



Public Policy Summary January 26, 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 Events

- GPNP's next Public Policy Committee meeting will be held on February 14, 2017 from 8:30 AM to 10:30 AM. Click [here](#) to register.
- January 29: Westmoreland County observes a national day of remembrance for overdose victims. Click [here](#) for event info.
- January 30: Senator Camera Bartolotta (R-Beaver, Greene, Washington) hosts a telephone town hall. Click [here](#) for information.
- January 31: Is your charity ready for the new non-profit reporting standards? Would you like to learn how to build relationships with your legislators? Please join us on January 31 for the Washington County Community Foundation's Building Charitable Capacity Institute. Click [here](#) to learn more.
- January 31: The Forbes Funds' President Kate Dewey will be participating in the MIT Enterprise Forum: To B or Not To B...What It Means To Start or Invest In A For-Profit Social Enterprise Company. Click [here](#) to learn more.
- February 2: Learn how one nonprofit raised more in December 2016 than during any other full year of fundraising at "Review of 2016 Fundraising and Marketing Trends and Campaigns." Click [here](#) to learn more.
- February 9: Nonprofit Vote hosts "Creating a Voter Engagement Plan for Your Nonprofit" online. Click [here](#) to learn more.
- February 21: The Wilson Group and their nonprofit partners have designed a session for executives and office managers alike to show how making small changes now to your current workflow will yield big savings on time and money over the long term. You'll learn how to get the most out of your current technology to work smarter and save money. Click [here](#) to learn more.
- The remaining GPNP Public Policy Committee meeting dates are available [here](#).

GPNP News and Announcements

- GPNP 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.
- The application period for RACP grants is open until February 3, 2017.
- The National Multiple Sclerosis Society- PA Keystone Chapter is our Member Spotlight for January.

GNPN Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

[Pennsylvania Budget and State Government](#)

- According to State Impact, legislators are examining a possible shale tax to help fund this year's state budget.
- Governor Tom Wolf fired Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs Secretary Gary Tennis. Reportedly, the firing is due to Tennis objecting to Governor Wolf's planned consolidation of the Departments of Human Services, Health, and Drug and Alcohol Programs into a new Department of Health and Human Services.
- Senator Ryan Aument (R-Lancaster) announced his intention to introduce a bill that would mandate a two year budget cycle for Pennsylvania.
- *The Patriot-News* reported that pre-K education advocates plan to seek increased funding in the FY 2017-2018 budget.
- *The Times-Tribune* reported that lawmakers are examining municipal pension reform in addition to state pension reform.
- The Independent Fiscal Office estimates that shale gas impact fees will continue to decrease this year.
- House Speaker Mike Turzai (R-Allegheny) introduced new legislation to increase the available funds for the Educational Improvement Tax Credit and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit programs.
- Representative Tony DeLuca (D-Allegheny) announced that he plans to introduce bills that would implement early voting and same-day voter registration in Pennsylvania.

[New Pennsylvania Legislation](#)

The following bills were introduced since our last update. If there is a bill missing that is relevant to your mission, please email streeter@forbesfunds.org so we can add it to our tracking list.

- HB 56- Adoption-Related Counseling Services
- HB 171- Amending the Pennsylvania Election Code
- HB 184- Full-time Cyber Education Programs Offered by School Districts
- HB 191- Expungement for Non-Violent Felony Convictions
- HB 193- Automatic Voter Registration & Voter ID
- HB 208- Unfunded Educational Mandates
- HB 209- Independent Office of the Repealer
- HB 210- Restoring Checks and Balances in State Government
- HB 221- Improving Fiscal Oversight of Lapsed Funds
- HB 235- Establishing a Task Force on Opioid Abuse Epidemic's Impact on Infants and Children
- HB 237- Increased Investments in EITC and OSTC Programs
- HB 244- Religious Child Care Facilities Act
- HB 250- Educational Improvement Tax Credit and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit Increases
- SB 6- Public Assistance Integrity Act (PAIA)
- SB 9- Proof of Citizenship for Receipt of Public Benefits Act
- SB 10- Municipal Sanctuary and Federal Enforcement (SAFE) Act
- SB 128- Pre-emption of Local Employer Leave Mandates
- SB 134- Loan Forgiveness Program for Graduates Entering the Mental Health Intellectual Disability and Drug/Alcohol Treatment Professions
- SB 163- Raising the Tipped Wage
- SB 173- Taxpayer Protection Act - Constitutional Amendment
- SB 177- Guide, Hearing, and Service Dogs Tax Exemption
- SB 179- Mental Health Treatment - Database for Availability of Services
- SB 181- Performance Based Budget Legislation
- SB 198- Charter School Law Reform

GNPN Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

- SB 204- Tax Credit for Purchase of Classroom Supplies
- SB 205- Health-Related Industries Education Scholarship Program
- SB 206- Legislative Racial Impact Statements
- SB 207- Employee Paid Sick Leave
- SB 208- Increasing Personal Income Tax Poverty Exemption

Federal Policy

- President Donald Trump signed an executive order enabling federal agencies to roll back regulations that are part of the Affordable Care Act.
- Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) announced plans to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act within the next three months. They also announced that tax reform will be at the top of the congressional agenda.
- According to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, the repeal of the Affordable Care Act will undermine the mental health reforms championed by Representative Tim Murphy (R-PA).
- According to Pennsylvania officials, repealing the Affordable Care Act's Medicaid expansion could leave 675,000 people uninsured.
- The Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center issued its report on the potential impact of repealing the Affordable Care Act.
- Arts organizations are beginning to organize against potential cuts to federal arts funding.
- House Ways and Means Committee Chair Kevin Brady (R-TX) said that current tax reform discussions are seeking to "unlock more charitable giving."
- According to *The Washington Post*, voting rights advocates expressed concern that President Trump's call for an investigation into alleged voter fraud will lead to restrictive voting laws.
- State Impact reported on President Trump's energy and environmental plans.

Elections 2017 and 2018

- The Associated Press previewed upcoming elections in Pennsylvania.
- Representative Brandon Neuman (D-Washington) announced that he is running to become a judge in the Court of Common Pleas.
- Reverend John Welch kicked off his campaign for mayor of Pittsburgh.

Nonprofit Sector

- Uber announced that it is donating transportation services to the Women's Center and Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh.
- Riverview Children's Center announced that it will be expanding its campus.
- *Stanford Social Innovation Review* analyzed the impact of student debt on the nonprofit sector's workforce.

