

GNP Public Policy Summary January 5, 2017



Public Policy Summary January 5, 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](#)

- January 25: Allies for Children is convening stakeholders to discuss advocacy on CHIP, Medicaid, and health insurance. Click [here](#) to learn more.
- 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.
- 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.
- GNP's Public Policy Committee meeting dates for 2017 are scheduled for 2017. Click [here](#) for the dates and registration information.
- During January, Steel City Codefest is hosting the "Is There an App for That?" community series for nonprofits. Click [here](#) for information.

[GNP News and Announcements](#)

- GNP 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.
- The Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management is conducting its Wage and Benefit survey. Click [here](#) for the information.
- Just Harvest is offering free tax preparation services and seeking volunteer tax preparers for the Money in Your Pocket Coalition.

[Pennsylvania Budget and State Government](#)

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- The General Assembly began its legislative session on Tuesday. Important agenda items include the FY 2017-2018 budget, pension reform, gambling expansion, and reforming school property taxes.
- The Wolf Administration ceased issuing Keystone Opportunity Zone tax credits.
- The House adopted a rule that decreases the review time for legislation amended by the Senate from 24 hours to 6 hours.
- The Local Government Commission will convene later this month to issue recommendations for standardizing Pennsylvania's property assessment processes.
- New Census Bureau data indicates that Pennsylvania could lose two congressional seats in 2020.
- *The Observer-Reporter* profiled first-term Representatives Bud Cook (R-Fayette, Washington) and Justin Walsh (R-Westmoreland).

Trump Administration

- *The Washington Post* reported on the conservative agenda that President-elect Donald Trump and congressional Republicans are expected to pursue.
- *The Washington Post* reported that President-elect Trump could end the government's payments for health insurance subsidies as one of his earliest actions.
- According to *The New York Times*, many religious institutions are planning to serve as "immigrant sanctuaries" in response to President-elect Trump's anticipated immigration policies.

Federal Policy

- *The New York Times* published "Six Things to Watch" in the new Congress, which began its session Tuesday.
- National media reported on the latest developments in the Republicans' push to repeal the Affordable Care Act.
- *The Hill* reported on changes to Medicaid that are under consideration by Republicans.
- *The Hill* reported that Republicans at the state and federal levels are expected to work against Democratic-led cities' attempts to implement progressive policies at the local level.

Elections 2017 and 2018

- According to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Senator Scott Wagner (R-York) has taken key steps toward launching his gubernatorial campaign.
- The Incline published a list of Pittsburgh-area officials who will appear on the ballot in 2017 and 2018.
- Pittsburgh City Council Member Natalia Rudiak announced that she will not seek reelection.
- Allegheny County Council Member Michael Finnerty resigned his seat to take a position in state Representative Anita Kulik's (D-Allegheny) office.

Nonprofit Sector

- *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported that Pittsburgh, UPMC, Highmark Health, Carnegie Mellon University, and the University of Pittsburgh are approaching a deal in which those nonprofits would contribute to major public projects throughout the city.
- Allegheny County revoked the tax-exempt status of over 300 properties as part of its review of tax-exempt properties.

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- *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported that President-elect Trump's victory prompted a surge in year-end giving by donors.
- *The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* reported on the use of Regional Asset District funds by certain Alle-Kiski Valley nonprofit organizations.
- *The New York Times* reported on the national trends impacting the United Way.
- Tickets for Kids Charities announced that it is merging with Minnesota-based Tix for Tots.

[Pittsburgh Region News](#)

- Pittsburgh City Council approved a revenue deal with the Rivers Casino and the proposed grant program to encourage the hiring of Pittsburgh Promise alumni.
- WESA published a series on Pittsburgh City Council members' priorities for 2017.

[Health and Human Services](#)

- According to Kaiser Health News, the newest Medicare rules are expected to benefit "high need" patients.
- *The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* reported that the number of calls received by the Westmoreland County drug helpline reflects only a small piece of the need for services in the county.
- Kaiser Health News reported on the opioid epidemic's impact among seniors.
- *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* published the newest piece of its "OVERDOSED" series.
- A vigil was held in downtown Pittsburgh for the 12 homeless people who died during 2016.
- *Pittsburgh City Paper* highlighted the work of 412 Food Rescue.
- Stateline reported on the use of telemedicine in schools.

[Education](#)

- The Pittsburgh Public Schools district is implementing the Technology Education and Literacy in Schools program to increase computer literacy.
- According to the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, Pennsylvania's college enrollment declined by 18,000 students since 2015.
- NPR published a roundup of the latest studies on pre-K education.
- NPR published new data regarding the difficulty of finding childcare.

[Veterans](#)

- *The Wall Street Journal* published a story about opioid use among veterans.
- *The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* reported on the difficulties that the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion are having attracting younger members.

