

A NEWSLETTER
CONTAINING
THE LATEST
INFORMATION
ON LEGISLATION
AND NEWS OF
INTEREST TO
TOWNSHIPS

**HB 1673 would
allow volunteer
fire relief funds to
be used for
recruitment and
retention of
volunteer
firefighters.**

Capitol Roundup

Legislature to tackle budget after election — The General Assembly will return to session on November 10 for leadership elections and will need to adopt a state budget for December through June, as only a 5-month budget has been adopted for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Other legislation may be considered as well during the legislature's first post-election session in more than a decade and PSATS will be working to promote legislation to benefit townships while opposing legislation that would go against PSATS' policy.

PSATS has released a new Grassroots tool that will help you easily contact your state legislators, particularly as every legislator will be pushing to promote their legislation as the session draws to a close on November 30. To check out the new tool, log onto connect.psats.org and choose "Grassroots."

Volunteer fire bills go to governor — After a busy session week in late October, several bills to benefit volunteer fire departments and ambulance companies passed both chambers and are now before the governor, who is expected to sign them. These bills would address several PSATS resolutions:

SB 94 would clarify that volunteers that provide necessary operational support for volunteer fire companies are eligible for workers' compensation coverage if injured in the performance of their duties. Operational support is defined and must be conducted on a regular basis and is subject to approval by the municipality purchasing the coverage. The term does not include a social member of a volunteer fire department.

HB 1673 which would expand the Volunteer Fire Company, Ambulance Company and Rescue Squad Assistance Program to include paid municipal fire and EMS companies, subject to referendum, and would increase the eligible loan amounts.

The bill would expand the role of the office of the state fire commissioner and give the commissioner the authority to establish rules, in consultation with the a newly expanded Fire Advisory Board, for the eligible uses of the volunteer fire relief. The board would be directed to review and make recommendations for the fire relief funding formula.

HB 1673 would add that fire relief associations include both volunteer and combo companies and that funds may be used for: necessary training, activities and materials to help with the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters, establishment of length of service awards, facilities to store vehicles and equipment and for training and meetings, vehicles and equipment for emergency response, defrayment of the cost of obtaining or renewing a CDL for volunteer firefighters that operate fire or emergency vehicles registered to fire companies or municipalities, and stipends to volunteer firefighters not to exceed \$1,500 per year.

The bill would authorize counties and school districts to provide property tax credits to volunteer first responders (*townships had the authority from 2016*), eliminate the 20% cap on municipal emergency responder real estate tax credits, and authorize intermunicipal cooperation for tax credit programs.

HB 1838 would require 30 percent of the money from the Emergency Medical Services Operating Fund be allocated to provide training to underserved rural areas and that not less than 10 percent of these funds be provided to EMS agencies to purchase medical equipment for ambulances. The bill would increase EMS fines on traffic violations from \$10 to \$20 and on ARD from \$25 to \$50, with the increases going to the fund.

Broadband bills move forward — HB 2438 is now before the governor, which would



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After requests for clarification from PSATS, the Wolf Administration has restated that municipalities were exempt from the original COVID restrictions/orders and remain so.

allow rural electric cooperatives to use their existing infrastructure to deploy fiber lines for broadband services.

Several other broadband bills were moving and are expected to see further action after the election, including **SB 835**, which would create a broadband funding pilot program for unserved areas of Pennsylvania.

Legislation before governor — Township legislation on the governor's desk includes:

SB 1199 would authorize the operation of **personal delivery devices**, or autonomous robots, to deliver packages to consumers. Townships could prohibit such devices on certain local roads and pedestrian areas if they would constitute a hazard.

HB 885 would eliminate the ability to use alternative security instruments under the Public Works Contractors' Bond Law.

SB 940 would authorize a municipality to issue and record a condemnation order on a property with the county recorder of deeds, which would serve as a lien on the property.

