act 23 of 2014](#).

*** **Mobile Homes** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1263](#), which requires mobile and manufactured home sellers to get a tax status certification before they can complete the sale of such a structure.

The new law is an attempt to help counties keep track of mobile and manufactured home owners who sell their dwellings and then move to other states without paying delinquent property taxes.

This will also help unsuspecting people who buy these homes and don’t learn about the back tax problem until after they become owners. In some cases, the buyer of the delinquent property can lose the home if he or she is unable to pay the late property assessments.

The governor signed the bill into law as [Act 36 of 2014](#).

*** **Outsourcing License Tests** -- The Senate unanimously passed a bill that allows PennDOT to outsource driver license tests to qualified private contractors.

[House Bill 2092](#) was originally drafted to expand the CDL license exemption for farm vehicles from 150 miles to anywhere within the state. An amendment inserted the driver license provision.

The bill was enacted as [Act 170 of 2014](#).

*** **Bridge Replacement Authorization** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2244](#), a supplement to the 2014-15 Highway-Railroad and Highway-Bridge Capital Budget Act that authorizes money to build, rehabilitate and replace bridges.

The total authorization for state-owned bridges is \$4.929 billion. The total for bridges owned by counties and municipalities is \$1.586 billion.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 127 of 2014](#).

* **Electric Bicycles** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 997](#), which would have legalized pedal-assist electric bicycles in the state vehicle code.

With a growing number of small businesses emerging to meet the demand for these motorized bicycles, lawmakers were pressed to clearly define them in the code. The bike's small electric motor assists some riders who are out-of-shape, older, or riding on difficult, hilly terrain.

The measure would have defined pedal-assist electric bicycles as bicycles equipped with operable pedals, an electric motor 750 watts (1 horsepower) or less, weighing 100 pounds or less, and capable of a maximum speed of not more than 20 mph. The legislation also would have required that the rider be at least 16-years-old.

The bill died in the House. However, nearly all of its provisions were included in [House Bill 573](#), which was enacted as [Act 154 of 2014](#).

*** **Combat Infantry License Plate** -- The Senate unanimously approved an amended [Senate Bill 1187](#) that creates a combat infantry badge license plate for soldiers who have earned that distinction.

Since 1943, the combat infantry badge has been awarded to officers and enlisted men and women who have served in combat with the U.S. Army.

The governor signed the bill into law as [Act 109 of 2014](#).

* **Economic Development** -- The Senate voted 49-0 to approve [Senate Bill 1210](#), which would have rewritten the state's Transit Revitalization Investment District (TRID) Act to encourage municipalities to begin using the economic development tool. Since its inception in 2004, no so-called TRIDs have been created.

Under Act 238, municipalities and counties can designate one-eighth to a half mile radius around a mass transit stop or station as a TRID. Incremental tax revenues generated by new real estate investment within the TRID can then be used to attract business and residential development either in or near the district.

Lawmakers were asked to change the law to make TRIDs more flexible, deliver funding from a portion of state taxes that would support grants or low-interest loans, and give local governments the option to dedicate a portion of designated levies to their TRIDs.

The bill died in the House.

*** **DUI Law Challenge** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1239](#), which changes language in the state vehicle code as it affects repeat drunk driving (DUI) offenders. The state Superior Court had determined the language to be technically flawed.

The court ruled in June of 2013, that a defendant who appealed his prison sentence was correct in doing so because the term “notwithstanding,” as it had been written in Section 3803(a) of the vehicle code, rendered that section legally null.

The new legal language was gleaned directly from the court’s opinion.

The governor signed the bill into law as [Act 189 of 2014](#).

*** **All Terrain Vehicle Tires** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1287](#), which will broaden the definition of “all-terrain vehicles” (ATVs) to accommodate the registration and titling of some of the newer models on the market.

The bill allows for an increase in weight for class 1 ATVs from a maximum dry weight of 1,000 pounds to 1,200 pounds. This allows for the use of innovative airless tires, which comes standard on some newly-released vehicles. The new tire design was developed for use by U.S. and allied military forces throughout the world. The non-pneumatic, never-flat tire technology increases vehicle handling in rugged terrain and is composed of a central polymeric web, surround by a rubber tread band, which allows continuous operation, even if up to 30 percent of the web is damaged.

