



Public Policy Summary February 24, 2017

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Below is a summary of key public policy issues impacting the Pittsburgh region's nonprofit sector. Key stories include:

[Upcoming GPNP Events](#)

- Tuesday March 28: GPNP is hosting "Rising Above the Line Items: GPNP's 4th Annual Budget Session." It is our 4th year offering thought provoking insight from leading experts on the Pennsylvania state budget. This discussion will challenge the nonprofit sector to rise above the line items and examine the ongoing state budgetary challenges that continue to place publicly-funded, community programming at risk due to rising costs at the state and organizational levels. During this discussion we will identify on what topic(s) should the sector take a stand. Click [here](#) to learn more and register.

[Advocacy Sections](#)

- Many of your organizations are mobilizing around key issues, and we want to make sure that you can share your activities with GPNP members. If you are hosting an event or meeting, seeking coalition partners, or organizing and advocacy campaign and need to get the word out, share your information with streeter@forbesfunds.org. Please share your activities with us so we can help you amplify your work!
- Our [Health Care Advocacy Section](#) contains the latest activities regarding health care advocacy.
- The Consumer Health Coalition invites you to participate in next week's Teach In on health care. Click [here](#) to download the event information.
- The American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania has joined GPNP and is available to assist nonprofits on civil liberties issues. Click [here](#) to learn about their resources.
- The Congressional Management Foundation issued its latest report on advocacy best practices for Congress. Click [here](#) to learn more.

[The Forbes Funds and GPNP News and Announcements](#)

- The Forbes Funds is proud to launch the Wishart Nonprofit Executive Fellowship 2017. Click [here](#) for more information.
- March 28: Nonprofit Talent, The Forbes Funds, and Grantmakers of Western Pennsylvania present, "Lessons in Social Impact Investing With Tony Wells, President And Co-Founder Of The Wells Foundation."

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- GNPN is pleased to offer you a growing array of exclusive member services and discounts from our corporate sponsors! Click [here](#) to view the list of services.
- PublicSource is offering a special GNPN member discount code for its upcoming event with *Hillbilly Elegy* author J.D. Vance.
- Foundation of HOPE is our February Member Spotlight!
- AARP is hosting a volunteer event next week. Click [here](#) to download information.
- The Keystone Historic Preservation Grant Program is accepting applications until March 1.
- The Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board's Grants to Reduce Dangerous Drinking program is accepting applications until March 31.
- The Conservation Partnerships grant application period is open until April 12.
- The Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus Scholarship Program is accepting applications until April 22.

[Pennsylvania Budget](#)

- Hearings began this week on Governor Tom Wolf's budget proposal. As the hearings began, Governor Wolf published an op-ed defending his budget proposal.
- During its hearing, the Independent Fiscal Office testified that "permanent" changes are needed to remedy Pennsylvania's financial problems. Additionally, the IFO responded to questions regarding the Governor's proposed minimum wage increase and shale tax.
- The AP reported that Governor Wolf may be able to secure a minimum wage increase during this budget cycle. According to the AP, "Some Republicans say a minimum wage increase could be acceptable, but at a much lower figure" than the \$12 per hour that he has proposed.
- Revenue Secretary Eileen McNulty testified that the Wolf Administration's tax amnesty program could help recover a significant portion of the state's \$1.1 billion in delinquent taxes.
- WITF and *The Patriot News* reported on the current pension reform debate and how it is impacting the budget hearings.
- *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported on Governor Wolf's proposal to close certain state health centers as a cost saving measure.
- *Pittsburgh Quarterly* published a feature on the Department of Education's funding.
- *The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* reported on growing grassroots support to eliminate school property taxes in the Pittsburgh region.
- The Pennsylvania State University System held its budget hearing and discussed plans to reorganize the system.
- The Citizens Advisory Council issued a report stating that recent budget cuts to the Department of Environmental Protection's budget "have reached an unsustainable level."
- *The Patriot-News* reported that Governor Wolf's proposed user fee to fund the state police has revived an old argument about law enforcement in Pennsylvania.

[Additional State Government News](#)

- Governor Wolf is advocating to keep the Affordable Care Act and the accompanying Medicaid expansion that he implemented.
- *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported on Senator Jay Costa's (D-Allegheny) bill that permits involuntary commitment for opioid treatment.
- *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* published a piece analyzing the perceived conflict between Republican legislators and the city of Philadelphia.

[Legislation](#)

The following bills were introduced since our last update:

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- HB 129- Welfare Prohibition for Convicted Drug Traffickers
- HB 508- Preventing Non-Compliant Megan's Law Offenders from Receiving Welfare Benefits
- HB 549- Setting medical fees
- HB 563- Legislative and Congressional Redistricting
- HB 569- Establishing the PA Independent Re-Districting Commission
- HB 591- Prohibiting Public Fund Transfers to Inmates
- HB 599- Partnering with Pew
- HB 612- Child Sex Abuse Statute Of Limitation Reform - The Real Deal

Federal Policy

- *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported on the response of local arts groups to proposed cuts to federal arts funding.
- *The Washington Post* reported that President Donald Trump is planning to issue new executive orders to overturn President Barack Obama's environmental policies.

Health Care

- House Republicans released a policy memo containing their initial policy proposals for replacing the Affordable Care Act. According to *The Washington Post*, the Republicans' policy proposals include: expanding health savings accounts, providing tax credits to purchase health insurance, and creating state high-risk pools.
- *The Hill* reported on emerging divisions between Republicans representing states that expanded Medicaid and Republicans representing states that declined to do so.

Immigration

- KDKA reported that Pittsburgh's Latino community is "fearful" because of the Trump Administration's immigration policies.
- *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported that local leaders are challenging the Trump Administration's immigration policies.
- The Partnership for a New American Economy released a report showing the economic impact of immigrants by congressional district.
- The Incline published a chart of immigration votes and policy positions held by Allegheny County's General Assembly delegation.

Nonprofit Sector

- Luzerne County Council is preparing to vote on new disclosure rules for nonprofits receiving county funding.

Pittsburgh Region News

- Washington County Commissioners lauded the county's recent economic growth.
- Regional leaders are optimistic that coal industry jobs may be coming back to the region.
- The Allegheny Conference on Community Development issued its 2016 Annual Report.

Health and Human Services

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- *The Observer-Reporter* reported on Senator Camera Bartolotta's (R-Beaver, Greene, Washington) forthcoming bill to address the opioid epidemic.
- The Penn State Data Center issued new research on Pennsylvania's aging population.

Education

- Pennsylvania Secretary of Education Pedro Rivera affirmed that his department will continue to implement its plans of Pennsylvania's schools despite the leadership change in the U.S. Department of Education.
- Pittsburgh City Council Member Natalia Rudiak introduced a bill to form an affordable pre-K task force.

Housing and Community Development

- PublicSource published a primer on the current state of affordable housing in Pittsburgh.
- *The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* reported on the use of tax breaks to spur economic development in Pittsburgh.
- The Urban Redevelopment Authority approved \$37 million in new housing developments.
- Representatives from Key Bank visited Pittsburgh to learn from community development organizations about how its investments can make an impact in the community.

Water, Energy, and Environment

- Pittsburgh Controller Michael Lamb released an audit of the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, which revealed "a perfect storm of mistake and incompetence."
- Next Pittsburgh published guides for individuals on how to address pollution and lead issues.

Corrections and Public Safety

- Pittsburgh announced that it will have its highest number of police officers since 2002.
- *The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* reported on declining participation in Westmoreland County's jail diversion program.