State Overtime Regulations Take Effect — New state overtime regulations took effect October 3 that require overtime to be paid to most full-time, salaried workers if they make less than \$35,568 per year. Townships are exempt from the state regulations, but are required to comply with federal provisions that require full-time, salaried workers making less than \$35,308 a year to be paid overtime when they work more than 40 hours in a work week.

MPOETC Publishes Overhaul of Municipal Police Training Regulations —

The Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission published a proposed comprehensive rewrite of the regulations for the Municipal Police Officer Education Act in the October 17, 2020 issue of the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. This extensive rewrite is intended to replace the existing regulations. Comments may be submitted by November 16 and PSATS plans to submit comments. Go to www.pacodeandbulletin.gov for more.

COVID News

For more information and resource links, go to psats.org and choose COVID-19 info.

Administration Restates That Municipalities Are Exempt from Current Gathering Limits — After requests for clarification from PSATS, the Wolf Administration has restated that municipalities were exempt from the original COVID restrictions/orders and remain so. Accordingly, they are not required to comply with the commonwealth's current gathering limits. Townships should, however, consider following the guidance in the current worker safety orders, such as reducing capacity by 50%.

Townships Should Display Federal Coronavirus Leave Poster — The U.S. Department of Labor has a labor law poster on employee rights regarding the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which provides for up to two weeks of paid sick leave for qualifying reasons related to COVID-19. Townships should display the poster with other required state and federal labor law posters. The poster is available from the department free of charge.

PUC Modifies Emergency Order Suspending Terminations — The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission has adopted enhanced consumer protections to safeguard families and small businesses. Townships that provide qualified services may continue to replicate the PUC practices including collections and grace periods. This includes continued termination protection for certain low-income residential customers, outreach to customers at risk of termination, waiver of reconnect fees, and no late-payment charges. Moratorium on terminations and collections for customers able to pay end November 9 for all utilities subject to the commission's jurisdiction.



Make Plans Now to Attend PSATS' 2021 Conference & Centennial Celebration

If you haven't already done it, be sure to include **a line item in your 2021 budget** for attendance at PSATS' 2021 Annual Educational Conference & Exhibit Show, scheduled for **April 18-21** in Hershey. Plan to attend and help us celebrate our 100th Birthday! In cooperation with Hershey facilities, we are committed to providing the safest possible environment.

PSATS' Annual Conference is the **best investment your township can make in terms of education** for supervisors and staff and offers tremendous value for minimal cost. **It's one investment that offers a year-round return!**

Our Conference Planning Committee met recently to discuss the conference agenda, including keynote speakers, workshop topics, the exhibit show, and special events, including our special Centennial Celebration Dinner planned for Tuesday evening of the conference.

We have big plans for our centennial and the conference, and we want you to be a part of it all! We hope you decide to join us for an extra special conference next year. Materials will be mailed to all townships on **December 3**.

Grant and Funding Resources Available

Townships can take advantage of the grant and funding resources below:

DCNR is offering free online grant workshops on November 4 for the eastern third of the state; **November 12** for central Pennsylvania, and **November 17** for the west. Each workshop runs from 9:30 a.m. to noon. Go to dcnr.pa.gov and choose "Events" for more.

PennDOT is accepting Multimodal Grant Applications from municipalities until **November 6**. Projects should coordinate local land use with transportation assets to enhance existing communities; improve streetscape, lighting, sidewalk facilities, and pedestrian safety; improve connectivity or use of existing transportation systems; or advance transit-oriented-development. For more, go to penndot.gov and choose "Projects and Programs."

The **Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency** is accepting grant applications designed to reduce or prevent community violence **until November 10**. The State School Safety and Security Grant Program is available to municipalities, counties, and community organizations. Go to www.pccdegrants.pa.gov for more.