The bill was enacted as [Act 111 of 2014](#).

*** **Vehicle Code Amendments** -- The Senate voted 49-1 for [Senate Bill 1312](#), which makes multiple amendments to the Vehicle Code.

First, drivers caught texting or calling with a handheld cell phone while driving a commercial motor vehicle or motor carrier vehicle face a \$100 fine. Any employer who violates these provisions can be charged with a summary offense and a \$500 fine.

Second, if a person causes an accident that results in a death and flees, they must serve a minimum of three years in jail. (Currently they must serve only one year). The provision closes a loophole that compelled some drunk drivers to flee accident scenes.

Also, a tax clearance is required from the county when a person sells or transfers ownership of a manufactured home if it was anchored to the ground and previously titled to a person using the manufactured home as a residence.

The bill also allows school districts to use busses up to 45 feet in length (previously 40 feet). The bill allows for one pilot car for vehicles greater than 13 feet but not greater than 14 feet in body width.

The bill also allows a permitted oversized vehicle to travel within 1,000 feet of another permitted oversized vehicle in the same direction if it is a military vehicle, a vehicle traveling in a construction zone, or a vehicle traveling within 2,500 feet of a stop sign, traffic light or and other traffic-control signal or event that would cause either vehicle to come to a stop.

Finally, the bill removes restricted travel periods for permitted manufactured housing transport.

The bill was approved by the governor as [Act 85 of 2014](#).

* **Delaware River Port Authority** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1358](#), which would have made the Delaware River Port Authority (DRPA) more open and changed the way it operates.

Specifically, the bill would have: prohibited DRPA from engaging in economic development activity; required an open records policy; ordered a 30-day public notice for any vote concerning a contract; disallowed DRPA from negotiating, extending, amending or otherwise altering the terms of a contract or entering into a contract, unless the action is taken by the DRPA board at a public meeting; and required biennial budget audits, biennial performance audits and a biennial review of compensation for all DRPA employees.

The bill would also have limited DRPA board member, officer and employee “perks” by prohibiting vehicle allowances, toll exemptions and lump sum expense allowances; prohibiting any personal lines of credit from DRPA; prohibiting the acceptance of any gifts that could affect the conduct of DRPA business; and prohibiting salaries to be higher than those of the governors of Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Senate Bill 1358 died in the House.

* **Delaware River Port Authority Reform** -- A companion of [Senate Bill 1358](#), the Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1373](#), which would have given the governor veto power over Delaware River Port Authority (DRPA) decisions.

The federal compact that serves as the enabling law for DRPA gives PA and New Jersey the option to provide veto power to their respective governors. New Jersey has done this. Pennsylvania has not.

[Senate Bill 1373](#) died in the House Transportation Committee.

* **Bridge Construction Work** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1383](#), which would have authorized \$5.612 billion for work on state and county-owned bridges.

Specifically, the capital bill would have authorized \$4.614 billion for work on state bridges, and \$998.2 million for work on county-owned bridges.

The legislature would still have needed to specifically appropriate funds before work can begin on any of the itemized projects.

The bill died in the House; and [House Bill 2244](#) was the vehicle used for the authorizations.

*** **Highway Project Authorization** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1384](#), the Highway Capital Budget Project Itemization Act.

The bill that authorizes \$19.153 billion on state and local highway projects, itemized in the legislation.

The measure was enacted as [Act 129 of 2014](#).

* **Veteran's Driver License Designation** -- The Senate voted unanimously for [Senate Bill 1405](#), which would have penalized those who falsely claim to be a veteran when claiming a Veteran's Designation on a driver's license.

Under the bill, those falsely claiming to be a veteran could have been charged \$300 or imprisoned for between 30 and 90 days.

The bill died in the House.

URBAN AFFAIRS & HOUSING

*** **Homeless Veterans** -- The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 1135](#) to help reduce homelessness among veterans.

The law amends the Public Housing Authorities Law to require local housing authorities to give preference to veterans and families of active duty military when leasing public housing.

First preference will now be given to homeless veterans, second to disabled veterans or families of disabled veterans, third to families of deceased veterans and servicemen, and fourth preference to other veterans or servicemen or their families.

The governor signed SB 1135 into law as [Act 188](#) of 2014.