Arts, Parks, and Culture

- Pittsburgh Today and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* published articles about the arts climate in Pittsburgh.
- Next Pittsburgh highlighted the Tull Family Theater's grand opening.

Transportation

- The Port Authority of Allegheny County announced that its ridership is holding constant despite a downward national trend in public transit utilization.
- *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported on the legislation to create a Bike Lane Advisory Board. City Council passed the legislation on Tuesday.

These stories, and many others, follow below.

Sections

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March 28: Rising Above the Line Items: GNPN's 4th Annual PA Budget Session

*** Special GNPN Education Event ***

Rising Above the Line Items

Please join us for

GNPN's 4th annual Pennsylvania budget session.

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It is our 4th year offering thought provoking insight from leading experts on the Pennsylvania state budget. This discussion will challenge the nonprofit sector to *rise above the line items* and examine the ongoing state budgetary challenges that continue to place publicly-funded, community programming at risk due to rising costs at the state and organizational levels. During this discussion we will identify on what topic(s) should the sector take a stand.

The goals of this session are:

1. GPNP members will understand the Governor Wolf's 2017-2018 budget proposal.
2. GPNP members will learn about potential cost-saving measures and the practical implications of government reform, such as the departmental consolidation plan proposed by the Wolf Administration.
3. GPNP members will learn about Pennsylvania's public retirement system and its impact on the long-term sustainability of community-focused programs.
4. GPNP members will understand existing state revenue options.

Who Should Attend:

Nonprofit Executives and staff * Elected Officials and Staff
General Public * Philanthropy

Tuesday, March 28, 2017

10:30 AM to 12:30 PM

Rodef Shalom,
4905 5th Avenue,
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

[register](#)



March 28: Good Ideas Forum: Lessons in Social Impact Investing With Tony Wells, President And Co-Founder Of The Wells Foundation



**LESSONS IN SOCIAL IMPACT INVESTING WITH TONY WELLS,
PRESIDENT AND CO-FOUNDER OF THE WELLS FOUNDATION**

Presented by Nonprofit Talent, Grantmakers of Western Pennsylvania, and The Forbes Funds

Date: Tuesday, March 28th, 2017

Time: 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM

Location: Point Park University Ballroom downtown Pittsburgh

Cost: \$20 per person/delicious breakfast and beverages provided

This engaging session is designed for funders, investors, and nonprofits seeking to learn more about capital, financing strategies, and approaches to achieve greater social impact.

The Wells Foundation is a Columbus-based private family foundation created by Dana and Tony Wells. Pursuant to its mission, the foundation has a history of investing into social enterprises, developing new social innovation models, and advising local nonprofit organizations that are considering social enterprise since 2001. Tony is one of the most creative, and sought-after national speakers on the topic of Social Impact Investing, sharing his own stories, successes and lessons learned after taking the risk to make nearly ALL of his foundation's endowment available for impact in the nonprofit sector.

[register](#)

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2017 Public Policy Committee Meeting Dates

GNPN's Public Policy Committee will convene on:

- [Tuesday, April 11, 2017](#)
- [Tuesday, May 30, 2017](#)
- [Tuesday, August 8, 2017](#)
- [Tuesday, November 14, 2017](#)

The meetings will be held from 8:30 AM to 10:30 AM at The Forbes Funds/GPNP offices located at 5 PPG Place, 2nd Floor, Pittsburgh, PA, 15222. Conference lines will be available for those who cannot attend in person. You can register for the meetings by clicking the meeting dates above.

The Forbes Funds and GPNP News

[The Forbes Funds Launches the Wishart Nonprofit Executive Fellowship 2017](#)

Here at the Forbes Funds, we're always building, testing, tweaking. Our newest creation is the Wishart Nonprofit Executive Fellowship, which will send three outstanding nonprofit leaders to a unique learning opportunity outside the traditional nonprofit educational circuit. Funded by the Alfred W. Wishart, Jr. Fund for Excellence in Nonprofit Management, Fellows will attend the prestigious Carnegie Bosch Institute (CBI) at Carnegie Mellon University's Tepper Business School. Valued at \$4,100, this program is offered at no cost to participating Fellows. Application deadline: Tuesday, March 7, 2017. Click [here](#) to learn more about this exciting opportunity.

[Exclusive Services for GPNP Members](#)

GNPN is pleased to offer you a growing array of exclusive member services and discounts from our corporate sponsors! Services and discounts are currently available from:

- * **Association of Fundraising Professionals Western Pennsylvania Chapter**
- * **Bookminders**
- * **Multiscope**
- * **The Wilson Group**
- * **Your CFO**

Click [here](#) to view our current offering of services for GPNP Members!

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[Foundation of Hope Member Spotlight!](#)

Foundation of HOPE is our Member Spotlight for February! The mission of the Foundation of HOPE is to empower incarcerated and released individuals to restore their relationship with their God, rebuild their lives, and reconcile to their communities. Thanks to its long-term, committed partnership with the Allegheny County Jail (ACJ), HOPE successfully carries out its mission through a three-tiered continuum of care for jail inmates and ex-offenders that includes Chaplaincy; a Pre-Release Program; and an Aftercare Program. Click [here](#) to read about their important work!

[Special GNPN Discount for Event with Hillbilly Elegy Author J.D. Vance](#)

PublicSource is bringing the author of the #1 New York Times bestselling book *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* to Pittsburgh for an evening lecture on Thursday, March 30, 2017. The event will begin at 7 p.m. at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Lecture Hall. Purchase [your tickets](#) now using the code GNPN for a 25% discount!

Announcements

["Report - Citizen-Centric Advocacy: The Untapped Power of Constituent Engagement." Congressional Management Foundation. February 13, 2017.](#)

"Citizen-Centric Advocacy: The Untapped Power of Constituent Engagement," reveals the degree of influence that citizens have on congressional decision-making. The report is the most comprehensive research ever published on citizen engagement with Congress. The research answers critical questions for citizen-advocates and lobbyists, including the following: How influential are constituent meetings compared to lobbyist meetings? What is the most effective way to communicate with a lawmaker (letter, email, phone call)? Which methods/strategies are most successful for building long-term relationships with Congress? The findings are based on nine surveys of congressional staff, comprising nearly 1,200 responses provided to CMF from 2004-2015. The research also includes a new case study with food bank representatives (part of the Feeding America network) and how they utilized advanced citizen-advocacy techniques to build relationships with their legislators."

[Interested in Volunteer Opportunities with AARP?](#)

Join AARP PA on Tuesday, February 28 in Pittsburgh to connect with current volunteers and community partners, and learn about the work they are doing in the region and at the national level. Through education, advocacy and service, AARP volunteers work together to protect Medicare, support caregivers, prevent fraud and engage in many local advocacy and community service efforts. All are welcome! RSVP to Jennifer Blatz at 412-508-7304 or jblatz@aarp.org. Click [here](#) to download the flyer.