[Housing and Community Development](#)

- *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported on the difficulties of rent-to-own arrangements for aspiring homeowners.
- Pittsburgh City Council Member R. Daniel Lavelle introduced a resolution that would empower the city's solicitor to explore options for the city that could circumvent the Penguins' development rights to the former Civic Arena site.

[Water, Energy, and Environment](#)

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- The National Bureau of Economic Research released a study showing the benefits of living near fracking sites.
- Pennsylvania's Environmental Hearing Board blocked mining in Greene County's Ryerson State Park.

[Arts and Culture](#)

- *Pittsburgh City Paper* published stories about local arts activism.
- Pittsburgh Filmmakers/Pittsburgh Center for the Arts named The Pittsburgh Foundation's Germaine Williams as its new CEO.

[Parks and Animals](#)

- Pittsburgh opened a new dog park in Downtown.
- The Incline reported that Pittsburgh Animal Care and Control's use of pet microchips has decreased the number of pets ending up in shelters.

[Transportation](#)

- *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported on the issues encountered during the first days of the Port Authority of Allegheny County's new fare system.
- Pittsburgh City Council Member Theresa Kail-Smith proposed legislation that would establish an advisory board to oversee the city's bicycle infrastructure.

These stories, and many others, follow below.

Sections

[GNPN Events](#)

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

* [February 21: Working Smarter Means Big Savings](#)

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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

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

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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.

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.

February 21: Working Smarter Means Big Savings

Please Join Us for a Special GNP Member Education Event:

Working Smarter Means Big Savings

Learn how to increase your efficiency while reducing costs!



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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

GNPN's Public Policy Committee will convene on:

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- [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.

GNPN 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](#)

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!

Announcements

[Allies for Children Convening for CHIP, Medicaid, and Health Insurance Advocacy](#)

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Allies for Children is convening stakeholders to coordinate advocacy efforts around protecting children's health insurance programs, Medicaid and CHIP during this critical time. Any organizations interested in participating in a January 25th, 9 a.m. meeting to develop next steps and begin advocacy efforts, please contact Alicia Moore at alicia.moore@alliesforchildren.org.

[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."

["Is There an App for That?" Community Series](#)

The "Is There An App for That" community series - hosted by the Steel City Codefest team - invites individuals from local nonprofits, government agencies, or social good programs to think through challenges that could be helped or solved through technology. If their panel of local technology experts is unable to provide you with ideas of already existing solutions, we may select your challenge to be developed as a custom app during the 2017 Codefest. Join us at one of the Carnegie Library Branches for a free evening of problem-solving and find out more about submitting a challenge to the 2017 Codefest. Visit steelcitycodefest.eventbrite.com to register.

[Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management 2017 Wage and Benefit Survey](#)

"The community needs your HR data! Since 2000, the Wage & Benefit Survey of SW PA Nonprofit Organizations has provided the most current data about regional salary and benefits - needed for both for valid decision-making and 990 compliance. It has also sparked the 74% conversation resulting in greater pay equity in the region's nonprofit sector. Your willingness to participate in the survey has made this trusted resource possible. Thanks to the generosity of the RK Mellon Foundation, the final survey results will be available for NO COST for nonprofits who participate. The purchase price for non-participants is \$200. The submission deadline has been extended to January 9, 2017. All information is held in strict confidence and viewed only by our independent consultants. Questions? Contact Carrie Tancaitor at tancaitor@rmu.edu or 412-397-6003. [Begin the survey now on our SSL-encrypted survey site!](#)"

[Just Harvest: Free Tax Preparation](#)

As a lead partner in the United Way of Allegheny County's Money in Your Pocket Coalition, Just Harvest provides free, IRS-certified income tax preparation for low-income households at four sites in Allegheny County. In the 2016 tax season, we completed over 2,900 tax returns and refunded nearly \$5.8 million to low-income families, mainly through Earned Income and Child Care tax credits. Phone lines to schedule an appointment open January 11 and tax filing assistance runs January 17 through April 18. Learn more at: bit.ly/2iGbwBI

The coalition is also in need of 90 more volunteers by January 6. Volunteers will be trained and IRS-certified, so no previous experience is necessary. For those with experience, Continuing Education Credit and abbreviated trainings are available. CPAs, attorneys, and enrolled agents/paid preparers can qualify for credit. Register or learn more here: bit.ly/2h762yB

Pennsylvania Budget and State Government News

["New Legislature to consider bills on gambling, property taxes and retirement benefits." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. January 2, 2017.](#)

"Pennsylvania legislators return to the Capitol this week to start the new year with plenty of old business - and a fresh dose of political pressure - awaiting them. There are no shortage of big-ticket issues. Lawmakers are likely to consider bills regulating and taxing online gambling, reducing or even eliminating property taxes and again trying to change the retirement benefits for future state and public school workers. And, as it has for successive years, the commonwealth's billion-dollar budget woes will drive the agenda."