Pittsburgh Region News

- PublicSource profiled Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto and his plans for leading the city during the Trump Administration.
- Pittsburgh City Council gave preliminary approval to legislation to support Pittsburgh's immigrants.
- Potter Township gave approval to Shell to construct its new cracker plant in Beaver County.

Health and Human Services

GNPN Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

- Human Services Secretary Ted Dallas discussed problems with Pennsylvania's drug treatment system with the *Reading Eagle*.
- According to the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, participation in the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program is outpacing last year's participation.
- *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported that donations to the Three Rivers Mothers Milk Bank are being distributed across the region.

[Education](#)

- WESA interviewed Pittsburgh Public Schools' Director of Equity Angela Allie.
- The Pittsburgh Public Schools Board declared its facilities "sanctuary" campuses.
- The University of Pittsburgh announced a new program to train former coal miners to start their own businesses.

[Housing and Community Development](#)

- Pittsburgh ranked highly for housing affordability in the Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey.
- *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* highlighted the revitalization work underway in Hermitage.

[Water, Energy, and Environment](#)

- A forthcoming report from HIS Markit indicates that the Pittsburgh region can support four additional cracker plants.
- A judge ordered a halt to mining in Greene County's Ryerson Station State Park.

[Corrections and Public Safety](#)

- Pennsylvania's parole population is increasing as the state's inmate population continues to decrease.
- The American Civil Liberties Union is threatening to sue the state over delays in providing care to inmates and defendants with severe mental illnesses.
- Carlow University announced that it will be focusing on gun violence in its "Education for Justice" series.

[Arts, Parks, and Culture](#)

- The "Active Voice" art exhibit is seeking art submissions inspired by the Trump Administration.
- The Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy announced that it will be connecting trails in the Alle-Kiski Valley and the North Hills.
- The Pittsburgh Public Theater is using new technology to assist attendees who are hearing and visually impaired.

These stories, and many others, follow below.

Sections

[GNPN The Forbes Funds Events](#)

* [January 31: Washington County Community Foundation Building Charitable Capacity Institute](#)

GNPN Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

- * [MIT Enterprise Forum: To B or Not To B...What It Means To Start or Invest In A For-Profit Social Enterprise Company](#)
- * [February 2: Review of 2016 Fundraising and Marketing Trends and Campaigns](#)
- * [February 14: GNPN Public Policy Committee Meeting](#) (Click to Register)
- * [February 21: Working Smarter Means Big Savings](#)
- * [2017 GNPN Public Policy Committee Meeting Dates](#)

[GNPN News](#)

[Announcements](#)

[Pennsylvania Budget and State Government](#)

[New Pennsylvania Legislation](#)

[Trump Administration](#)

[Federal Policy](#)

[Elections 2017 and 2018](#)

[Nonprofit Sector](#)

[Pittsburgh Region News](#)

[Health and Human Services](#)

[Education](#)

[Housing and Community Development](#)

[Water, Energy, and Environment](#)

[Corrections and Public Safety](#)

[Arts, Parks, and Culture](#)

[Transportation](#)

[Constituent and Town Hall Events](#)

January 31: Washington County Community Foundation Building Charitable Capacity Learning Institute Winter Seminar



Is your charity ready for the new non-profit reporting standards?

Would you like to learn how to build relationships with your legislators

GPNP Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

Please join us on January 31 for the BCCLI - Winter Seminar to learn more about these important topics.

Event Details

- Tuesday, January 31, 2017
- 2:00 - 4:30 pm
- Southpointe Golf Club, 360 Southpointe Boulevard, Canonsburg, PA 15317
- The Seminar is FREE, but Registration is REQUIRED.

[register](#)

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2:00 - 3:00 pm

Featured Presenter: Sandra Guthrie, WCCF Trustee, CPA, Guthrie, Belczyk, & Associates

Learn how your organization will be impacted by the new non-profit financial reporting model and what you should be doing now to prepare.

In this workshop, we will cover:

- Net Asset Classification
- Understanding the new disclosure requirements regarding liquidity and availability of resources
- Expenses and Investment Return



Sandy has many years' experience in public accounting for nonprofits and for-profit businesses. She holds a bachelor's in accounting from California University of Pennsylvania and is both a certified public accountant and certified fraud examiner.

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3:00 - 4:30 pm

Featured Presenter: Samantha Balbier, Executive Director, Greater Pittsburgh Nonprofit Partnership

Getting to know your legislator and local elected officials is an important aspect in advocating for the missions of your organization. Nonprofit organizations are uniquely positioned to communicate their community's needs to the politicians who write public policy and appropriate funds.



We are offering an opportunity to learn how to make the most of legislative visits and meetings with elected officials. These meetings will be very important in the coming months as we approach another very difficult state budget process for 2017-2018.

Join us along with the regional Greater Pittsburgh Nonprofit Partnership to prepare for better communications with your local officials.

GNPN Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

Samantha is a long-time Pittsburgh resident with a demonstrated track record in policy analysis, development, strategic communications, and building collaborations to mobilize policy makers and the public to take action. Samantha has an MSW from the University of Pittsburgh in Community Organizing and Public Policy, as well as bachelors degrees from Mercyhurst College in Social Work and Business & Marketing.

January 31: MIT Enterprise Forum: To B or Not To B...What It Means To Start or Invest In A For-Profit Social Enterprise Company



Entrepreneurs are starting and investors are funding companies that generate profit AND make a social impact. But what does it actually mean to start, invest in and operate a for-profit social enterprise? An expert panel representing investors, economic development groups, foundations, the legal community and social entrepreneurs will discuss the various structures and funding sources for for-profit social venture enterprises, what to expect as an investor or founder, and how for-profit social enterprises operate. Click [here](#) to register.

[register](#)

Moderator

- Center for Women's Entrepreneurship, Chatham University: Rebecca U. Harris, Executive Director

Panelists

- Idea Foundry: Nicole Muise-Kielkuki, Social Director, Social Enterprise Initiative
- The Forbes Funds: Kate Dewey, President
- Stonecipher Law Firm: Jeanne Lofgren, Business Law and Restructuring Attorney
- Folia Water: Jonathan Levine, Ph.D. CEO and Cofounder

February 2: Review of 2016 Fundraising and Marketing Trends and Campaigns



Learn how one Pittsburgh organization raised more in December 2016 than during any other FULL year of fundraising.

As you are aware the Velocity Series is focused on annual giving. We are wrapping up our second year and want to share the results with you. Derrick Feldman, the lead consultant, will review what worked in 2016, what the research team at Achieve learned from the Velocity cohort groups' fundraising appeals and how you can incorporate new learnings into your 2017 plans. Area nonprofit leaders of the Pittsburgh Velocity Cohort (Fundraising and Marketing for 2017) will describe their campaign experience, what they learned and what changes they will make in the future. You also will hear about the revamp to the Velocity program in 2017.