[Keystone Historic Preservation Grant Program Open Until March 1](#)

From Senator Wayne Fontana: "The [Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission \(PHMC\)](#) is now accepting applications from non-profits and local governments for the Keystone Historic Preservation Grant Program. Grants support projects that identify, preserve, promote and protect historic and archaeological resources in Pennsylvania for both the benefit of the public and community revitalization. Two categories of grants - project and construction - are available for historic resources in Pennsylvania listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic

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Places. Applicants may apply for only one type of grant. Project grants are available for planning and development initiatives that enhance historic preservation in communities. Project grant applications may include municipal planning initiatives focusing on historic resources or may be used to meet building- or project-specific planning goals. Keystone Historic Preservation Project Grants are available between \$5,000 and \$25,000 and require a 50/50 cash match. Construction grants are available for rehabilitation, preservation and restoration activities for historic resources that are publicly accessible and under non-profit or local government ownership. Keystone Historic Preservation Construction Grants are available between \$5,000 and \$100,000 and require a 50/50 cash match. A total of \$1.5 million has been set aside for this program and the application deadline is March 1. Grants will be awarded through a competitive selection process and are contingent on availability of funds. Applicants are required to use the web-based electronic grant application process. For more information, including grant program guidelines, please visit the PHMC online at www.phmc.pa.gov."

[Grants to Reduce Underage and Dangerous Drinking Application Period Open Until March 31](#)

From Senator Wayne Fontana: "The Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board (LCB) is accepting applications from schools, community organizations, municipalities, law enforcement organizations, non-profits, institutions of higher education, and for-profit institutions, for two-year grants aimed at reducing underage and dangerous drinking. Grants are intended to fund programs that focus on proven strategies to discourage and reduce both underage and dangerous drinking. The grant cycle is for up to two years, from July 2017 through June 2019, with a maximum award of \$20,000 per year and \$40,000 over two years. Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis and are subject to the availability of funds, and grant amounts will be determined by the Bureau of Alcohol Education. The deadline to apply is 4 p.m. on March 31 and applications must be submitted through PLCB+, an online system developed to streamline licensing and alcohol education functions. More information on this system and on the grant is available by clicking on the "Alcohol Education Grants" tab at www.lcb.pa.gov or by clicking here. The LCB sets aside roughly \$2 million per grant cycle, and initiatives funded in previous years include increased police patrols, social norms campaigns, Parents Who Host Lose the Most campaigns, college alcohol assessment surveys, online alcohol education programs, peer training, and more. There is no limit to the number of organizations from a single county or municipality that may apply for grants, but each must be a separate entity and only one grant will be awarded per organization."

[Conservation Partnerships Grant Application Period Open Until April 12](#)

From Senator Elder Vogel: "The state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) is now accepting applications for grants under the 2017 Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2). The C2P2 program has funded thousands of projects that have helped plan, acquire, and develop parks, recreation facilities, and trails as well as conserve watersheds throughout the Commonwealth. Most grants require at least a 50% match. For more information, please contact your regional advisor. The application period for C2P2 grants is open until April 12. Click here for more information and to apply."

[PLBC Scholarship Program Application Period Open Until April 22](#)

From Representative Jake Wheatley: "The Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus' annual scholarship program is now accepting applications through Saturday, April 22 for the 2017-18 school year. The scholarship is open to high school seniors and college students. Applicants must be a minority student, have a minimum grade-point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale, be sponsored by a PLBC member, and demonstrate leadership qualities. A 250-word essay on the student's academic plans and career goals and a 250-word essay on why you admire your state representative also must be submitted. You can download all the information and forms from the PLBC website. Only the first 250 applications submitted will be considered. The PLBC plans to award at least 10 students a \$1,000 scholarship to be used toward tuition at a Pennsylvania college

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or university. Pennsylvania students looking to attend one of the out-of-state historically black colleges and universities are also invited to apply for the scholarships. For information on other potential scholarships as well as the PLBC scholarship, students can visit www.pahouse.com/plbc/scholarships. If you have any additional questions about the PLBC Scholarship Program, applicants can contact the PLBC office at 717-772-6955."

Health Care Advocacy

Many GNPN members are concerned about the anticipated changes to the Affordable Care Act, Medicare, Medicaid, and CHIP. If your organization is conducting activities, please share them with streeter@forbesfunds.org so they can be included in this section. Below are announcements from GNPN members:

From Allies for Children:

Proposals to block grant Medicaid could undermine the key components of the program including: the guarantee of coverage for eligible children, the ability for children to have all the care they need covered, and the ability for families to get care for children at an affordable cost. We are looking to have a better understanding of how organizations benefit from Medicaid as well as the economic impacts of the Medicaid program. If you are able or willing to share stories related to clients who benefit from Medicaid or CHIP, please contact Heather Hopson, communications director, at heather.hopson@alliesforchildren.org.

From the Consumer Health Coalition:

The Consumer Health Coalition (CHC) is looking for volunteers to share their personal health insurance stories. Click [here](#) to download information. Additionally, the Consumer Health Coalition has published "Cover Me" resources for organizations and individuals mobilizing around health care. Click [here](#) and [here](#) to download them.

[February 28: Teach In: Health Care](#)

It is estimated that 670,000 Pennsylvanians, many from poor and rural areas, will lose their health insurance if the Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act is repealed. Another 400,000 residents who signed up for coverage through the ACA exchange will also be left uncovered. Come And Learn What You Can Do!!!! Click [here](#) to download the flyer.

From the PA Health Access Network and Insure PA:

Join a statewide movement to protect all Pennsylvanians' access to affordable, high-quality healthcare coverage, preserve life-saving consumer protections, and ensure Medicare, CHIP, and Medicaid remain available for those who need them. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Resources from the ACLU

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The American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania has joined GNPN and is available to assist nonprofits on civil liberties issues. In particular, the ACLU offers a number of "Know Your Rights" guides available [here](#) along with its Speakers' Bureau.

The ACLU often provides speakers for educational events, panels, conferences, and school programs. It has an active speakers' bureau consisting of attorneys, community leaders, ACLU-PA staff, and board members who are well versed in a variety of civil liberties topics, including (but not limited to):

- Free speech
- Immigrants' rights
- LGBT rights
- Police practices
- Religious liberty
- Reproductive freedom
- Security & civil liberties
- Student & youth rights
- Voting rights

Click [here](#) for more information.

Pennsylvania Budget

["Tax on gas drillers, minimum wage hike questioned as Pa. lawmakers open budget hearings." Karen Langley. *Philadelphia Inquirer*. February 21, 2017.](#)

"Members of the Senate and House Appropriations Committees questioned officials with the state Independent Fiscal Office about the Democratic governor's calls to raise the minimum hourly wage to \$12 from \$7.25, the federal level, and his plan to impose a 6.5 percent severance tax on natural gas drilling, an industry that has provided an economic boost to pockets of the state."

["Wolf could secure minimum wage hike, with big concessions." AP. February 18, 2017.](#)

"Years of pressure by Pennsylvania Democrats could yield a state minimum wage increase this year, although it likely will require substantial concessions in the Republican-controlled Legislature. Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf is proposing hiking the hourly minimum from \$7.25 to \$12. That would be the nation's highest. He is tying the proposal to his budget plan as a way to provide more tax revenue. Some Republicans say a minimum wage increase could be acceptable, but at a much lower figure."

["'Permanent' changes needed to fill state's widening budget gap, economist tells lawmakers." Kevin Zwick. *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. February 21, 2017.](#)

"Lawmakers in Harrisburg on Tuesday heard that 'permanent' changes are necessary to address the state's growing fiscal problems. Matthew Knittel, director of the nonpartisan Independent Fiscal Office, appeared before the House and Senate appropriations committees and said those fixes could mean spending cuts, tax increases or both. 'Temporary changes will not address a structural deficit. It will still be there,' Knittel said."