["Drive to kill school property tax headed back to Legislature." AP. January 3, 2017.](#)

"Debate over school property taxes in Pennsylvania is expected to return to the Legislature in 2017. Senate supporters say the Nov. 8 election provided the necessary votes to eliminate school property taxes entirely and replace them with other revenue streams. That would mean shifting about \$14 billion in taxes from property owners, including businesses, to Pennsylvania consumers and workers through sales and personal income taxes. An Associated Press analysis of state data found that more than 70 percent of school property taxes were collected by the wealthiest half of school districts in 2014-15."

["End of development program is a lump of coal for Philly, Coatesville." *Philadelphia Inquirer*. December 27, 2016.](#)

"The Keystone Opportunity Zone (KOZ) program, which provides deep tax breaks in hopes of revitalizing abandoned, blighted, or underused properties, has long been touted by state and local officials as a success story. They say it has helped create nearly 10,000 jobs and pumped \$1.5 billion in private development capital into communities, often in distressed areas. The administration's argument for shutting off the spigot on new tax breaks boils down to dollars and cents: The state simply can't afford it."

["Pennsylvania House slashes public review time for Senate-amended legislation." Kevin Zwick. *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. January 3, 2017.](#)

"The Pennsylvania House of Representatives adopted a new rule Tuesday to allow some legislation to pass more quickly but essentially limiting time for public review. Under the change, the House would have to wait only six hours instead of 24 before taking a final vote on legislation amended by the Senate."

["State task force working to change Pa.'s property assessment rules in 2017." Emily Previti. WITF. January 3, 2017.](#)

"...when task force members meet next [on January 26], they'll try to come up with a plan for implementing some changes that don't need legislative approval, according to Local Government Commission Executive Director Phil Klotz."

["Lawmakers: Extend gambling tax deadline." Robert Swift. *The Times Tribune*. January 5, 2017.](#)

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" Lawmakers plan to ask the state Supreme Court to extend a deadline tied to a ruling declaring a state casino tax unconstitutional, a Monroe County senator heading a key casino oversight committee said."

["Wolf Administration plans to consolidate offices, puts hold on new leases to address budget woes." Jan Murphy. *The Patriot-News*. January 4, 2016.](#)

"Gov. Tom Wolf on Wednesday took another step toward reorganizing government to address the state's budgetary shortfall by ordering state agencies to begin consolidating information technology and human resources functions. In a memo obtained by PennLive sent out to Cabinet secretaries on Wednesday, Wolf said those agencies under his jurisdiction that currently have their own offices and staff that perform those functions will move over the year toward a shared service model that some departments already use. The governor also directed agencies to not enter into any new leases without the approval of the state Department of General Services, effective immediately. This is in an effort to look for savings by reducing state government's leased footprint, according to the memo."

["Wolf says he's ready for fiscal, political challenges." Dave Heller. *Newsworks*. January 3, 2017.](#)

"In an interview at our studio, Wolf told WHYY's senior reporter Dave Davies he's made historic gains in education funding, and will fill the gaping holes in the state budget without broad-based tax increases. And he said any Republican lawmakers who seek to torpedo his agenda in order to boost their own candidacies risk a backlash from voters."

["Wolf suggests three-pronged approach for distressed cities." Robert Swift. *The Times Tribune*. January 4, 2017.](#)

"Pennsylvania's distressed cities can be helped by a three-pronged approach of providing school property tax relief, targeting state economic aid and easing municipal pension debt, Gov. Tom Wolf said Tuesday. The Democratic governor discussed urban issues, the importance of state education aid and his pending Feb. 7 state budget address during a wide-ranging interview with The Times-Tribune in his Capitol office."

["Pennsylvania think tanks battle over remedies for \\$1.7B state budget deficit." Tim Stuhldehrer. *Lancaster Online*. January 2, 2017.](#)

"The position statements by the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center and the Commonwealth Foundation come on the eve of what promises to be yet another bitter state budget fight."

["Gov. Wolf: Harrisburg's rough, but job's still fun." Mike Argento. *York Daily Record*. December 27, 2016.](#)

"Tom Wolf is having fun. To those watching from a distance, it may not seem like it. Entering his third year in office, despite having to deal with what can charitably be described as a contentious relationship with the Republican-controlled Legislature and facing a budget deficit that could run as high as a billion dollars, he is enjoying the job."

["Historic population loss could weaken Pennsylvania's political clout." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. January 2, 2017.](#)

"The latest U.S. Census Bureau estimates show the state on track to lose at least one seat in Congress - and possibly two - come 2020. That is when official population numbers are released and the state begins the once-a-decade politically charged process of redrawing congressional and state legislative maps."

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["Two freshmen legislators swear to represent region well." Rick Shrum. *Observer-Reporter*. January 3, 2017.](#)

"Republicans Bud Cook and Justin Walsh became members of the Pennsylvania House Tuesday during the biennial swearing-in ceremony in Harrisburg. These first-time lawmakers were as excited as college freshmen, entering a new world."