* **Homeowners Associations** -- The Senate voted 49-0 to approve [Senate Bill 1302](#), which would have amended and clarified regulations and procedures for homeowner's associations (HOA).

The proposal looked to give members of HOAs the ability to vote on proposals during meetings via paper ballot, absentee ballot, electronic ballot, internet-based ballot or another method made available by the board in order to increase participation.

Senate Bill 1302 died before the House Urban Affairs Committee.

*** **Blighted Properties/Non-Profits** -- The Senate unanimously adopted [House Bill 1363](#) to make it easier for non-profits and other entities to eliminate blighted properties in their communities.

Now, state law decreases the time for court action on a petition from within 120 days of receipt of the petition to 60 days to push these delinquent owners into making repairs. The owner is also required to post a bond for the estimated repair costs. This helps prevent a property owner from stalling on repairs by promising, but then failing, to fix or repair the property.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 157](#) of 2014.

*** **Abandoned Tenant Property** -- The Senate voted 29-21 to approve [House Bill 1714](#) and make it easier for landlords to dispose of tenant property they deem to be abandoned.

The new law allows landlords to dispose of property left by tenants within 10 days unless the tenant communicates and intention to retrieve the property. If the tenant requests storage, the landlord can dispose of the property after 30 days of storage at the tenant's expense.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 167](#) of 2014.

*** **Neighborhood Blight** -- The Senate voted 49-0 for [House Bill 2120](#), which closes loopholes in the state's Neighborhood Blight Reclamation and Revitalization Act.

To eliminate blight, the new law bans property owners from placing real estate titles in the names of shell entities or from leaving their investments under the control of a manager or landlord who cannot be held liable under the law.

Following unanimous House concurrence, the governor enacted the bill as [Act 171](#) of 2014.

*** **Planned Communities Extensions** - The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1122](#), which amends the Uniform Condominium Act and the Uniform Planned Communities Act to extend the current seven-year time limitation on withdrawal or conversion of real estate within flexible planned communities to a 10-year limitation for projects that are not built in phases.

This provides developers additional time to complete planned communities that, due to new lending restrictions established in response to the economic downturn, have been stalled or delayed.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 37](#) of 2013. The Senate also unanimously passed [Senate Bill 859](#), which contained similar provisions. That bill died in the House.

*** **Business Improvement Districts** - The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 1644](#) to extend the power of the Municipal Authorities Act by giving the Business Improvement District (BID) authority the option of lowering the tax assessment on residential properties while proportionately raising the tax assessment on non-residential properties within a Business Improvement District.

A public hearing will be required to be held for all property owners in the BID to make them aware of the change in the calculation of assessment for residential and commercial properties.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 128](#) of 2013.

*** **Carbon Monoxide Alarm Requirements** – By a vote of 47-1, the Senate passed [Senate Bill 607](#), the Carbon Monoxide Alarm Standards Act.

The bill requires that anyone selling a residential property must disclose information on the installation of carbon monoxide detectors on the property disclosure statement. It would also require owners of multi-family buildings to install a carbon monoxide detector in any unit with fossil-fuel burning appliances, fireplaces or an attached garage.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 121](#) of 2013.

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

*** **Leaves of Absence** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 88](#), which amends Title 51 (Military Affairs) to clarify the 15-day leave of absence regulation for active duty military personnel working in civilian jobs.

The measure closes a loophole that caused employees with irregular shifts and work days to be charged multiple days of leave during a single 24-hour period.

The bill was enacted as [Act 80 of 2013](#).

*** **Memorial Flag** -- The Senate unanimously passed [House Bill 119](#), which established an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) memorial flag to honor EMS personnel killed in the line of duty. The flag will be similar to the Firefighters Memorial flag created by Act 168 of 1990.

The bill allows the flag to be displayed over EMS service memorials, funerals for EMS providers, from the poles of any public area and as directed by the director of EMS in the Department of Health.

The bill was enacted as [Act 57 of 2014](#).

*** **Wireless 911 Fund** -- The Senate voted 48-1 in favor of [House Bill 583](#), which ensures the solvency of the wireless 911 fund. The fund would have been functionally bankrupt by 2014.