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["Pa. Revenue secretary 'very confident' tax amnesty program will chip away at tax debt owed to state." Jan Murphy. *The Patriot-News*. February 22, 2017.](#)

"Revenue Secretary Eileen McNulty is 'very confident' that Pennsylvania will take a chunk out of the \$1.1 billion in delinquent taxes owed to the commonwealth through the upcoming tax amnesty program. McNulty shared with the House Appropriations Committee on Tuesday that the program that allows delinquent taxpayers to pay up without penalty and only pay half the interest they owe is expected to generate \$150 million. She estimated that will result in a net collection of about \$100 million once expenses are deducted that can be used to help the state address this year's revenue shortfall. The amnesty program will begin on April 21 and run through June 19 and apply only to back taxes owed as of Dec. 31, 2015."

["Pa. budget questions answered in Capitol and on internet." Steve Esack. *The Morning Call*. February 22, 2017.](#)

"In House and Senate hearing rooms, lawmakers largely kept politics at bay while asking financial and policy questions of legislative and administrative department heads. The officials explained Gov. Tom Wolf's \$32.3 billion spending plan, which would downsize state government, raise the hourly minimum wage and boost various business taxes."

["Pennsylvania's huge public pension debt weighs heavily on budget talks." Katie Meyer. WITF. February 23, 2017.](#)

"One of the big questions going into Pennsylvania's budget negotiations is whether - after years of failed attempts - the Legislature in Harrisburg will address tens of billions of dollars in unfunded liabilities in its two biggest pension funds. Those are the State Employee Retirement System and the Public School Employee Retirement System - commonly known as SERS and PSERS. As budget hearings continue, lawmakers are searching high and low for a way to ease that burden."

["On pension reform, Pa. lawmakers talk a good game, but it's another state that's swinging for the fences." Charles Thompson. *The Patriot-News*. February 21, 2017.](#)

"As the conversation resets for 2017-18 in Harrisburg, there is another large, fiscally-challenged state where leaders are still trying to make bigger fixes than policymakers here are considering. Welcome to Illinois."

["State health centers again on budget chopping block." Kate Giammarise. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. February 20, 2017.](#)

"These state health centers are part of a network of 55 such offices around the commonwealth, many providing rural counties with public health services such as vaccinations, counseling and testing for sexually transmitted diseases and investigations of outbreaks of certain illnesses. Under a budget proposal by Gov. Tom Wolf, these health centers could close, though administration officials say the public health services provided here would still be available elsewhere. Following the Democratic governor's budget address earlier this month, Mr. Wolf's secretary of Policy and Planning, Sarah Galbally, said of the plan to close the centers: 'It's really about moving people out into the community, not taking away services.' The community health nurses could work in other settings, according to budget materials from Mr. Wolf's administration, such as a local health department or County Assistance Office. Budget documents also state that the expansion of Medicaid has pushed the rate of people without health insurance in Pennsylvania to a new low, so some services once provided by the centers are now provided by primary care doctors. Other centers in southwestern Pennsylvania are located in Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset and Westmoreland counties. Brief visits by a Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reporter to two local centers on a weekday morning last week found empty waiting rooms in both."

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["A Shrinking Resource." Julia Fraser. *Pittsburgh Quarterly*. Spring 2017.](#)

"Leaner times for Pennsylvania's Department of Education"

["Movement to eliminate school property taxes pushes for support in Western Pennsylvania." *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. February 18, 2017.](#)

"Local supporters of eliminating school property taxes think spending by districts is out of control: Schools are overstaffed, class sizes are too small and pensions are too big. They say the responsibility to pay for those costs falls on homeowners - an expanding, aging population who increasingly cannot afford to stay in their homes."

["Reorganizational study of Pa. state university system takes center stage at budget hearings." Jan Murphy. *The Patriot-News*. February 23, 2017.](#)

"By mid-summer and late fall, several universities in the 105,000-student State System of Higher Education will have depleted their operational reserves and be looking to borrow from other reserves that are dedicated to funding student housing and dining operations to keep the doors open. By next summer, if nothing changes, enrollment continues to decline, and more funding doesn't become made available, those schools will become totally out of money, said system Chancellor Frank Brogan. With that as a backdrop, Brogan told lawmakers on Thursday an urgency exists to make some changes to the way the system operates and set its financially struggling universities on a sustainable path."

["Pa. funding for environmental regulation is 'unsustainable,' panel says." Wallace McKelvey. *The Patriot-News*. February 21, 2017.](#)

"An advisory panel issued a warning Tuesday that budget cuts to the state Department of Environmental Protection have 'reached an [unsustainable](#) level.' 'We are aware that everyone will be approaching you with the expectations for additional funds, but the consistent cuts to DEP over the last [two] decades has reached an unsustainable level,' wrote William Fink, chairman of the Citizens Advisory Council, a non-partisan panel that reviews and provides input on environmental policies and regulation."

["Should you be paying for their police? Wolf's state police 'user fee' renews decades-old debate." Colin Deppen. *The Patriot-News*. February 16, 2017.](#)

"Should taxpayers in Harrisburg and elsewhere around the state be footing the bill for police services in this solidly middle-class township near Pittsburgh? That's a question being asked after the governor floated a new plan to help close the budget deficit and fund new hires of state police amid a statewide budget crunch and expected trooper shortage."

[Commentary: "Budget offers new way forward for Pennsylvania." Governor Tom Wolf. *Philadelphia Inquirer*. February 21, 2017.](#)

Additional State Government News

["With repeal in air, Wolf gives robust defense of health law." AP. February 22, 2017.](#)

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"Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf kept up pressure Wednesday to keep the 2010 federal health care law covering 1 million-plus Pennsylvanians, using his office to mount a vigorous public defense of it as efforts unfold in Congress to repeal it. Wolf is in a prime position to help exert public pressure on Pennsylvania's big delegation of Republicans in Congress. Only Texas and Florida send more Republicans to Congress than Pennsylvania's 14, and only a couple of other Democratic governors hail from a state with a Republican congressional delegation of significant size. Wolf's administration has tried to make the case for the law in at least a half-dozen events in recent weeks, while Wolf's public events on fighting Pennsylvania's wave of heroin and prescription drug addiction often touch on the law's crucial coverage of addiction treatment services. It also issued a 105-page report detailing the broad reach of the law's coverage in Pennsylvania. The latest event, on Wednesday, joined three of Wolf's Cabinet secretaries with people who had their own story to tell about how the law known as Obamacare or the Affordable Care Act had changed their life."

["State lawmakers looking at forced treatment as option to combat opioid crises." Karen Langley. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. February 20, 2017.](#)

"As state legislators seek to address the heroin and opioid overdose epidemic, support appears to be growing for the idea of forcing some drug abusers into treatment. The Senate's highest-ranking Democrat [Senator Jay Costa (D-Allegheny)] this month introduced legislation that, if enacted, would let family members petition to involuntarily commit a relative to treatment. In the House, the Republican chairman of the Health Committee says he is preparing a separate bill that would allow involuntary treatment of a drug user after an overdose. The proposals reflect what some say is a wave of despair fueled by an opioid epidemic rippling the state and the country."

["Is Pa.'s GOP-controlled Legislature picking on overwhelmingly Democratic Philadelphia?" Angela Coulombis. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. February 20, 2017.](#)

"The Republicans insist their agenda is not an attack on Philadelphia or any other urban area. They note that the GOP-controlled Legislature sends hundreds of millions of state dollars to Philadelphia every year and has come through for the city every time it comes knocking on Capitol doors for approval to raise taxes. But their emphasis right out of the gate on voiding some of the city's most progressive policies has raised the specter of a rise in anti-Philadelphia sentiment in the Capitol, one that could lead to a clash between the overwhelmingly Democratic city's liberal sensibility and the Legislature's biggest modern-day conservative majorities."