["Lawmaker says it's time for Pa. House GOP's maternity leave policy to move into the 21st century." Jan Murphy. *The Patriot-News*. December 28, 2016.](#)

"A Beaver County GOP lawmaker thinks it's time for the state House Republican Caucus to join with a growing number of companies that are making motherhood more financially secure by offering paid maternity leave to employees. After all, when it comes to pension reform, Rep. Jim Christiana points out his Republican colleagues argue that it's time for government to emulate what businesses are doing in offering 401(k) retirement plans to employees. So why shouldn't the same apply to leave benefits after childbirth?"

[Commentary: "PA politicians must control costs." Senator Scott Wagner \(R-York\). *York Daily Record*. December 29, 2016.](#)

[Commentary: "Elimination only way to solve school property tax problem." Senator Dave Argall \(R-Berks, Schuylkill\). *Reading Eagle*. December 30, 2016.](#)

[Commentary: "The rich can take the hit - to fix the budget, they should pay their fair share." Marc Stier. *The Patriot-News*. December 23, 2016.](#)

[Commentary: "The battle that awaits in Harrisburg." Lowman Henry. *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. December 22, 2016.](#)

[Commentary: "Pa. layoff fight looks like prelude to 2018 governor's race." Steve Esack. *The Morning Call*. December 30, 2016.](#)

Trump Administration

["Claiming mandate, GOP Congress lays plans to propel sweeping conservative agenda." Dave Weigel. *The Washington Post*. January 1, 2017.](#)

"For six years, since they took back the House of Representatives, Republicans have added to a pile of legislation that moldered outside the White House. In their thwarted agenda, financial regulations were to be unspooled. Business taxes were to be slashed. Planned Parenthood would be stripped of federal funds. The Affordable Care Act was teed up for repeal - dozens of times. When the 115th Congress begins this week, with Republicans firmly in charge of the House and Senate, much of that legislation will form the basis of the most ambitious conservative policy agenda since the 1920s. And rather than a Democratic president standing in the way, a soon-to-be-inaugurated Donald Trump seems ready to sign much of it into law."

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["Trump could quickly doom ACA cost-sharing subsidies for millions of Americans." Amy Goldstein. *The Washington Post*. December 24, 2016.](#)

"Even without Congress repealing the Affordable Care Act, the Trump administration could undermine the law by unilaterally ending billions of dollars the government pays insurers to subsidize the health coverage of nearly 6 million Americans. Given that insurers would still be required to provide consumers that financial help, such a move could create upheaval in the ACA's marketplaces - prompting health plans to raise their prices or drop out, according to health-policy experts in both major political parties."

["Houses of Worship poised to serve as Trump-era immigrant sanctuaries." Laurie Goodstein. *The New York Times*. December 27, 2016.](#)

"Protecting immigrants is shaping up to be a priority of the religious left, an amorphous collection of people and groups reflecting many faiths and ethnicities. It has been jolted into action by Mr. Trump's victory and his selection of an attorney general nominee who supports a crackdown on immigrants."

Federal Policy

["Congress returns and Republicans are in charge: 6 things to watch." *The New York Times*. January 3, 2017.](#)

"What should you watch for? Here is our cheat sheet..."

["GOP launches long-promised repeal of Obamacare with no full plan to replace it." *The Washington Post*. January 4, 2017.](#)

"Signifying how enormous a priority the issue is for the incoming administration, Vice President-elect Mike Pence met privately to discuss it with House and Senate Republicans. He offered no details afterward about what a new health-care law might look like but vowed to unwind the existing one through a mixture of executive actions and legislation. Meanwhile, President Obama made a rare Capitol Hill appearance, meeting behind closed doors with Democrats from both chambers. He urged members of his party not to help the GOP devise a new health-care law."

["Why Obamacare is unlikely to die a swift death." *The Washington Post*. January 2, 2017.](#)

"Congressional Republicans have long boasted that once they claim the reins of power, they will act quickly and decisively to roll back what they view as the most onerous piece of President Obama's domestic agenda: the Affordable Care Act. But their actions starting Tuesday to end Obamacare will be far less sweeping, at least initially, than a full-blown repeal of the law."

["House, Senate headed for clash on Medicare." Alex Bolton. *The Hill*. January 1, 2017.](#)

"Senate Republican leaders prefer to focus narrowly on an ObamaCare replacement bill that does not contain changes to Medicare - a cautious approach that reflects their slim majority. But House Republicans, firmly in control of the lower chamber, want to aim higher. They say unified Republican control of government is a chance to finally enact the entitlement reforms that they've been talking about for years."

["GOP zeroes in on changes to Medicaid." Peter Sullivan. *The Hill*. December 29, 2016.](#)

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"While Democrats have been pounding the drum against proposed changes to Medicare, Republicans appear far more likely to pursue an overhaul of Medicaid, the healthcare program for the poor."