The measure encourages, but does not require, the regionalization of 911 centers to cut costs. It clarifies that no public safety answering point can be funded for more than 70 percent of its agency-approved personnel training, salary and benefit costs. The bill also stops the carryover of unfunded liabilities from year to year in the 911 fund.

This bill was largely in response to a Legislative Budget and Finance Committee report completed as part of Act 118 of 2010.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 9 of 2013](#).

*** **Chartered Fire Companies** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 807](#), which allows two or more independently chartered fire companies who share a relief association to send an elected delegate to represent the individual company at a statewide or corporation meeting.

Thus, each individual fire company can send a duly elected delegate and receive travel expenses paid from relief funds.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 1 of 2014](#).

*** **Voluntary License For A Bachelor Of Social Work** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 807](#), which creates a voluntary license for a bachelor of social work.

The application fee for the license is \$40, with a \$75 renewal fee. Only people who are licensed as bachelor social workers will be permitted to style themselves as licensed bachelor social workers and use the letters "L.B.S.W." in connection with their names.

Bill proponents claim that Pennsylvania social workers have been pushing for bachelor degree licensure for years.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 179 of 2014](#).

*** **Purchasing Emergency Equipment** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 1706](#), which doubles the amount that volunteer departments can borrow for purchasing equipment, a much needed change as the price of emergency services equipment has increased over the years.

[House Bill 1706](#) updates the Volunteer Loan and Assistance Program, which provides low-interest loans to volunteer fire and EMS departments.

Maximum amounts for purchasing emergency apparatus or vehicles increase from \$100,000 to \$200,000. Prices for equipment and vehicles has doubled, and in some cases tripled, over the last few years. Loan amounts also doubled for companies looking to upgrade their facilities or repair old equipment.

The legislation also changes the number of loans allowed for new regional departments. Previously, an individual department could only carry three VLAP loans at a given point in time. The law increases that limit for merged departments to 10 loans at one time for a period of 10 years from the merger date.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 129](#) of 2013.

*** **Telephone 911 Surcharge** -- By a unanimous vote, the Senate passed [House Bill 2275](#), extending for five years a telephone surcharge to fund 911 emergency centers.

The bill is a one-year reauthorization of the law. Lawmakers said they intend to update the entire 911 act sometime in 2015. The bill was signed into law as [Act 84](#) of 2014.

*** **State Licensing And Legal Reporting Requirements** -- The Senate unanimously approved [House Bill 2377](#), which protects out-of-state businesses from the state's licensing and legal reporting requirements when they are only in Pennsylvania for emergency-related work during a declared disaster.

The measure further eliminates barriers that could delay the deployment of individuals and resources during disasters.

The bill was enacted as [Act 203](#) of 2014.

*** **Training Requirements for County Directors** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 302](#), which standardizes and strengthens the training and resources for county directors of veteran affairs by delineating training requirements and setting minimum standards, including:

- Requiring all county directors to be accredited as a veteran service officer by a national or state accrediting body.
- Providing the authority to county commissioners to appoint a Director of Veterans Affairs, approve compensation as set by the county's salary board and provide the necessary office resources at the courthouse or other centrally accessible location.

The bill codifies in statute the functions and services that many county directors had already performed.

The bill was enacted as [Act 5](#) of 2013.

*** **Military Resident Physicians** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 403](#), which assists the Pennsylvania National Guard in recruiting and retaining military resident physicians.

The bill leverages \$300,000 in Education Assistance Program (EAP) funding to incentivize military physicians to join the Pennsylvania National Guard after they complete their military

service. Physicians will receive \$15,000 per year of service. According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, this will not affect programs funded under EAP due to an average balance of \$736,000 remaining at the end of the last two fiscal years (2011-12 and 2012-13).

This bill was signed into law as [Act 78 of 2014](#).

*** **Armed Forces Remains** -- The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 586](#), which requires the state to recognize the wishes of a military service member regarding the handling of his or her remains if they die during service.

The measure requires decisions about remains to be consistent with the wishes of the person in military service as authorized on their DD Form 93, which is a valid document or a successor form provided by the Department of Defense that is signed by a member of the armed services forces and designates a person to make choices about his or her remains.

The bill was signed into law as [Act 45 of 2013](#).

*** **Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Funds** -- The Senate unanimously passed a bill to help volunteer emergency medical organizations pay for training.