If you attended any of the Velocity Series sessions in 2016, you don't want to miss this event! To attend, register here:

[register](#)

Presented by:



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February 21: Working Smarter Means Big Savings

Please Join Us for a Special GPNP Member Education Event:

Working Smarter Means Big Savings

Learn how to increase your efficiency while reducing costs!

As an executive, you know that in today's volatile market, efficiency and effective cash flow management are essential for nonprofit organizations. The expectation is to provide more and more services while keeping administrative costs down. An easy way to reduce administrative costs is to get the most out of the current tools you use to create and distribute documents and information within your organization.

The Wilson Group and their nonprofit partners have designed a session for executives and office managers alike to show how making small changes now to your current workflow will yield big savings on time and money over the long term. You'll learn how to get the most out of your current technology to work smarter and save money.

Who should attend:

Executives * Operations Managers * Office Administrators
IT Administrators * Finance Staff * Procurement Staff

**** All Attendees Will Be Entered to Win Special Prizes ****

Tuesday, February 21, 2016

9:00 AM to 10:30 AM

The Forbes Funds and GPNP Office
5 PPG Place, 2nd Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

[register](#)



2017 Public Policy Committee Meeting Dates

GNP's Public Policy Committee will convene on:

- [Tuesday, February 14, 2017](#)
- [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.

GNP News

[The National Multiple Sclerosis Society- PA Keystone Chapter is our Member Spotlight for January!](#)

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society exists because there are people with MS. Its vision is a world free of MS. Everything it does is focused so that people affected by MS can live their best lives as we stop MS in its tracks, restore what has been lost and end MS forever. It is more than an organization. It is a movement. United in our collective power to do something about MS now and end this disease forever. The gathering place for people with MS, their family and loved ones, healthcare providers, volunteers, donors, fundraisers, advocates, community leaders and all those that seek a world free of MS. A place to connect and take action. In order to change the world, it mobilizes all possible human and financial resources to achieve results. Click [here](#) to learn more about their work.

[Exclusive Services for GPNP Members](#)

GNP 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**

GNPN Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

* **The Wilson Group**

* **Your CFO**

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

Announcements

["Westmoreland County to observe National Day of Remembrance for overdose victims." Renatta Signorini. Pittsburgh Tribune-Review. January 22, 2017.](#)

"National Day of Remembrance, Sunday, Jan. 29, 4:30-6:30 p.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church of Greensburg, 1120 Harvey Ave. Candlelight vigil, speakers, slide show of victims. To submit a photo of a loved one who has died from an addiction, email kdilascio@sphs.org by Friday and include the photo, the person's name and dates of birth and death." Click [here](#) for more information.

[RACP Grant Application Period Open Until February 3](#)

"The Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) is a Commonwealth grant program administered by the Office of the Budget for the acquisition and construction of regional economic, cultural, civic, recreational, and historical improvement projects. RACP projects are authorized in the Redevelopment Assistance section of a Capital Budget Itemization Act, have a regional or multi-jurisdictional impact, and generate substantial increases or maintain current levels of employment, tax revenues, or other measures of economic activity. RACP projects are state-funded projects that cannot obtain primary funding under other state programs. ... The new window for Round 2017/1 will be open for 30 days during the period from January 4, 2017 through February 3, 2017."

[February 9: Nonprofit Vote Webinar: Plan Ahead 2017: Creating a voter engagement plan for your nonprofit](#)

Join us for a free, hour long webinar on how to create a voter engagement plan for 2017 from scratch. Learn about what's at stake in 2017, the role of municipal elections and their importance to nonprofits and their clients, and, most importantly, what you will need to think about as you plan your activities. We'll walk you through the six steps you'll need to take to ensure your voter engagement work is a success. Click [here](#) to register.

Pennsylvania Budget and State Government News

["A new year, a new round of gas severance tax proposals." Marie Cusick. State Impact. January 23, 2017.](#)

"State lawmakers are back in Harrisburg this week, and not surprisingly, they're looking at levying new taxes on Marcellus Shale natural gas drillers."

["Ex-Cabinet official says he was fired by Wolf over his opposition to department restructuring plan." Jan Murphy. The Patriot-News. January 25, 2017.](#)

GNPN Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

"Fired Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs Secretary Gary Tennis said his dismissal from Gov. Tom Wolf's Cabinet stemmed from his opposition to demoting his department to a bureau and consolidating it with apparently two other departments in state government. ... Tennis said he was told it would become a bureau in what was called the Department of Health and Human Services. Currently, the health department is a separate department from human services. Tennis declined to elaborate on the governor's broader consolidation plan."

["Pennsylvania government continually misses annual budget deadline, so lawmaker proposes 2-year budget." Sam Janesch. Lancaster Online. January 25, 2017.](#)

"State Sen. Ryan Aument, of Landisville, is proposing for a second time to put Pennsylvania on a two-year budget cycle instead of the annual spending plan due by June 30 every year."

["In another tight state budget year, advocates make case for preschool funding." Charles Thompson. The Patriot-News. January 25, 2017.](#)

"In a tight budget year, one group that still feels confident enough to ask for growth in state funding are advocates for expanded access to preschool programs."

["Municipal pensions' debt solutions are elusive across Pennsylvania." Robert Swift. The Times Tribune. January 22, 2017.](#)

"At the start of a new legislative session, Republican caucus leaders directed their remarks to curbing costs for the two giant state pension plans for state government and school district employees. However, many also stressed that municipal plans deserve attention, too."

["Shale gas impact fees expected to fall again this year." Laura Legere. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. January 24, 2017.](#)

"Pennsylvania's shale gas companies will pay an estimated \$175 million in impact fees for 2016, a new record low for the 5-year-old program that reflects the low prices and lack of new drilling that defined the industry last year. The projection released Monday by the state Independent Fiscal Office anticipates that the impact fee will bring in \$13 million less than it did last year, continuing the decline trend for the third straight year. Few new wells and older wells that fall below production thresholds are to blame for the drop, the office said."

["Speaker Turzai, Fellow Bipartisan Legislators Introduce Expanded Tax Credit Scholarships for Students." Press Release. January 26, 2017.](#)

"House Bill 250 will increase the amount of tax credits available under the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program by \$50 million (to \$175 million) and the amount of tax credits available under the Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) program by \$25 million (to \$75 million) to grow opportunities for parents to make better school choices and help more students escape from failing schools. The two programs open access to good private schools by allowing businesses to claim a tax credit for donations to scholarship funds for low- and middle-income children. More than 40,000 students benefit from the EITC and OSTC programs each year through educational scholarship organizations, which provide scholarships for students to attend non-public schools. Additionally, the program assists countless Pennsylvania students in traditional public schools through the Educational Improvement Organizations portion of the tax credits made available each year, which support innovative educational programs that enhance the regular school curriculum."