["Key Pa. senator under fire for suggesting inner-city students need 'less intensive' program to succeed." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. February 20, 2017.](#)

"Mr. Eichelberger, who chairs the Senate Education Committee, said Monday that his comments, mentioned in a story by the Carlisle Sentinel, were taken out of context. In an interview, he blamed failing urban school systems - not their students' skin color - for why some graduates falter in college."

[Commentary: "Here's a way to smarter Congressional redistricting." Franklin Kury. *The Patriot-News*. February 21, 2017.](#)

Pennsylvania Legislation

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Below are key bills introduced or voted on since our last update. If there is a bill relevant to your mission that you do not see listed, please email streeter@forbesfunds.org so we can add it to our tracking list.

New Legislation

[HB 129- Welfare Prohibition for Convicted Drug Traffickers](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative Jim Cox (R-Berks, Lancaster)

Current Committee: Not Yet Assigned

"... legislation that will prevent those convicted of drug distribution crimes from receiving welfare benefits." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[HB 508- Preventing Non-Compliant Megan's Law Offenders from Receiving Welfare Benefits](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative Jim Cox (R-Berks, Lancaster)

Current Committee: Not Yet Assigned

"... legislation that will prevent convicted sex offenders, who are required to register under Megan's law, and who are non-compliant in their registry requirements, from receiving welfare benefits." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[HB 549- Setting medical fees](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative Harry Readshaw (D-Allegheny)

Current Committee: Health

"... legislation ... to enable patients and health care providers to know the cost associated with medical tests and procedures prior to having the test and/or procedure ordered." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[HB 563- Legislative and Congressional Redistricting](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative Ed Neilson (D-Philadelphia)

Current Committee: State Government

"My proposal would incorporate the current state legislative redistricting standards of population equality and the maintenance of political subdivisions and compact/contiguous districts into the process of Congressional redistricting. Additionally, redistricting standards will be enhanced to include encouraging competitive districts and considering communities of interest when drawing district boundaries. Under my legislation, the independent commission tasked to draw these lines will not be beholden to incumbent politicians or political parties. In contrast, this nonpartisan commission will hold public hearings to consider input from the citizens of the Commonwealth and would be designed to work within time constraints to ensure the founding principle of our democratic system, that is, 'one person, one vote.'" ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[HB 569- Establishing the PA Independent Re-Districting Commission](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative Tina Davis (D-Bucks)

Current Committee: State Government

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"This legislation mirrors the common-sense reform approach used by the state of Arizona where a bipartisan panel draws that state's electoral districts thereby countering gerrymandering that has become the new normal in Pennsylvania." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[HB 591- Prohibiting Public Fund Transfers to Inmates](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative Cris Dush (R-Indiana, Jefferson)

Current Committee: Not Yet Assigned

"... legislation that will prohibit gift cards/certificates as well as electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards, administered by the Department of Human Services for public assistance, to be used towards alcohol purchases and/or deposited into inmate accounts. This legislation would also prohibit the Department of Corrections from allowing public assistance withdraws or transfers from occurring on the facilities premises." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[HB 599- Partnering with Pew](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative George Dunbar (R-Westmoreland)

Current Committee: Not Yet Assigned

"Our legislation will allow the Independent Fiscal Office to gather the data from various agencies and input into Pew's Results First Matrix model. Pew will train existing IFO employees on the Results First matrix model and working in tandem with them, analyze and calculate long-term costs paid by taxpayers and the benefits achieved by these costs for multiple government programs. The results of these calculations would then be published in an easy-to-read online portal for public consumption, allowing policymakers, budget crafters and the general public the ability to see the original intent and history of the program. Coupled with this analysis is the extensive cost-benefit analysis. This allows for quick and easy identification of future programmatic redesign, empowering policymakers to re-craft these initiatives for greater return on government investments." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[HB 612- Child Sex Abuse Statute Of Limitation Reform - The Real Deal](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative Mark Rozzi (D-Berks)

Current Committee: Judiciary

"... an SOL reform measure which will eliminate the criminal and civil statutes of limitations for childhood sexual assault claims and allow for a 2 year revival civil window, so that past victims of childhood sexual abuse can have the opportunity to bring suit, if they have the evidence to do so." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

Federal Policy

["Facing cuts under Trump administration, arts community prepares to fight funding battle." Michael Fuoco. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. February 21, 2017.](#)

"The nation's arts community is girding for a potentially fierce funding battle now that the White House budget office has recommended that Donald Trump's first spending plan eliminate the National Endowment for the Arts and other perennial conservative targets."

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["Federal cuts may hit Pittsburgh public broadcast media." Maria Sciuolo. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. February 21, 2017.](#)

"A White House budget office proposal to eliminate the CPB, and in effect, PBS and NPR, which receive grants from CPB, would be problematic locally, but 'devastating' to under-served populations, said one executive."

["Trump to roll back Obama's climate, water rules through executive action." *The Washington Post*. February 21, 2017.](#)

"One executive order, aimed at bolstering American energy independence, will instruct the Environmental Protection Agency to begin rewriting the 2015 regulation that limits greenhouse-gas emissions from existing electric utilities. It also instructs the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to lift a moratorium on federal coal leasing. A second order will instruct the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers to revamp a 2015 rule, known as the Waters of the United States rule, that applies to 60 percent of the water bodies in the country. That regulation - issued under the 1972 Clean Water Act, which gives the federal government authority over not only major water bodies but also the wetlands, rivers and streams that feed into them - restricts development as well as some farming operations on the grounds that these activities could pollute the smaller or intermittent bodies of water or choke them off altogether."

[Commentary: "Trump May Upend Nonprofits With Vow To 'Destroy' Johnson Amendment." Philip Hackney and Brian Mittendorf. *Newsweek*. February 19, 2017.](#)

[Commentary: "Republicans' dream of tax reform is in big trouble." Matt O'Brien. *The Washington Post*. February 22, 2017.](#)

[Commentary: "Block-Granting Low-Income Programs Leads to Large Funding Declines Over Time, History Shows." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. February 22, 2017.](#)

[Commentary: "Lessons from TANF: Block-Granting a Safety-Net Program Has Significantly Reduced Its Effectiveness." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. February 22, 2017.](#)

Health Care

["House GOP discusses Obamacare replacement ideas - but doesn't call them a plan." Mike DeBonis and Kelsey Snell. *The Washington Post*. February 16, 2017.](#)

"According to numerous lawmakers and aides in the room, as well as a [policy memo](#) distributed afterward, the House leaders laid out elements of a repeal-and-replace plan - including long-standing Republican concepts like health savings accounts, tax credits and state high-risk pools for the chronically sick. But they did not detail how those elements would fit together or get passed into law."

["House GOP Health Care Policy Memo." February 2017.](#)

["GOP Obamacare Plan Would Cover Fewer People; Blowback Grows." Bloomberg. February 24, 2017.](#)

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"Republican lawmakers expect that their Obamacare replacement will result in fewer Americans covered by health insurance, a fact that's likely to increase blowback amid growing support for the program. New details of the plan are beginning to emerge, described by lawmakers and their aides. While still being worked out, it would do away with the Affordable Care Act's requirement that all Americans have health coverage or pay a fine, and replace it with rules that let people choose not to buy insurance, instead paying higher premiums or penalties if they need it later. The result would be fewer people covered, said Republican lawmakers."

["GOP healthcare plans push health savings account expansion." Jessie Hellman. *The Hill*. February 22, 2017.](#)

"HSAs - special accounts for medical expenses that come with tax breaks - have long been a cornerstone of Republican healthcare plans. They argue giving people more direct control over their medical expenses will drive down healthcare costs."