FEMA is accepting Applications for Supplemental Firefighter Grants until **November 13**. Both volunteer and combination volunteer/paid fire departments may apply for \$31 million under the Fiscal Year 2020 Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program for personal protective equipment and other supplies to support COVID-19 response. Departments that already applied or received funding in this round are eligible to apply again. For more information, go to www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/firefighters

DEP is accepting applications for its Truck and Bus Fleet Grant Program until **November 13**. Townships may apply with projects to replace or repower eligible diesel-powered Class 4-8 trucks, school buses, shuttle buses or transit buses. For more information, go to www.dep.state.pa.us/DrivingPAForward/

PA WalkWorks is accepting applications **to expand its network of walking routes until November 13**. Selected organizations will receive technical assistance with route selection, guidance for physically distanced walks, and promotional materials and signage. Learn more at www.health.pa.gov/topics/programs/WalkWorks/Pages/WalkWorks.aspx

Don't Miss PSATS Training Opportunities

For more information about any of these sessions, go to learn.psats.org!

Flagger Training — This live instructor-led Flagger Training is for individuals with flagging responsibilities on any road open to the public. The course meets the PennDOT Publication 408 flagger training requirements. The course is scheduled for multiple locations in November and December.

Quickbooks Series — This virtual series will help you get the most out of Quickbooks. Using Quickbooks for Meeting and Year-End Reports will take place **October 29**, Getting Ready for the Township Audit is scheduled for **November 19**, and Year-End Employee Functions will take place **December 17**.

Strategic Planning for Fire Service Operations — This virtual session slated for **November 18** will review the top 10 challenges facing volunteer fire departments and identify the responsibilities of the township for fire response. Participants will conduct a SWOT analysis of their current operations and learn how to develop standards based on public expectations.

CDL Courses — CDL Records Management Virtual Training will be held **November 10** and **December 17**, while CDL Probable Cause Training for Supervisory Personnel Virtual Training will be held **December 14**.

ABCs for Elected Auditors — In this virtual class, scheduled for **December 15**, learn about the responsibilities of elected auditors, how to conduct a through audit of the township's finances, and how to navigate DCED's online financial reporting requirements.

This and That...

Be sure to check this section each month, where you will find important reminders and information.

- **Coming Soon: New PSATS website** — In a few short weeks, the Association will be moving over to a new and improved website. The new psats.org will be your new source of information and house all the PSATS services you have come to love over the years. With that being said, we must advise you of a few changes that will need to be made.

As you know, the member portal or "Connect" is where you currently log in to access member exclusive services. With the new psats.org, you will now access member services through the PSATS site. All your sources, all in one place.

Members who currently do NOT have an account to the current member portal or "Connect" will need to **create a new account**. To create an account, follow the "New Account" instructions located under "Sign In" on the new psats.org.

Members who currently have an account to the member portal or "Connect" will need to do a **password reset** on the new website. To do a password reset, please follow the "Password Reset" instructions located under "Sign in" on the new psats.org.

Make sure you check back after November 9th to view the new and improved psats.org!

- **Date clarified for annual organization meeting** — The annual organization meeting required by Section 602 of the Second Class Township Code must be held on the first Monday in January, which is **Monday, January 4, 2021**. The elected auditors' annual organization meeting must be held the following day, Tuesday, January 5, 2021.
- **Looking for Salary and Benefits Information for Townships?** — Did you know that the PSATS Salary Survey Plus allows you to compare your employee's wages with those of similar townships or with statewide averages with just a few clicks? Did you know that you can compare benefit information as well, even by region, population, or similar budget size? This valuable and secure PSATS service is available anytime and is brought to you by participating townships!

To take advantage of this benefit, just enter your township's data, which is instantly uploaded, improving results for all townships! As soon as the survey is complete, your township officials will have access to all reports and may customize comparisons by region, population, budget size, benefits provided, union status, and more!

For access, login to connect.psats.org and look under "My PSATS Account" for a link to Salary Survey Plus. Trouble with access? Email memberservices@psats.org or call 717-763-0930.