["Hospitals in Safety Net Brace for Health Care Law's Repeal." Abby Goodnough. *The New York Times*. December 28, 2016.](#)

"Since the election, hospitals have been among the loudest voices against wholesale repeal of the health law."

["GOP aims to rein in liberal cities." Reid Wilson. *The Hill*. January 5, 2017.](#)

"After consolidating power in Washington, D.C. and state capitals under President-elect Donald Trump, Republicans are moving to prevent large cities dominated by Democrats from enacting sweeping liberal agendas."

["Federal judge issues injunction against Obama administration abortion, transgender regulations." Dave Weigel. *The Washington Post*. December 31, 2016.](#)

"A federal judge in Texas handed a victory to conservatives Saturday, issuing a temporary injunction to stop an Obama administration regulation that would prevent discrimination in health care on the basis of 'gender identity' and 'termination of pregnancy.'"

["Delaney sees hope for revival of his tax plan in Trump administration." Jenna Portnoy. *The Washington Post*. December 28, 2016.](#)

"Rep. John Delaney (D-Md.) has been pushing a plan to use a one-time tax on accumulated overseas corporate profits to pay for infrastructure projects since he first ran for office in 2012, but without much success. Now with his political rivals poised to retain control of Congress and occupy the White House, Delaney's repatriation tax proposal may find new life."

[Commentary: "Deliberate Process Expected for Tax Reform Overhaul." Independent Sector. January 4, 2017.](#)

2017 and 2018 Elections

["First GOP challenger to Wolf emerges." Chris Potter. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. January 3, 2017.](#)

"The 'Scott Wagner for Governor' committee was registered with the Department of State on Dec. 23, providing Mr. Wagner, a Harrisburg powerhouse despite still serving his first full term, a vehicle to receive and spend campaign dollars on a gubernatorial bid."

["Governor-hopeful Scott Wagner: The man unions hate, conservatives love." Jan Murphy. *The Patriot-News*. January 5, 2017.](#)

"...the 61-year-old York County state senator who never graduated college has his eyes on the governor's office, and his approach to his business may be indicative of his political ascent."

["These are the Pittsburgh-area pols up for reelection in 2017, 2018." MJ Slaby. *The Incline*. November 11, 2016.](#)

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"This year is a big year for the city, with a mayoral race and that of four of the nine city council members. And in 2018, it's back to casting ballots for national and state positions, including Gov. Tom Wolf's seat."

["Voters get to choose a new member of Pittsburgh City Council." Bob Bauder. *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. January 2, 2017.](#)

"Four potential candidates have lined up to replace two-term Pittsburgh City Councilwoman Natalia Rudiak, whose decision not to seek re-election sets up an open-seat primary."

["Allegheny County councilman Finnerty resigns." Andrew Golstein. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. December 30, 2016.](#)

"Mr. Finnerty, 71, D-Scott, said in a news release that he submitted his resignation letter Thursday. Mr. Finnerty was in his third term on council and planned to run for a fourth term in 2017, but he accepted a position on the staff of newly elected state Rep. Anita Kulik, D-Kennedy."

["Researchers say Pennsylvania's electoral system among worst in country." Tom Fontaine. *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. December 27, 2016.](#)

"The Electoral Integrity Project, affiliated with Harvard University and the University of Sydney in Australia, evaluated states' electoral systems based on interviews with more than 700 political scientists. Researchers scored states on the perceived integrity of 11 aspects of the electoral process, from how congressional and legislative districts are drawn to how votes are cast and counted. Pennsylvania's overall score of 56 out of 100 tied for fifth-worst among U.S. states, ahead of only Oklahoma, Tennessee, Wisconsin and Arizona."

Nonprofit Sector

["Large nonprofits may reach city, county deal in 2017." Adam Smeltz. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. December 31, 2016.](#)

"Nearly two years of financial negotiations among Pittsburgh's biggest nonprofit employers and local government leaders may reach a fruitful conclusion in the new year, according to Mayor Bill Peduto's administration. A potential fund under discussion with UPMC, Highmark Health, the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University could funnel millions into public projects such as infrastructure work, park improvements or affordable housing programs, said Kevin Acklin, Mr. Peduto's chief of staff."

["Allegheny County adds properties worth \\$108M back to tax rolls." Natasha Lindstrom. *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. December 28, 2016.](#)

"Allegheny County has revoked tax exemptions of more than 300 properties as part of sweeping scrutiny into whether thousands of parcels countywide deserve to keep their tax breaks."

["Unusually high surge in year-end donations attributed to election." Joyce Gannon. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. December 24, 2016.](#)

"Among the factors driving the surge are Mr. Trump's proposal to cap itemized tax deductions, including charitable contributions, and a flood of gifts to advocacy organizations that oppose his policies on hot-button issues such as gun control and abortion."