["Want early voting and same-day registration in Pa.? So does this Allegheny County representative." Sarah Anne Hughes. The Incline. January 25, 2017.](#)

GPNP Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

"Sometime next month, [Representative Tony] DeLuca plans to reintroduce House Bill 291, which would allow voting to begin 15 days before a primary or general election. He also plans to resubmit Bill 292, which would allow eligible voters to register at their polling place on the day of an election by submitting an application and providing proof of ID and residence."

["Not everyone is buying into need for property tax reform." Lugene Pezzutto. *New Castle News*. January 19, 2017.](#)

"Discussion on eliminating school property taxes has been a topic for many years. But where that debate, which would eliminate or severely reduce school property taxes and replace them with other revenue streams is headed, is a subject that a local government official and a school administrator find questionable. State Rep. Chris Sainato says it's a measure he won't support. And John Sarandrea, superintendent in the New Castle Area School District, said he is not convinced it's a good step."

["Labor & Industry fund used to operate Pa.'s unemployment compensation services to be audited." Jan Murphy. *The Patriot-News*. January 19, 2017.](#)

"At the request of lawmakers, DePasquale announced on Thursday that he will task his auditors with examining how the money that went into the Department of Labor and Industry's Unemployment Compensation Service and Infrastructure Improvement Fund (SIIF) was used."

["Pa. lawmakers get four more months to fix local slots tax." Harold Brubaker. *Philadelphia Inquirer*. January 20, 2017.](#)

"The Pennsylvania Supreme Court on Friday gave lawmakers an additional four months - until May 26 - to fix a tax on casinos' slots revenue that was struck down as unconstitutional in September."

[Commentary: "Freeze property taxes for low-income seniors in Allegheny County." Jim Roddey. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. January 20, 2017.](#)

[Commentary: "The 'machine' keeps tight hold on school property tax." Brian Fake. *The Express Times*. January 22, 2017.](#)

New Pennsylvania Legislation

Below are bills introduced 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.

[HB 56- Adoption-Related Counseling Services](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative Katherine Watson (R-Bucks)

Current Committee: Not Yet Assigned

"...legislation designed to ensure that birth parents, if they so desire, have access to adoption-related counseling services when they are considering relinquishing parental rights and placing a child for adoption, or when they have relinquished parental rights and have consented to place their child for adoption." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

GNPN Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

[HB 171- Amending the Pennsylvania Election Code](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative Rick Saccone (R-Allegheny, Washington)

Current Committee: State Government

"...legislation that will permit a registered voter of this Commonwealth to be appointed as a watcher in any election district located in Pennsylvania." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[HB 184- Full-time Cyber Education Programs Offered by School Districts](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative Curtis Sonney (R-Erie)

Current Committee: Education

"... legislation that will require a student or the student's parent or guardian to pay for the student's education in a cyber charter school if the student's school district of residence offers a full-time cyber education program." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[HB 191- Expungement for Non-Violent Felony Convictions](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative Ed Gainey (D-Allegheny)

Current Committee: Judiciary

"... legislation that would effectively expand expungement for certain eligible individuals in PA, specifically those who have been convicted of a non-violent felony." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[HB 193- Automatic Voter Registration & Voter ID](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative Ed Gainey (D-Allegheny)

Current Committee: State Government

"... legislation reforming the voter registration system by instituting automatic registration of all eligible voters with provisions for opt out. To ensure the integrity of our elections, my proposal will also require the issuance of voter identifications for all newly registered, qualified electors." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[HB 208- Unfunded Educational Mandates](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative Kristen Phillips Hill (R-York)

Current Committee: Not Yet Assigned

"...legislation to amend the constitution to prohibit unfunded mandates on school districts. Under this bill, any mandate passed by legislation or executive action must be fully-funded. This funding would have to be available for school districts prior to implementation of the mandate." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[HB 209- Independent Office of the Repealer](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative Kristen Phillips-Hill (R-York)

Current Committee: State Government

"The Commonwealth does not undertake a regular and systematic independent review of existing regulations, nor possess an organized system to receive recommendations from the public, educators, business, government entities and others on recommendations for repeal, modification or revision of existing statutes and regulations. This bill will establish the Independent Office of the Repealer to undertake such an ongoing review, receive and process recommendations, evaluate the merits of recommendations in accordance with decision rules and

GPNP Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

quantitative and qualitative criteria, and make recommendations to the General Assembly and the Governor and Executive agencies for repeal, modification or revision." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[HB 210- Restoring Checks and Balances in State Government](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative Kristen Phillips-Hill (R-York)

Current Committee: Not Yet Assigned

"... legislation which would prevent a repeat of the Treasurer's payments [during the budget impasse]. Under this legislation any payment not required by the Fair Labor and Standards Act or a court decision cannot be made unless approved by the general Assembly and the governor."

([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[HB 221- Improving Fiscal Oversight of Lapsed Funds](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative Jason Ortity (R-Allegheny, Washington)

Current Committee: Not Yet Assigned

"... legislation to reform this process and ensure the General Assembly has greater oversight over lapsed funds. Under the proposed reform any waiver approved by the Budget Secretary must also be approved by a majority vote of both appropriation committees. This change allows for the House and Senate to exercise their right to oversee state appropriations and ensure taxpayer funds are well spent." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[HB 235- Establishing a Task Force on Opioid Abuse Epidemic's Impact on Infants and Children](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative Katherine Watson (R-Bucks)

Current Committee: Not Yet Assigned

"The Task Force will be directed to identify strategies and make short- and long-term recommendations to prioritize the prevention of substance-exposed infants; to improve outcomes for pregnant and parenting women striving to recover from addiction; and to promote the health, safety and permanency of substance-exposed infants and other young children at-risk of child abuse and neglect, or placement in foster care due to parental alcohol and drug abuse."