["ObamaCare fix hinges on Medicaid clash in Senate." Alexander Bolton. *The Hill*. February 22, 2017.](#)

"Some Republicans want to save the expansion at least through a transition period during which states would continue to get additional federal funds. Others, including lawmakers from states that didn't take the expansion, say all of ObamaCare has to go, with no long, costly transition period for Medicaid. The fact that some states took the expansion and others didn't provides a dividing line that will pit Republicans against one another."

["GOP governors confront Medicaid divide." Peter Sullivan. *The Hill*. February 24, 2017.](#)

"Governors are descending on Washington this weekend as Republicans wrestle with the future of ObamaCare's expansion of Medicaid. GOP lawmakers say they are looking to governors for advice on what to do about the program, which is one of the toughest issues Republicans face as they look to repeal and replace the healthcare law. Many of the lawmakers representing states that accepted the Medicaid expansion are looking to keep it. But they are at odds with conservatives and Republicans from states that rejected the expansion, who are pushing for full repeal."

["Two tax issues dividing Republicans on ObamaCare." Peter Sullivan. *The Hill*. February 21, 2017.](#)

"Conservatives worry a tax credit to assist people with the cost of insurance, which would help people maintain or get coverage, will be too costly and that recipients might abuse the government help. ... Objections also are being raised against a proposal to open up some employer-sponsored health insurance plans to taxation. Some Republicans worry that proposal is essentially a new version of ObamaCare's much-reviled 'Cadillac tax.'"

[Commentary: "What's Next For The Affordable Care Act? Your Questions Answered." Julie Povner. NPR. February 23, 2017.](#)

[Commentary: "Obamacare repeal threatens drug treatment for thousands." John Finnerty. *New Castle News*. February 21, 2017.](#)

[Commentary: "Staffing, budget shortages put Indian Health Service at 'high risk.'" Joe Davidson. *The Washington Post*. February 20, 2017.](#)

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[Commentary: "A Ray of Hope for Mental Health." E. Fuller Torrey and John Snook. *National Review*. February 14, 2017.](#)

[Commentary: "Republican Health Proposal Would Redirect Money From Poor to Rich." Margot Sanger Katz. *The New York Times*. February 16, 2017.](#)

[Commentary: "House Republicans Would Reverse ACA Coverage Gains and Radically Overhaul Medicaid, New Talking Points Confirm." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. February 17, 2017.](#)

[Commentary: "House Republican Proposals to Radically Overhaul Medicaid Would Shift Costs, Risks to States." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. February 24, 2017.](#)

[Commentary: "Medicaid Per Capita Cap Would Shift Costs and Risks to States and Harm Millions of Beneficiaries." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. February 24, 2017.](#)

Immigration

["Pittsburgh's Latino Community Fearful Of President's Hardline Immigration Stance." KDKA. February 22, 2017.](#)

"At Casa San Jose, an immigrant support organization in Brookline, counselors say members of the local Latino community have receded into the shadows."

["Local officials, clergy challenge the narrative of Trump's immigration policies." Peter Smith. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. February 21, 2017.](#)

"Civic, religious and immigrant-community leaders released statistics asserting that immigrants have brought more than \$2 billion in annual spending power to the region's economy and include thousands of entrepreneurs and homeowners."

["Data aims to show impact of immigrants on Pittsburgh region." Sarah Anne Hughes. *The Incline*. February 21, 2017.](#)

"Fetterman and her husband, Braddock Mayor John Fetterman, will host an event at their home to release new data on the economic benefits of immigration from the Partnership for a New American Economy. 'This is the first time that immigrant contributions have been researched and documented to this level,' she said of the partnership's Map the Impact project, which was [updated](#) this week with breakdowns by Congressional district and metro area. The map includes by-community information like taxes paid by immigrants and their spending power - 'really detailed information that further makes the case on why we need compassionate immigration reform,' she said."

["Where Allegheny County's Harrisburg delegation stands on immigration." Sarah Anne Hughes. *The Incline*. February 20, 2017.](#)

"As places like Pittsburgh continue to show their support for immigrant communities in the face of a federal crackdown, Pennsylvania legislators are considering a bill to withhold state funding from so-called sanctuary cities. The bill, introduced by Republican Sen. Guy Reschenthaler whose district includes Mt. Lebanon and Robinson Township, would penalize municipalities that fail to

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comply with orders from the feds to detain undocumented immigrants. That includes Pittsburgh, which hasn't declared itself a sanctuary city but is considered one under the legislation. It was approved by the Pa. Senate 37-12 earlier this month. That legislation is not the only immigration-related bill elected officials are considering this session. Rep. Tony DeLuca, who represents Penn Hills, has again introduced a bill that would penalize business owners who employ undocumented persons by possibly suspending or revoking the business' license and fining the owner \$5,000. The bill is co-sponsored by another Allegheny County Democrat, Rep. Dom Costa of Stanton Heights, who has been criticized in the past by activists for his immigration record."

Nonprofit Sector

["County council may vote on disclosure requirements next week." Bill Willcott. *Citizens Voice*. February 21, 2017.](#)

"Luzerne County Council could vote at its Feb. 28 meeting on disclosure requirements for county authorities, boards and commissions, and for nonprofit organizations that receive funding or payment from the county. It's another attempt to refine what information entities that do business with the county or perform some government function must provide. The resolution would supersede another one from 2016, which itself repealed a resolution from 2015. The proposals create 13 requirements for ABCs and ten for nonprofit organizations. ... Nonprofits would have to provide IRS Form 990 tax returns, financial audits, the current year's budget, copies of any requests for proposals where the successful bidder proposer will be paid from county funds, and more."

["Investigation finds some tax-exempt properties that should be paying taxes." WTAE. February 24, 2017.](#)

"Now Action News Investigates has found even more that might also have to pay up: A bank branch. A phone store. A restaurant. All of them are clearly for-profit businesses. But all of them are situated in buildings that are not paying property taxes. Typically, when a nonprofit leases space to a for-profit business it pays taxes on that portion of the building. That's the way it works at a Starbucks in a building owned by the University of Pittsburgh. But that's not the way it works at a building across the street which is also owned by Pitt."

["Social Justice Innovation Weekend winners tackle drug addiction, food access and youth enrichment." Amanda Waltz. *Next Pittsburgh*. February 21, 2017.](#)

"A device that helps recovering drug addicts avoid relapse. A food service for vulnerable populations. A program that connects underprivileged children of color with their heritage through world travel. These are the winners of the Social Justice Innovation Weekend, a challenge hosted by Repair the World: Pittsburgh to bring together local entrepreneurs and students with solutions that address pressing community issues. Participants were required to submit an idea in one of three categories: Art Innovation, Faith-based Innovation or Innovation Through Technology."

Pittsburgh Region News

["County economic development scorecard posts another healthy year." Michael Bradwell. *Observer-Reporter*. February 23, 2017.](#)

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"Washington County has been the true exception in the Greater Pittsburgh region in creating new economic growth, new job opportunities and countywide expansion," said commission Chairman Larry Maggi. "In 2016, our public and private partners announced \$1,179,658,675 in new business investment and an additional 1,062 created or retained jobs in Washington County." Maggi added the investment was well diversified, including energy, commercial/retail development, infrastructure and manufacturing."