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["Valley nonprofits feeling left out of aid program." Madysyn Czebiniak. *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. December 31, 2016.](#)

"The agency that doles out money from Allegheny County's extra 1 percent sales tax will grant nearly \$100 million this year, but a couple of Alle-Kiski Valley nonprofits left money on the table."

["United Way Searches for Its Place in a World of One-Click Giving." Ron Lieber. *The New York Times*. December 23, 2016.](#)

"Giving to United Way is a reflexive action for many Americans whose employers solicit contributions via payroll deduction. But it's obvious that an increasing number of donors are asking a perfectly reasonable question now: Who needs a charitable middleman when causes and data galore are at our fingertips?"

["Tickets for Kids merges with Minneapolis-based nonprofit." Joyce Gannon. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. January 4, 2017.](#)

"Tickets for Kids Charities has merged with a Minneapolis-area nonprofit that has the same mission of providing tickets to cultural and sports events to children in need. Blawnox-based Tickets for Kids today said it merged with Tix for Tots of Minneapolis-St. Paul."

["Charity Accounts Become the Hot Holiday Must-Have." Laura Sanders. *The Wall Street Journal*. December 23, 2016. \(Subscription Required\)](#)

[Commentary: "What to look for in nonprofits." Michael Andreola. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. December 27, 2016.](#)

Pittsburgh Region News

["Pittsburgh City Council approves grant program, revenue deal at year-end meeting." Adam Smeltz. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. December 31, 2016.](#)

"Pittsburgh City Council finished its 2016 meetings Thursday with a brief final session, approving a grant program for Pittsburgh Promise alumni and a revenue agreement with Rivers Casino."

["2017 City Council Preview: Democratic Governance In The Trump Era." WESA. December 26, 2016.](#)

"Pittsburgh's nine Democratic City Council members will soon find themselves governing in an era where Republicans control not only the state legislature, but both houses of Congress and the presidency. Pursuing a progressive agenda is nothing new for Councilmen Dan Gilman, Ricky Burgess and Bruce Kraus. But they say in 2017, advocating for the city's marginalized and disenfranchised populations will be more important than ever."

["2017 City Council Preview: Equitable Development In The Midst Of Urban Reinvention." WESA. December 29, 2016.](#)

"Council members Deb Gross, Corey O'Connor and Daniel Lavelle represent three very different districts, but the issue of equitable development looms large for each of them. For Gross, it's

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figuring out how to keep gentrification in check in neighborhoods that are rapidly transforming. Lavelle is pushing for more affordable housing in his district, amid continued delays of the Pittsburgh Penguins' plans to redevelop the former Civic Arena site near PPG Paints Arena. And O'Connor is looking for ways to tie one of the largest mixed-use developments in Pittsburgh history into the existing neighborhood."

["2017 City Council Preview: Public Safety." WESA. January 3, 2017.](#)

"This is the third in a three-part web series looking ahead to 2017 with members of Pittsburgh City Council."

["City's Departing Innovation Chief: Inclusion A Must In Innovation." Kevin Gavin. WESA. December 28, 2016.](#)

"After nearly three years on the job, Lam resigned this month and moved with her husband who accepted a new job in Atlanta."

Health and Human Services

["New Medicare rules should help 'high need' patients get better treatment." Kaiser Health News. December 29, 2016.](#)

"Under the new rules, physicians will be compensated for legwork involved in working in teams - including nurses, social workers and psychiatrists - to improve care for seniors with illnesses such as diabetes, heart failure and hypertension. Care coordination for these 'high need' patients will be rewarded, as will efforts to ensure that seniors receive effective treatments for conditions such as anxiety or depression."

["Need outstrips calls to Westmoreland drug helpline." Renatta Signorini. Pittsburgh Tribune-Review. December 26, 2016.](#)

"When the phone isn't ringing, call-takers post on the helpline's social media accounts, check emails and voicemail messages and fill out logs that detail what happened during each call. Chappell thinks the number of callers is not in line with the number of people who need help."

["Unregulated recovery homes criticized over living conditions." Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. January 3, 2017.](#)

"Three-quarter-way houses are meant to be a bridge to independent living for addicts, but critics calling for tougher state oversight say some are so crowded, unsupervised and unstable that they can hobble the recovery process."

["Aging and addicted: The opioid epidemic affects older adults, too." Kaiser Health News. December 30, 2016.](#)

"As the nation grapples with a devastating opioid epidemic, concerns have primarily focused on young people buying drugs on the street. But America's elderly also have a problem. Over the past several decades, physicians have increasingly prescribed seniors pain medications to address chronic pain from arthritis, cancer, neurological diseases and other illnesses that become more common in later life."