([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[HB 237- Increased Investments in EITC and OSTC Programs](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative Jim Christiana (R-Beaver, Washington)

Current Committee: Not Yet Assigned

"...legislation that will increase the amount of available tax credits for the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program by \$70 million, and the amount of available tax credits for the Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) program by \$30 million." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[HB 244- Religious Child Care Facilities Act](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative Will Tallman (R-Adams, Cumberland)

Current Committee: Not Yet Assigned

"...this legislation would prohibit the Department of Public Welfare, any other governmental agency, political subdivision or other governmental entity from attempting to exercise authority over the program, curriculum, ministry teaching or instruction offered in a religious child care facility, the selection of personnel or children who enroll in such a facility." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

GNPN Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

[HB 250- Educational Improvement Tax Credit and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit Increases](#)

Prime Sponsor: Representative Mike Turzai (R-Allegheny)

Current Committee: Not Yet Assigned

"... legislation that will increase the amount of tax credits available under the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program by \$50 million (to \$175 million) and the amount of tax credits available under the Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) program by \$25 million (to \$75 million), to grow school choice opportunities and help more students escape from failing schools." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[SB 6- Public Assistance Integrity Act \(PAIA\)](#)

Prime Sponsor: Senator Mike Regan (R-Cumberland, York)

Current Committee: Health and Human Services

"comprehensive legislation designed to eradicate waste, fraud, and abuse within the Commonwealth's Public Welfare Code. [Click [here](#) to view the description]." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[SB 9- Proof of Citizenship for Receipt of Public Benefits Act](#)

Prime Sponsor: Senator Pat Stefano (R-Fayette, Somerset Westmoreland)

Current Committee: State Government

"...legislation which would ensure that illegal immigrants residing in Pennsylvania do not receive public benefits like Medicaid, welfare and unemployment compensation." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[SB 10- Municipal Sanctuary and Federal Enforcement \(SAFE\) Act](#)

Prime Sponsor: Senator Guy Reschenthaler (R-Allegheny, Washington)

Current Committee: State Government

"... legislation that will address the issue of sanctuary cities in the Commonwealth. This bill is designed to prevent municipalities and counties from designating themselves as "sanctuary cities" in order to thwart federal efforts to combat illegal immigration." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[SB 128- Pre-emption of Local Employer Leave Mandates](#)

Prime Sponsor: Senator John Eichelberger (R-Blair, Cumberland, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon)

Current Committee: Local Government

"...legislation which would clarify local municipalities may not mandate a local leave policy." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[SB 134- Loan Forgiveness Program for Graduates Entering the Mental Health Intellectual Disability and Drug/Alcohol Treatment Professions](#)

Prime Sponsor: Senator Mario Scavello (R-Monroe, Northampton)

Current Committee: Education

"...loan forgiveness program for qualified college graduates entering the mental health, intellectual disability and drug and alcohol treatment professions." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[SB 163- Raising the Tipped Wage](#)

Prime Sponsor: Senator Christine Tartaglione (D-Philadelphia)

GNPN Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

Current Committee: Labor and Industry

"...would incrementally increase Pennsylvania's tipped minimum wage to 70% of the minimum wage by 2020, after which time the tipped wage would be linked to the minimum wage, rising as it rises." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[SB 173- Taxpayer Protection Act - Constitutional Amendment](#)

Prime Sponsor: Senator Camera Bartolotta (R-Beaver, Greene, Washington)

Current Committee: State Government

"My bill seeks to limit the growth of state spending by indexing it to two objective standards of measure, with the lower of the two determining the rate of spending. The standards of measure are: The average change in personal income for the three preceding calendar years, OR; The average inflation rate plus the average percentage change in state population over the three preceding years (with exceptions for certain extraordinary circumstances). The 'Taxpayer Protection Act' would also require revenues collected in excess of amounts determined by this formula to be reallocated in the following manner: 25% of any moneys in excess of these limits be returned to the taxpayers; 25% be allocated to the Rainy Day Fund to help balance state budgets during trying economic times; and 50% to help pay down the unfunded liabilities of the Public School Employees' Retirement System (PSERS) and the State Employees' Retirement System (SERS)." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[SB 177- Guide, Hearing, and Service Dogs Tax Exemption](#)

Prime Sponsor: Senator Guy Reschenthaler (R-Allegheny, Washington)

Current Committee: Finance

"... legislation that would add a sales tax exemption for guide, hearing, or service dogs, and the products and services necessary for their care." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[SB 179- Mental Health Treatment - Database for Availability of Services](#)

Prime Sponsor: Senator Camera Bartolotta (R-Beaver, Greene, Washington)

Current Committee: Health and Human Services

"... legislation creating a real-time, voluntary reporting system to identify available psychiatric beds across the Commonwealth." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[SB 181- Performance Based Budget Legislation](#)

Prime Sponsor: Senator Bob Mensch (R-Berks, Bucks, Montgomery)

Current Committee: Appropriations

"... legislation that would streamline and justify discretionary and state government spending. This type of policy is called "performance based budgeting" and would require all departments and agencies to justify their budget requests beginning with dollar one, for all existing as well as proposed programs for each fiscal year, before they can receive consideration for budget funding." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[SB 198- Charter School Law Reform](#)

Prime Sponsor: Senator Vince Hughes (D-Montgomery, Philadelphia)

Current Committee: Education

"My proposal will make four necessary changes to the charter school law. In addition to my proposals below, I stand ready to work with any member who has ideas on how best to reform the

GNPN Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

Commonwealth's charter school law. (1) Allow a local school board to consider financial impact as part of the charter school authorization process. (2) Allow a local school board to set student enrollment targets at any time during a charter school's existence. (3) Limit the state Charter Appeal Board's role solely to affirming the local school board's decision related to a charter authorization or renewal. (4) Reform the state's broken charter school special education funding system by aligning the funding to the three cost category system used by school districts, which provides funding based on student needs. This would fully enact the recommendations of the Special Education Funding Commission." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[SB 204- Tax Credit for Purchase of Classroom Supplies](#)

Prime Sponsor: Senator Vince Hughes (D-Montgomery, Philadelphia)

Current Committee: Finance

"In order to further encourage teachers to provide additional resources to our children, foster learning, and support our communities, this legislation provides a tax credit of up to \$500 for teachers who purchase classroom supplies on their own dime. Eligible classroom supplies include books, supplies, computers and related equipment, including related software and services, other equipment and supplementary materials." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[SB 205- Health-Related Industries Education Scholarship Program](#)

Prime Sponsor: Senator Vince Hughes (D-Montgomery, Philadelphia)

Current Committee: Education

"My legislation creates the Health-Related Industries Educational Scholarship Program. Students who qualify for the program can receive financial assistance to complete their education for the purpose of pursuing an occupation in a health-related industry. The program incentivizes 2-year healthcare programs with a Pay-It-Forward plan and tax credits for businesses that will train/mentor student interns on the job." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[SB 206- Legislative Racial Impact Statements](#)