["Coal leaders hopeful for industry resurgence." Randy Griffith. *Tribune-Democrat*. February 17, 2017.](#)

"During the first five weeks of 2017, Pennsylvania bituminous coal production was up nearly 25 percent over last year, said Rachel Gleason, executive director of Pennsylvania Coal Alliance. Several recent developments have encouraged coal producers that the trend will continue, Gleason said during the chamber's luncheon program, News at Noon: Somerset County Coal Update."

[Report: "Connecting People to Opportunity: 2016 Annual Report." Allegheny Conference on Community Development. February 2017.](#)

Health and Human Services

["Bartolotta bill would broaden opioid treatment options." *Observer-Reporter*. February 23, 2017.](#)

"Bartolotta's Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, Senate Bill 428, would mandate a comprehensive, patient-centered focus on the treatment of opioid addiction. The legislation would require treatment centers to follow best practices and offer a wider variety of services to meet the unique needs of each patient."

["Research Brief: Pennsylvania's Aging Population: 2011 to 2015." Penn State Data Center. February 2017.](#)

"Pennsylvania's population is getting older according to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. The following brief will focus on details related to the age 65 and over population in regards to population change, poverty, unemployment, and their living arrangements. Lastly, the brief will discuss Pennsylvania's aging population in a national context."

["Wilksburg extends financing for women's shelter." Deanna Carpenter. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. February 17, 2017.](#)

"Wilksburg council has taken a step to help the Women's Center and Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh add more beds. Council last week voted to extend the term of a note approved last year for the borough's Industrial and Commercial Development Authority to help renovate the women's shelter, which is located in Pittsburgh but also serves Wilksburg residents. The extension approved by council would lengthen the term of the note from two years to a maximum of 10 years, said Wayne Gerhold, note counsel for the authority. The note, approved in April 2016, is not to exceed \$9 million. The financing still must be approved by Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald and the state before expansion of the shelter can move forward."

["Burrell School District joins behavioral health pilot program." Matthew Medsger. *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. February 21, 2017.](#)

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"Burrell School District will join five other Westmoreland County districts in piloting an enhanced Student Assistance Program to provide behavioral, mental health or drug and alcohol counseling plus, other services."

Education

["DeVos could bring radical changes to public schools. PA's top education official is not changing his approach." Mary Niederberger. PublicSource. February 21, 2017.](#)

"Pennsylvania Secretary of Education Pedro Rivera is not letting uncertainty at the U.S. Department of Education derail any of the plans his department has set in motion for improving education in the state. Newly installed U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has talked about abandoning the Common Core and promoting school vouchers and charter schools over traditional public school districts. But Rivera, in an interview this week with PublicSource, said the current education agenda will remain in place. The priorities have included implementing the Pennsylvania Core standards, aligning state tests and curriculum to those standards, revising the system for assessing quality in schools, creating new high school graduation requirements and working to increase equity among public schools."

["City may launch task force to examine affordable preschool." Molly Born. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. February 24, 2017.](#)

"Pittsburgh City Councilwoman Natalia Rudiak will introduce legislation Tuesday creating an early childhood task force charged with crafting a plan to expand affordable preschool. The group will include members of the Pittsburgh Public Schools, the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers, Allegheny County Department of Human Services, the foundation community and Mayor Bill Peduto, who has called early childhood education one of his two main focus areas this year. The announcement also included the release of a new study on the topic from the City of Pittsburgh."

["Advocates continue calls for suspension reform in Pittsburgh Public Schools." Molly Born. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. February 20, 2017.](#)

"Representatives from the Education Rights Network and the Education Law Center, a legal advocacy group, and parents asked again this year for an end to out-of-school suspensions or expulsions for nonviolent conduct for students in preschool through fifth grade in the Pittsburgh Public Schools."

["State approves expansion for Pittsburgh's Environmental Charter School." Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. February 21, 2017.](#)

"The Environmental Charter School at Frick Park won its case before the state Charter School Appeal Board on Tuesday for an expansion that includes a high school and a second K-8 school."

["Fall targeted for initiative to make Westmoreland students career-ready." Joe Napsha. Pittsburgh Tribune-Review. February 21, 2017.](#)

"An initiative to better align Westmoreland County's education system with employers' needs for highly skilled workers should be ready for implementation this fall - an effort officials hope will improve the local economy, a workforce development leader said Tuesday."

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[Commentary: "Dismal Voucher Results Surprise Researchers as DeVos Era Begins." Kevin Carey. *The New York Times*. February 23, 2017.](#)

Housing and Community Development

["What you need to know about affordable housing \(or lack thereof\) in Pittsburgh." Nick Kepler. *PublicSource*. February 23, 2017.](#)

"Here is an explanation of the state of affordable housing in Pittsburgh ..."

["In Pittsburgh's battle against blight, some neighborhoods get left behind." *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. February 20, 2017.](#)

"Tax breaks like this one, meant to encourage revitalization of blighted areas, in recent years largely have been awarded to private developers for new, upscale apartments and hotels in some of Pittsburgh's hottest neighborhoods, with little to no local scrutiny, a Tribune-Review investigation found."

["URA approves \\$37 million in housing projects." Christian Morrow. *New Pittsburgh Courier*. February 17, 2017.](#)

"The Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh board has approved moving ahead with more than \$37 million in housing initiatives that will create or renovate more than 500 units of rental housing across the city, most of it designated affordable."

["\\$16.5 billion for community...KeyBank's Murphy meets with local development groups to evaluate bank's investment." Christian Morrow. *New Pittsburgh Courier*. February 16, 2017.](#)

"Since KeyBank announced its 2017 Community Benefits Plan, Murphy said he regularly gets calls at his Cleveland, Ohio office asking, 'Are you the guy with the \$16 billion?' People in Pittsburgh were asking too, but the bank isn't at the investment stage yet, he said. He and his team were here to listen to several community development organizations-including the Hill CDC and Neighborhood Allies-about their visions, and to evaluate how the bank's investments can yield the greatest benefit."

["Pittsburgh housing activists protested downtown. What are they looking for?" Stephen Caruso. *PublicSource*. February 21, 2017.](#)

"Randall Taylor thinks Pittsburgh has a problem - a development problem. Seeing tax burdens growing for seniors and people losing their homes in Lawrenceville, South Side and East Liberty - which are often deemed hot, up-and-coming neighborhoods - Taylor notices a pattern in Pittsburgh's growth."

["Pittsburgh, developer call truce over East Liberty apartment complex." Bob Bauder. *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. February 23, 2017.](#)

"Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto's administration and a Downtown developer who have battled over an East Liberty apartment complex called a truce Thursday. The sides agreed to negotiate without public comment after failing to resolve differences over the Penn Plaza apartments."

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[Commentary: "Good Peduto policies on housing market that serves many." Phyllis Chamberlain. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. February 21, 2017.](#)

Water, Energy, and Environment

["Audit by City Controller Michael Lamb finds mismanagement at Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority." Rebecca Addison. Pittsburgh City Paper. February 16, 2017.](#)

"It's been a rough two years for the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority. High lead levels have been found in the city's drinking water. The installation of new water meters lead to billing issues. And many have been critical of the authority's customer service. According to Pittsburgh City Controller Michael Lamb, these issues are 'a perfect storm of mistake and incompetence.' Earlier today, his office released a performance audit of the authority that examined PWSA's contract with management company Veolia Water North America; the installation of the new water meters; corrosion control treatment; and customer service. Overall Lamb says mismanagement is to blame for PWSA's issues. He says poor leadership and administrative turnover has left the authority vulnerable to mismanagement and even though Veolia was contracted to increase consistency, a clear plan for the authority never materialized."