[Senate Bill 707](#) allows volunteer firefighters' relief association funds to be used for costs related to advanced life support (ALS) or paramedic (EMT-P) training. Previous law restricted the use of the funds to firefighter training.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 65 of 2014](#).

*** **Disaster Emergency Act** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 720](#), which established an assistance program under the Disaster Emergency Act.

This legislation will help victims of flash floods, fires, tornadoes, and other natural and manmade disasters that are below the federal aid threshold.

Assistance will be limited to grants for projects that do not qualify for federal assistance to help repair damage to public facilities.

The bill was enacted as [Act 187 of 2014](#).

*** **Geospatial Coordinating Board** -- The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 771](#), which creates a 17-member Geospatial Coordinating Board.

Under the bill, the board advises the governor on geospatial issues, uniform data standards, and the coordination and efficiency of geospatial policy and technology among federal, state and local agencies, academic institutions and the private sector.

Geospatial information is gathered by numerous entities, including government, private sector and higher education institutions and is widely used for mapping and emergency response.

The bill was enacted as [Act 178 of 2014](#).

*** **Helping Needy Service Members** -- The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 923](#), which preserves and expands the Military Family Relief Assistance Program (MFRAP).

The MFRAP program provides grants of up to \$3,500 to needy Pennsylvania service members who experienced a sudden loss of income as a result of military service; emergency

child care needs; natural or manmade disasters resulting in the need for food, shelter and other necessities; or the death or critical illness of a parent, spouse, sibling or child.

The program is funded by voluntary donations derived largely from Pennsylvania Personal Income Tax refund check-offs, which would have automatically expired at the end of 2013.

The bill extends both the MFRAP tax refund check-off and the MFRAP program itself, which is set to expire on June 30, 2016.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 66 of 2014](#).

***** National Guard Education Assistance** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1115](#), which changes the Pennsylvania National Guard's Educational Assistance Program to provide eligible service members with additional financial aid to cover costs of pursuing an approved education program.

The bill ensures proper distribution of state financial aid after federal aid is taken into consideration. All costs must be documented by the educational institution.

This bill was signed into law as [Act 82 of 2014](#).

***** Defining Amputee Veterans** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1129](#), which changed the name of the "Paralyzed Veterans' Pension" to the "Amputee and Paralyzed Veterans' Pension."

Previous law defined paralyzed veterans, but did not include a definition of amputees. It rectified that by defining an amputee veteran as having the "loss or permanent damage or paralysis of two or more limbs" – and having a disability compensation of 40 percent or higher for each limb as defined by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The bill was enacted as [Act 180 of 2014](#).

***** Prescription Drug Savings** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1224](#), which provides prescription drug savings to veterans who live in assisted living or personal care homes.

Pennsylvania adopted a similar law in 2008 when the governor signed legislation allowing long-term care facilities to repackage medications received through the Veterans' Administration so residents could save money.

The bill was enacted as [Act 147 of 2014](#).

*** Emergency and Law Enforcement Personnel Death Benefits** -- The Senate unanimously approved [Senate Bill 1266](#), which would have changed the state's Emergency and Law Enforcement Personnel Death Benefits Act to provide more time for survivors to apply for benefits when their family members — emergency and law enforcement personnel — die in the line of duty.

Currently, if law enforcement officers, ambulance service or rescue squad members, firefighters, certified hazardous material response team members, or National Guard members die while on the job, benefits must be sought within 90 days of a death.

[Senate Bill 1266](#), which would have extended that deadline to three years, died in the House.

* **Emergency Systems** -- The Senate voted unanimously to approve [Senate Bill 1377](#), which would have extended the sunset date for the collection of wireless Enhanced (E-911 service).

The law was set to expire on June 30, 2014. The bill would have extended it by one year to June 30, 2015. The E-911 system links emergency callers with the appropriate public resources in their area, including fire, medical, or police.

The bill died in the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee.

* **Emergency Equipment Loans** -- The Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 1423](#), which would have adjusted provisions of the Farm Safety and Occupational Health Act to account for inflation in the Emergency Vehicle Loan Program.

The bill would have increased the maximum loan for heavy duty rescue trucks along with aerial apparatus to \$300,000.

The bill was laid on the table in the House.

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