Prime Sponsor: Senator Vince Hughes (D-Montgomery, Philadelphia)

Current Committee: Judiciary

"... which would give legislators the ability to request that the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing prepare a racial impact statement for any legislative measures that would amend the Crimes Code (Title 18) or Judicial Code (Title 42) prior to its final consideration by the Senate or House of Representatives." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[SB 207- Employee Paid Sick Leave](#)

Prime Sponsor: Senator Vince Hughes (D-Montgomery, Philadelphia)

Current Committee: Labor and Industry

"This bill, known as the 'Healthy Employee/Healthy Workplace Act,' would require every employer in this Commonwealth to provide paid sick leave to employees." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

[SB 208- Increasing Personal Income Tax Poverty Exemption](#)

Prime Sponsor: Senator Vince Hughes (D-Montgomery, Philadelphia)

Current Committee: Finance

GPNP Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

"This legislation would increase the poverty exemption for the personal income tax by \$1,000 per dependent. Under the proposal, the current exemption of \$9,500 would be increased to \$10,500, thereby increasing the income threshold for a married couple with two dependent children to qualify for the poverty exemption from \$32,000 to \$34,000." ([Cosponsor Memo](#))

Federal Policy

["Trump signs executive order that could effectively gut Affordable Care Act's individual mandate." *The Washington Post*. January 20, 2017.](#)

"President Trump signed an executive order late Friday giving federal agencies broad powers to unwind regulations created under the Affordable Care Act, which might include enforcement of the penalty for people who fail to carry the health insurance that the law requires of most Americans. The executive order, signed in the Oval Office as one of the new president's first actions, directs agencies to grant relief to all constituencies affected by the sprawling 2010 health-care law: consumers, insurers, hospitals, doctors, pharmaceutical companies, states and others. It does not describe specific federal rules to be softened or lifted, but it appears to give room for agencies to eliminate an array of ACA taxes and requirements. However, some of these are embedded in the law, so it is unclear what latitude the executive branch will have."

["Republicans set aggressive agenda on health care, regulations and tax reform." *The Washington Post*. January 25, 2017.](#)

"In an afternoon session at an annual GOP policy retreat, House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (Wis.) and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (Ky.) unveiled plans that put repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act as the first order of business, with the target date for action within the next three months. Lawmakers also plan to move quickly on a broad rewrite of the tax code that is expected to include deep cuts in tax rates. The agenda sets a vigorous pace in an attempt to make good on key campaign promises made by President Trump."

["Experts: Rollback of Obamacare would undermine mental health coverage for many." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. January 26, 2017.](#)

"It expanded expanded telepsychiatry, prioritized care of the most seriously mentally ill, eased prescribing limitations for psychiatric drugs, increased outpatient treatment, fixed a rule keeping Medicaid recipients from physical and mental health treatment on the same day, and focused federal funding on proven treatments. But U.S. Rep. Tim Murphy's signature mental health law means little to the poorest mental health patients if Congress repeals the Affordable Care Act without replacing it with something that protects the coverage that millions became eligible for in 2010."

["Repeal of Medicaid expansion could hit hard in Pa. Trump country." *David Wenner. The Patriot-News*. January 23, 2017.](#)

"Repealing the Medicaid expansion portion of the Affordable Care Act without a comparable replacement could leave 675,000 Pennsylvanians uninsured -- a population consisting mostly of 'rural, working poor,' a pair of state officials said."

["Report projects ACA repeal would cost 137,000 PA jobs and double state budget deficit." *Don Sapatkin. Philadelphia Inquirer*. January 19, 2017.](#)

GNPN Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

"Repealing the Affordable Care Act would cause significant financial pain to businesses, patients, and taxpayers in Pennsylvania, according to a [report released Thursday](#). The state's projected budget deficit would nearly double, and an estimated 3,425 additional residents would die prematurely each year."

[Report: "Devastation, Death, and Deficits: The Impact of ACA Repeal on Pennsylvania." Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center. January 19, 2017.](#)

["Arts groups gear up for fight over NEA." Christina Marcos. *The Hill*. January 19, 2017.](#)

"Advocates for the arts and public broadcasting are sounding the alarm over possible cuts to federal funding that one lawmaker said could be a sign of a cultural dark age under Donald Trump's presidency."

["Arts leaders react to possible Trump call for eliminating cultural programs: Not this again." Peggy McGlone. *The Washington Post*. January 19, 2017.](#)

"A published report that members of the Trump administration are considering sweeping budget cuts that include eliminating cultural agencies have left some arts leaders with a strong feeling of déjà vu."

["Trump, GOP set to battle on spending cuts." Alex Bolton. *The Hill*. January 23, 2017.](#)

"Many of the proposals that the officials are reviewing would gain support from a majority of conservative House Republicans, who have sought to cut the federal deficit by scrapping government programs they view as unnecessary. But some of Trump's targets have fans in the GOP-controlled Congress, particularly in the Senate."

["Lawmakers Hope to 'Unlock' More Giving in Tax Reform Effort." Independent Sector. January 26, 2017.](#)

"House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady (R-TX) said that committee republicans are aiming to spur more donations to charities as part of tax overhaul efforts. 'We're looking at ideas for how we can unlock more charitable giving. We are looking at ways we can encourage more small givers in charities, continue to encourage current givers, continue to unlock more charitable giving just throughout the economy,' Brady said January 25 at a Financial Services Roundtable event. While lawmakers haven't reached any final decisions as they draft legislation, the creation of an above-the-line deduction for charitable giving may be among the options under consideration, allowing both individuals who itemize and those who don't to take advantage of the incentive."

["Voting rights advocates fear Trump's unfounded fraud claims will lead to more restrictive laws." *The Washington Post*. January 25, 2017.](#)

"President Trump's plans to ask for a 'major investigation' into allegations of widespread voter fraud were met with skepticism by both Democratic and Republican lawmakers - and fear from voting rights advocates that the president will use his unfounded claims to justify more-restrictive voting laws."

["President Trump's energy plan: support shale, dump climate plan, refocus EPA." *State Impact*. January 20, 2017.](#)

"Within minutes of being sworn in Friday, links to Obama's Climate Action Plan were replaced by a smiling picture of the new president and vice president. The White House website then published

GNPN Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

'An America First Energy Plan,' which emphasizes use of domestic fossil fuels and shunning foreign oil. The plan takes aim at 'burdensome regulations on our energy industry,' while embracing 'the shale oil and gas revolution.'"