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["One day in the opioid epidemic." Rich Lord. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. December 26, 2016.](#)

"The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, which has featured the opioid problem in its series [OVERDOSED](#), asked people and institutions to take special note of the epidemic's impacts on one ordinary - though brutally cold - day, Dec. 15. But the reverberations from each of that Thursday's collisions, and the many others not captured here, continue far into the future, as the babies born dependent struggle with the effects, the cops and courts and jails contend with arrested addicts, the grieving families try to regroup. Then add Friday's rehab admissions, Saturday's arrests, Sunday's overdoses, Monday's orphans, and on and on."

["Twelve people died while homeless in Allegheny County this year." Andrew Goldstein. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. December 22, 2016.](#)

"More than 100 people stood beneath an overpass in Downtown for more than an hour Wednesday night at a candlelight vigil commemorating the people who died while homeless in 2016 in Allegheny County."

["Have Food, Will Travel." Celine Roberts. *Pittsburgh City Paper*. December 27, 2016.](#)

"Sound Bite rides along with 412 Food Rescue as they deliver rescued food to Pittsburgh communities."

["Telemedicine in Schools Helps Keep Kids in the Classroom." Stateline. January 4, 2017.](#)

"Telemedicine, increasingly used in prisons, nursing homes and remote areas, is becoming more common in schools. According to the American Telemedicine Association, at least 18 states authorize Medicaid reimbursement for telemedicine services provided in schools and 28 states plus Washington, D.C., require private insurers to cover telemedicine appointments as they would face-to-face doctor visits."

[Commentary: "Fighting the opioid scourge." Secretary of Drug and Alcohol Programs Gary Tenis. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. December 30, 2016.](#)

Education

["Pittsburgh high schools working to close computer literacy gap." Molly Born. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. December 29, 2016.](#)

"Pittsburgh Public Schools is the first district in the state to implement this volunteer program, Technology Education and Literacy in Schools, aimed at closing the computer science gap in high schools and increasing the number of women and students of color enrolled in a such a course."

["Pa.'s college numbers down." Jamie Martines. *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. December 25, 2016.](#)

"Pennsylvania is among the five states experiencing the largest decline in enrollment, having lost more than 18,000 students since fall of 2015."

["We Learned A Lot In 2016 About How Preschool Can Help Kids." Claudio Sanchez. NPR. December 27, 2016.](#)

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"This year brought several new studies, however, that found that - when done right- Head Start and other programs can give low-income students lasting benefits. It's not only through elementary school: At least one study we wrote about found the benefits of preschool paying off for individuals, and society, into adult life. All this research, however, was no blanket endorsement. Some of this year's findings reinforced earlier studies showing the uneven quality of Head Start programs around the country."

["Child Care Scarcity Has Very Real Consequences For Working Families." Jessica Deahl. NPR. January 3, 2017.](#)

"When NPR, along with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, surveyed more than 1,000 parents nationwide about their child care experiences, a third reported difficulty finding care."

["Program brings educators together to mentor each other on teaching strategies." Pittsburgh Tribune-Review. December 21, 2016.](#)

"Researchers at Pittsburgh-based nonprofit ASSET STEM Education outlined the importance of giving teachers the opportunity to learn from each other in a white paper released this month."

[Commentary: "Let Pa.'s resolution for 2017 be expanded access to pre-K." Pedro Ramos, Jim Cawley, and Sharmain Matlock-Turner. Philadelphia Inquirer. January 3, 2017.](#)

Veterans

["The VA Hooked Veterans on Opioids, Then Failed Them Again." Valerie Bauerlein and Arian Campos-Flores. The Wall Street Journal. December 29, 2016. \(Subscription Required\)](#)

"The agency overprescribed painkillers to returning soldiers, fueling addiction; now rehab facilities are overwhelmed"

["Shrinking veterans organizations struggle to attract younger members." Matthew Medsger. Pittsburgh Tribune-Review. December 25, 2016.](#)

"The VFW and American Legion, powerful lobbying groups for veterans' rights, are struggling to attract new members."

Housing and Community Development

["Renting to own sounded good at first, but now 2 residents are finding flaws." Kate Giammarise. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. December 28, 2016.](#)

"The idea of rent to own can be appealing to would-be homeowners who lack the resources to make a large down payment. But consumer advocates have criticized it as an arrangement that lacks the legal protections of either renting or home ownership, combined with the worst aspects of both, such as being responsible for major repairs while at the same time being vulnerable to eviction."

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["Councilman nudges city, Penguins on Civic Arena site redevelopment." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 30, 2016.](#)

"Five years since demolition crews dropped the Civic Arena, a Pittsburgh councilman wants to know whether the city could help push along redevelopment of the Lower Hill District site. 'I think the community is frustrated that they haven't seen development,' said Councilman R. Daniel Lavelle, who introduced a resolution Thursday to explore the city's legal options. The measure would let Solicitor Lourdes Sanchez-Ridge investigate how the city or the Urban Redevelopment Authority might request development ideas for the publicly owned property, even though the Pittsburgh Penguins hold development rights."