["What can Pittsburgh residents do about lead in their water?" Brian Conway. Next Pittsburgh. February 16, 2017.](#)

["How can average citizens fight polluters? A former EPA whistleblower explains." Amanda Waltz. Next Pittsburgh. February 21, 2017.](#)

["A year later, pipeline report is largely ignored." Marie Cusick. State Impact. February 22, 2017.](#)

"Pennsylvania has rapidly become a hub for the development of new natural gas pipelines. In recent weeks, billions of dollars worth of projects have been approved by state and federal regulators. Shortly after he took office, Governor Tom Wolf convened a major task force to recommend ways to coordinate planning and best practices for this building boom. But a year after the panel issued a report with 184 recommendations, it appears much of its work has been ignored."

Corrections and Public Safety

["City: Pittsburgh on track to have highest number of officers in 15 years." Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. February 18, 2017.](#)

"Friday morning, Mayor Bill Peduto swore in seven officers, all of whom have prior law enforcement experience. Thirty more recruits are in training. When they graduate, the number of sworn officers will be 921, the highest number since 2002, the city said. Staffing levels long have been a concern for city officials and police union leaders, in part because many officers - the union estimated the number between 250 and 350 - are eligible to retire now or will be able to do so soon."

["Enrollment in jail alternative program down 50% since 2014." Rich Cholodofsky. Pittsburgh Tribune-Review. February 16, 2017.](#)

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"Westmoreland County's day reporting center added seven enrollees in January, continuing a trend of fewer criminal defendants being ordered to receive intensive drug and alcohol treatment instead of going to jail. Enrollment has dropped since 2014, with the center operating around 60 percent capacity and leaving officials at a loss as to why."

["Beaver County Prison Board takes up regional booking center staffing, but refrains from making changes." Tom Davidson. *The Times*. February 23, 2017.](#)

"Beaver County sheriff's deputies will continue to administer the regional booking center at the Beaver County Jail. But some county Prison Board members aren't yet ready to shelve the option of transferring those duties to corrections officers at the jail in the future. The Prison Board has been mulling making a change since last year, in part to alleviate some of the budget woes that have faced the sheriff's office."

Arts, Parks, and Culture

["Local Artists: Struggling, But Not Starving." Julia Fraser. *Pittsburgh Today*. February 21, 2017.](#)

"Most Pittsburgh artists are getting by financially but find it difficult to make a living off of their art alone. And African American artists are much less likely than their white counterparts to rely on their art as their sole means of support, according to a recent survey. The findings are based on an online survey of 187 artists the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council conducted in the summer of 2016. Most respondents are life-long Pittsburghers. Others came to the region for education, artistic opportunities and other reasons. The report found that making a living as an artist in Pittsburgh is often a creative endeavor in and of itself. Artists support themselves by many means, such as by selling their art, teaching, holding full-time or multiple part-time jobs, and by having support from family or a partner. And the challenges they report include several common to artists elsewhere, such as securing grants, marketing and promoting their work, and finding affordable spaces to work and live."

["Forging an artisan economy in Pittsburgh." Joyce Gannon. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. February 20, 2017.](#)

"Since its launch two years ago, the Craft Business Accelerator has helped pave the way for 17 business transactions worth more than \$200,000 in total for the makers involved..."

["Tull Family Theater caters to arthouse movie lovers outside of Pittsburgh." Amanda Waltz. *Next Pittsburgh*. February 15, 2017.](#)

"After five years in development, the Tull Family Theater officially opens this week in Sewickley, making it the first movie theater to operate there in more than three decades. The 12,000-square-foot venue includes two screening rooms-the 77-seat Huntington Bank screening room and a yet unnamed room that fits 166 people-as well as the Esmark and Bouchard Family Community Room performance and events space. Tull Family Theater executive director Carolina Pais-Barreto Beyers says the nonprofit arthouse theater was created to strengthen cultural, educational and entertainment experiences in the region northwest of Pittsburgh."

["August Wilson Center names new board chair." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. February 23, 2017.](#)

"The board of the August Wilson Center has named developer Michael Polite as its new chair. Mr. Polite, who has been on the board since August 2015, will take over as board chair from Maxwell

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King, president and chief executive officer of the Pittsburgh Foundation. Mr. King will remain on the board, along with the heads of the Heinz Endowments and the Richard King Mellon Foundation."

[Commentary: "The Folly of Abolishing the N.E.A." Thomas Campbell. *The New York Times*. February 22, 2017.](#)

Transportation

["Port Authority ridership holding steady despite transit's downward trend nationally." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. February 16, 2017.](#)

"Port Authority seems to be bucking a national trend of declining use of public transportation. Authority CEO Ellen McLean told a board committee Thursday that the agency's ridership was down by 0.6 percent last year, which she attributed mostly to a slight reduction in light-rail traffic due to a seven-month closure in Beechview for track replacement. Other cities have seen substantial declines, ranging from 3 percent decline in Chicago to 12.2 percent in Orlando through the third quarter of 2016, according to figures from the American Public Transportation Association. Association figures show an overall decline of 3.17 percent in bus ridership for the 37 largest bus agencies in the country through the first nine months last year. 'We're flat, so we're doing relatively well,' Ms. McLean said. 'Clearly, we were in a much better situation than our colleagues.'"

["Bike lane advisory plan gains traction with City Council." Adam Smeltz. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. February 16, 2017.](#)

"Specifically, the proposal calls for a 13-person Advisory Board on Bicycle Infrastructure. Members would include representatives from the city police, planning and public works divisions, along with those from the bicycling and business communities. Together, they would craft policy and procedures for developing infrastructure such as bike lanes. They also would contribute to discussions about the state bicycle code and coordinate neighborhood communication about specific bike lane proposals, among other duties."

["Bike lanes planned for Fort Pitt Blvd. may take new route." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. February 18, 2017.](#)

"Property owners and business operators on Fort Pitt have said bike lanes would hamper access, obstructing deliveries and likely ruining street parking. At a community meeting in December, the city was urged to investigate other routes. Pittsburgh developer Wayne Gregg, who owns a building in the 200 block of Fort Pitt, said he's elated the city will review options."

Constituent and Town Hall Events

Below is a list of public and constituent events held by legislators.

If you know of an event not listed, please email streeter@forbesfunds.org

[Representative Hal English \(R-Allegheny\) "Speak with Hal" Events](#)

When: Tuesday, February 28, 2017 from 7:30 AM to 10:30 AM

Where: O'Hara Municipal Building, 325 Fox Chapel Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15238

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When: Friday March 3, 2017 from 4:30 to 6:30 PM

Where: Hampton Community Center, 3101 McCully Road, Allison Park, PA 15101

[Senator Camera Bartolotta \(R-Beaver, Greene, Washington\) Town Hall Event on Postpartum Depression](#)

When: March 2, 2017 at 12:00 PM

Where: Cameron Wellness Center, 240 Wellness Way, Washington, PA 15301

[Representative Bud Cook \(R-Washington\) Open House](#)

When: Tuesday, February 28, 2017 from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM

Where: 55 Gosai Drive, Suite 112, Bentleyville PA 15314

[Representative Aaron Bernstein \(R-Beaver, Butler, Lawrence\) Open House](#)

When: Monday, March 6, 2017 from 3:00 PM to 6:30 PM

Where: 438 Line Avenue, Ellwood City, PA, 16117

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Greater Pittsburgh Nonprofit Partnership

The Forbes Funds, A Supporting Organization of The Pittsburgh Foundation

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Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Phone: (412) 394-4275

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