[Commentary: "Community assistance act a necessary bill." Senator Bob Casey \(D-PA\). *Tribune-Democrat*. January 24, 2017.](#)

[Commentary: "What happens now to Justice Dept.'s civil rights enforcement?" Joe Davidson. *The Washington Post*. January 19, 2017.](#)

[Commentary: "A 'Whole of Government' Approach to Social Problems." William Eggers. *Governing*. January 17, 2017.](#)

Trump Administration

["Companies drafting emergency plans for Trump tweets." *The Hill*. January 19, 2017.](#)

"Companies and industry groups are turning to lobbyists with a pressing question: What should we do if President-elect Donald Trump attacks us on Twitter?"

2017 and 2018 Elections

["2018 races dominate current Pa. political landscape." AP. January 22, 2017.](#)

"A look at the political landscape..."

["State lawmaker Neuman to seek spot on bench." *Observer-Reporter*. January 18, 2017.](#)

"Neuman, D-North Strabane Township, formally announced Wednesday his bid to become a judge in the Court of Common Pleas. Neuman joins longtime attorney Charles Kurowski, former longtime Washington County Children and Youth Services solicitor Joyce Hatfield-Wise, current Assistant District Attorney Kristin Clingerman and former Washington County judge Phillippe Melograne in seeking the post."

["Welch launches mayoral campaign." Chris Potter. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. January 22, 2016.](#)

"Introduced with gospel music and testimonials from fellow clergymen, the Rev. John C. Welch launched his mayoral campaign Saturday afternoon at the Homewood Carnegie Library's auditorium."

Nonprofit Sector

GNPN Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

["Uber donates free transportation to Women's Center and Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh." Ed Blazina. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. January 24, 2017.](#)

"Uber will provide the rides to women free of charge whether they need to go to the center or need transportation from the center to medical, legal or other appointments. The shelter said it spends about \$1,000 a month for transportation for its clients, but it expects the donation to pay for a full year of rides because Uber charges less than other methods it has used."

["Riverview Children's Center to undergo \\$2.5 million expansion." Jake Flannick. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. January 20, 2017.](#)

"Expanding and renovating the Riverview Children's Center has become a priority for the decades-old institution, which has added accommodations in the past but has found itself unable to host larger functions. And although it's one of many early learning centers in the Pittsburgh region, it has a waiting list of more than 100 children."

["Student Debt: An Opportunity and a Challenge for the Nonprofit Workforce." *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. January 18, 2017.](#)

"Student debt is hurting recruitment, retention, and diversity in the nonprofit workforce, but a Federal program is poised to help."

["How Pittsburgh communities will benefit from \\$120,000 in Trump's first 100 days." Sarah Anne Hughes. *The Incline*. January 24, 2017.](#)

"As this era of uncertainty begins, more than a dozen groups and individuals in the Pittsburgh area are getting to work on turning their priorities into action - many with a focus on making sure such communities are supported."

["Animal Rescue League moves animals to new shelter during Moving of the Animals Parade." *Pittsburgh City Paper*. January 24, 2017.](#)

"Pittsburgh's Animal Rescue League, in the process of moving from its shelter in Larimer to a new larger location a third-of-a-mile down the road in Homewood, invited the public to watch a Moving of the Animals Parade Monday afternoon."

Pittsburgh Region News

["Peduto lauded among U.S. mayors, but knows Pittsburgh has much more to figure out during Trump presidency." Stephen Caruso. *Public Source*. January 19, 2017.](#)

"Despite the shroud of uncertainty, Peduto, who is seeking re-election this year, feels confident in the direction he is taking Pittsburgh - the direction of a shining 21st century tech metropolis that often seemed the talk of the conference. But the mayor also acknowledged that not everyone will benefit from the deals made to reach that sparkling future."

["City Council advances proposed protections for immigrants, refugees." Adam Smeltz. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. January 26, 2017.](#)

"Several proposals to help safeguard local immigrants and refugees gained momentum Wednesday with Pittsburgh City Council. Most council members backed advancing the bills to a final vote

GNPN Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

Tuesday. Proposed last week by Councilman Dan Gilman, the legislation would make city services more accessible to people learning English and those with disabilities, among other provisions."

["Beaver County township green-lights ethane cracker." State Impact. January 19, 2017.](#)

"Shell moved another step closer toward building its massive chemical plant near Pittsburgh. Supervisors in Potter Township approved the company's conditional use permit to build an ethane cracker on the site of a former zinc smelter."

["City teen program offering a lesson in civics." Adam Smeltz. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. January 23, 2017.](#)

"A new Youth Participatory Budget Council program will accept as many as 21 young people from the city for an up-close look at municipal government - and let them develop a proposal for the 2018 city budget."

Health and Human Services

["State human services secretary says drug treatment system not meeting needs." Ford Turner. Reading Eagle. January 23, 2017.](#)

"Dallas, in a phone interview late last week, said the drug abuse treatment system clearly is not meeting current needs. 'We need to embrace evidence-based practices,' Dallas said. He pointed to medication-assisted treatment - the use of medicines like methadone, Suboxone and Vivitrol - as a scientifically proven way to help many abusers. In an emailed statement over the weekend, state Sen. Judy Schwank also faulted the treatment system. State government, she said, has taken steps to monitor prescription drug distribution, encourage careful prescribing of painkillers and promote the overdose-reversing medicine naloxone."

["Federal heating help outpaces last year's need." Chuck Biedka. Pittsburgh Tribune-Review. January 22, 2017.](#)

"Federal grants to help area residents heat their homes so far this winter are ahead of pace compared to last winter. Through mid-January, the federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program has doled out more than \$10 million to residents of Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler and Westmoreland counties. About 34,000 residents received the grants. That's a higher rate than last winter, when LIHEAP gave about \$16.2 million for the entire heating season, which lasts into April."

["Donations to Pittsburgh milk bank help babies in need." Anya Sostek. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. January 24, 2017.](#)

"A year ago this month, the Three Rivers Mothers' Milk Bank delivered its first ounces of breast milk to babies in Pittsburgh neonatal intensive care units. Now, the milk bank serves 16 hospitals in Western Pennsylvania and West Virginia."

["Medical Debt Is Top Reason Consumers Hear From Collection Agencies." Michelle Andrews. NPR. January 24, 2017.](#)

"The [study](#) by the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau found that 59 percent of people who reported they had been contacted by a debt collector said it was for medical services. Telecommunications bills were the second most common type of overdue bill for which debt

GPNP Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

collectors pursued payment, at 37 percent, and utilities were third, reported by 28 percent. Unlike other types of debt, people with medical debt were prevalent across a range of income levels, credit scores and ages."