["Pittsburgh has eyes on developing former VA site." Bob Bauder. *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, December 27, 2016.](#)

"Pittsburgh hopes to acquire a former Veterans Affairs hospital complex in Lincoln-Lemington as a possible location for a public safety training center, public works facility and housing for homeless veterans, the mayor said Tuesday."

Water, Energy, and Environment

["Economic study weighs benefits, negatives of living near shale hot spots." Laura Legere. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 5, 2017.](#)

"Average households in U.S. shale oil and gas drilling hot spots have experienced property value, income and other benefits that outweigh the costs of a diminished quality of life brought on by the industrial activity, economists reported in [a recent study](#) for the National Bureau of Economic Research."

["Judge blocks mining near stream in Greene County state park." Marie Cusick. *State Impact*, December 27, 2016.](#)

"Pennsylvania's Environmental Hearing Board has temporarily blocked coal mining near a trout stream in Greene County's Ryerson Station State Park after two environmental groups challenged the permit. ... Ryerson is Greene County's only state park. It's located in an environmental justice zone, which is an effort to protect marginalized communities, such as minorities and people in poverty, from getting an unfair share of industrial development."

Corrections and Public Safety

["Study recommends strengthening Pa. gun laws in domestic violence cases." Katie Meyer. *WITF*, December 30, 2016.](#)

"The Joint State Government Commission is recommending changes to a decades-old domestic violence protection law in Pennsylvania. The group is pushing for updates that would, among other things, make it more difficult for abusers to access firearms."

Arts and Culture

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["Notable art as activism in 2016 Pittsburgh." Nadine Wasserman. *Pittsburgh City Paper*. December 28, 2016.](#)

"From Ai Weiwei to Vanessa German, galleries resounded with political messages"

["Lights, camera, action: A new leader for Pittsburgh Filmmakers/Pittsburgh Center for the Arts." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. December 27, 2016.](#)

"Pittsburgh Filmmakers/Center for the Arts has a new leader, Germaine Williams, who should be able to hit the ground running when he begins the job Jan. 23. Although the group has been through a turbulent period, it rebounded nicely during the past year. Mr. Williams is well positioned to help it achieve more progress."

["The History Center highlights a century of art donated to city schools." Charles Rosenblum. *Pittsburgh City Paper*. December 28, 2016.](#)

"Arts education is very much in contention these days. Advocates insist that the drive to emphasize science, technology, engineering and math must also add an A for arts, if youngsters are to be educated suitably. STEM must become STEAM. Yet amid rampant education de-funding, detractors perceive visual art as extraneous and mark it the first thing to go. So we have an apt historical moment for the show *The Gift of Art*, at the Heinz History Center. What is the utility of visual art in schools?"

["Members of the Pittsburgh music community reflect on the role of art and activism in the coming year." Margaret Welsh. *Pittsburgh City Paper*. January 4, 2017.](#)

"In the days immediately following Donald Trump's election, some people took to the streets in protest while others looked (mostly unsuccessfully) for a bright side. A few people tossed around that evergreen phrase, 'at least punk will be good again.' The idea, of course, is that protest and political unrest breeds great art. But at best it's a feeble, tongue-in-cheek attempt to find a silver lining; at worst, it's offensively tone-deaf... Sure, the Reagan era saw a lot of great punk songs, and the G.W. Bush years spawned their share of good, angry political music. But ultimately, it's important to remember that it's not about the songs. It's about what the songs and the artists who made them stand for and represent. And now more than ever, it matters what sort of action those songs inspire."

Parks and Animals

["Pittsburgh opens dog park Downtown." Mark Belko. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. January 5 2017.](#)

"The city is putting the finishing touches on the first off-leash park for dogs in the Golden Triangle. The fenced-in area is located on a small triangular patch of land at the base of the Rachel Carson Bridge, giving the Rovers and Spots of Downtown a place to cut loose."

["Why more Pittsburgh pet owners are finding their lost pets." MJ Slaby. *The Incline*. January 2, 2017.](#)

"In October, Pittsburgh Animal Care & Control started using pet microchip scanners, making reunions between pets and owners quicker and more frequent, Animal Care & Control supervisor David Madden said."

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Transportation

["Port Authority's new fare system causes some confusion." Dan Majors. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. January 4, 2017.](#)

"Port Authority spokesman Adam Brandolph said there were a number of minor issues Tuesday as passengers and operators dealt with the first full business day under the new procedures, which include using Connect Cards, paying upon boarding, and exiting buses at the rear."

["Proposed board would advise Pittsburgh on bike lanes." Adam Smeltz. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. January 4, 2017.](#)

"Delighted or frustrated, Pittsburghers passionate about the city's expanding bike lanes may have a new place to air their thoughts. A proposed advisory board would publicly review bike lane plans and draft policies for installing the infrastructure, according to legislation introduced Tuesday by Councilwoman Theresa Kail-Smith."

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

[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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