[Commentary: "What Is a Health Savings Account?" Center on Budget and Priorities. January 25, 2017.](#)

Education

["Pittsburgh Public's Director Of Equity Shares Her Plan For Systemic Change." Sarah Schneider. WESA. January 20, 2017.](#)

"90.5 WESA's Sarah Schneider spoke with [Angela] Allie about the challenges of equipping teachers with cultural competency and ensuring all students have equitable access to a quality education."

["Pittsburgh Public Schools declares itself 'sanctuary' campus." Molly Born. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. January 25, 2017.](#)

"The board of the Pittsburgh Public Schools unanimously passed a resolution tonight declaring itself a 'sanctuary' campus. Immigration agents would not be permitted on school grounds without permission from the district's law department and the superintendent under the motion, which pledges a 'safe and supportive school environment' for students regardless of immigration status."

["Free program aims to help displaced miners develop small businesses." Michael Bradwell. Observer-Reporter. January 21, 2017.](#)

"Mining Your Business,' a new course from Pitt's SBDC, which begins March 1 in the Pennsylvania CareerLink office at 90 W. Chestnut St., is aimed at anyone exploring and evaluating the possibility of starting a small business, including dislocated coal industry-related workers and family members."

[Commentary: "Here's why Pittsburgh's schools need a state takeover." Colin McNickle. The Patriot-News. January 23, 2017.](#)

Housing and Community Development

["This Pa. city has some of the most affordable homes in the world." Lisa Wardle. The Patriot-News. January 24, 2017.](#)

"[The Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey] released Monday shows that among major markets, Pittsburgh ranked fifth for most affordable housing costs compared to median household incomes in the city. There is concern, however, about [what the technology industry boom will mean for Pittsburgh housing.](#)"

["Hermitage finding economic path back through collaboration." Kris Mamula. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. January 23, 2017.](#)

GNPN Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

"The Mercer County town of Hermitage is rebuilding a slice of northwest Pennsylvania's economy by taking a page from the playbook that's being used 70 miles away in Pittsburgh."

Water, Energy, and Environment

["Appalachian region could support 4 more cracker plants, says report." Marie Cusick. State Impact. January 26, 2017.](#)

"The Appalachian region could support up to four more petrochemical processing plants, known as crackers, according to a forthcoming report from IHS Markit. Denise Brinley, a special assistant to the Secretary of the state Department of Community and Economic Development, previewed the report Thursday during a presentation at the Hart Energy Marcellus Utica Midstream conference in Pittsburgh. She says it will be published in the next few weeks."

["Mining permit in state park halted by judge." Reid Frazier. State Impact. January 25, 2017.](#)

"A judge has ordered a halt to mining underneath a state park in Greene County. Environmental Hearing Board judge Steven C. Beckman issued the order Tuesday, regarding a Consol Energy plan to expand its Bailey mine complex beneath Ryerson Station State Park. Environmental groups had argued the plan would have damaged a high-quality stream in the park."

["Researchers rush to preserve environmental data they believe to be threatened by Trump." Susan Philips. State Impact. January 19, 2017.](#)

"With every new administration, government held information disappears. Digital archivists know this. They've worked in the past to preserve Bush Administration data when Obama was elected. Sometimes, it's just a matter of budget priorities. Funds no longer exist to keep up a website. But with the incoming Trump administration, some scientists worry key environmental research will go missing because of political reasons. So researchers from across the country and Canada gathered in Philadelphia last weekend to copy key data."

Corrections and Public Safety

["As Pennsylvania's inmate ranks drop, parole population grows." Marc Levy. AP. January 20, 2017.](#)

"A 2012 state law that has contributed to Pennsylvania's shrinking state inmate population is also helping fuel a growing population of state parolees, long managed by an understaffed contingent of parole agents."

["ACLU may renew legal action against Pa. over delays to treat mentally ill inmates and defendants." Daniel Simmons Ritchie. The Patriot-News. January 25, 2017.](#)

"The ACLU says it may renew legal action against Pennsylvania in the coming months over concerns the state has violated a settlement agreement to curb excessive delays in hospitalizing seriously mentally ill inmates and defendants. Witold Walczak, legal director of the ACLU of Pennsylvania, says that despite actions taken by the Department of Human Services over the past year, Pennsylvania's state hospitals continue to have the worst backlog in the nation, leaving psychotic individuals to wait hundreds of days in county prisons before they can receive treatment."

GNPN Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

["Carlow University wades into the issue of gun violence." Bill Schackner. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. January 17, 2017.](#)

"On Tuesday, the university announced it was wading into another such issue, gun violence. Carlow plans to make the cause its inaugural 'Educating for Justice' issue. As such, it will be the focus for the next three years of a set of campus institutes that was announced at a campus event Tuesday night."

Arts, Parks, and Culture

["Project welcomes artwork as a platform for dialogue about nation's future." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. January 20, 2017.](#)

"Called 'Active Voice,' the project invites people to create artwork inspired by the new administration for display at Artists Image Resource, a North Side print and imaging laboratory."

["Happier trails ahead: Nonprofit to connect parks, systems across Allegheny County." Mary Ann Thomas. *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. January 22, 2017.](#)

"The Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy plans to connect the dots for several major parks and trail systems in the Alle-Kiski Valley and Pittsburgh's North Hills. The nonprofit's 'Many Trails - One Community' effort will, in the next two to five years, link a number of popular outdoor destinations..."

["Public Theater initiatives include new tech for hearing and sight impaired patrons." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. January 26, 2017.](#)

"The Public is the first theater outside of Broadway and Las Vegas to use Sound Associate devices for those with hearing and sight disabilities. The personal handheld devices, free and available at select performances, deliver I-Caption and D-scriptive, real-time closed-captioning and audio description."

["NEXT Up: Christopher Hahn." *Next Pittsburgh*. January 22, 2017.](#)

"Since becoming Pittsburgh Opera's general director in 2008, Christopher Hahn has expanded and enriched the company's repertoire, introducing Baroque and contemporary operas and a variety of production styles. Trained in his native country of South Africa, Christopher previously managed the San Francisco Opera Center's world-renowned Merola Opera Program-the country's leading training program for American singers-and served as artistic administrator at Los Angeles Opera with Plácido Domingo and Peter Hemmings."

[Commentary: "Public Art is Making the Invisible Visible." Henry Lipput. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. January 23, 2017.](#)

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

GNPN Public Policy Summary January 26, 2017

[Senator Camera Bartolotta \(R-Beaver, Greene, Washington\) Telephone Town Hall](#)

When: January 30, 2017 at 6:00 PM

Registration: <http://www.senatorbartolotta.com/tele-town-hall/>

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