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- [5 Lawsuits Over Census Citizenship Question Could Head To Trial, NPR](#)
- [At national convention, mail carriers protest Trump's privatization plans, PPG](#)
- [Trump administration releases modest rule for coal plants, PPG](#)
- [Following high court ruling on public sector union fees, battle for members escalates on many fronts, PPG](#)

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### ***Election Updates***

- [Wagner clarifies that he'd veto anti-same-sex marriage bill, TR](#)
- [Wolf, Wagner schedule first debate Oct. 1, TR](#)
- [Cybersecurity: States ramp up election protections ahead of midterms with \\$380 million in federal funds, USA Today](#)
- ['No confusion exists:' County elections division responds to Monroeville election confusion case, TR](#)

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### ***Local Updates***

- [Agency: Art Institute of Pittsburgh risks losing accreditation in November, PPG](#)
- [Pittsburgh ranks among America's top 20 cities for arts vibrancy, PPG](#)
- [Health care program that helps homeless get housing will expand, PPG](#)
- [Shuttered YMCA in Hazelwood — and the way the community stepped up](#)

- offers pattern for places now losing their branches, PPG
  - [Ben Carson says in Ambridge stop that HUD is combating affordable housing crisis, TR](#)
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## *Southwestern PA Forces of Change Survey*

Our region's transportation planning body, Southwestern PA Commission, is in the midst of its current long-range plan. This plan decides how state and federal transportation funds – roughly \$1 billion/yr, including public transit – are spent throughout southwestern PA. We need your help in representing your community's desires through this survey and spreading the word through your networks. [Click here for the survey.](#)

To capture a variety of perspectives across Southwestern Pennsylvania, we ask for your help to spread the word. Please share this survey and information to friends, family, and colleagues. The survey only takes about 10 minutes and can be done via desktop or mobile device.

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## *Pennsylvania News*

### **MERGING SCHOOLS | Research suggests sweeping statewide consolidations would have mixed financial results for Pennsylvania communities**

Sweeping statewide consolidation across Pennsylvania's 500 public schools wouldn't bring the cost-savings that some lawmakers and the public alike envision, at least not without the state providing financial incentives, a recent analysis shows.

While there is evidence that in some cases moves to combine very small districts could yield savings or improve educational opportunities, consolidating schools with 1,000 students or more might increase costs – and, in many cases, raise the tax millage in many communities those districts serve, a Joint State Government Commission report notes.

That doesn't mean consolidation wouldn't benefit Pennsylvania's struggling communities. But the state has no incentives in place to help schools interested in combining to overcome financial sticking points that might be holding them back, a New Jersey-based reform-minded nonprofit's study concluded.

Source: [The Tribune-Democrat](#)

### **Why the Explosive Report on Catholic Church Abuse Is Unlikely to Yield Criminal Charges**

The nearly 900-page grand jury report is unlikely to lead to any new criminal charges or civil lawsuits over the abuse that it catalogs, because the statute of limitations has expired on those cases. Current state law allows victims of abuse as children 12 years to sue after they come of age at 18, meaning they must do so by age 30. Criminal complaints must be filed by the time the victim is 50. Those rules leave the vast majority of abuse survivors, who came forward later in life — the grand jury said they include people as old as 83 — with no legal recourse. Only two of the cases in the report have so far led to criminal charges.

The grand jury made four recommendations for enhancing protections for children and allowing victims to obtain justice for past abuse: eliminate the limit for criminal complaints completely; set aside the expired civil statutes of limitations for abuse cases; amend the state's mandatory reporting law so that repeated failures to comply face harsher penalties; and bar confidentiality agreements that are meant to shield abusers.

For civil lawsuits, the attorney general and grand jury also recommended opening a temporary "window" to permit older victims to sue abusers, and the church. Earlier grand juries in Pennsylvania made similar recommendations.

Source: [The New York Times](#)

### **Southwestern Pa. health centers receive \$700K in federal grants**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced \$3.47 million in grant awards to 42 health centers in Pennsylvania.

Of those, the seven that operate locations in the Pittsburgh region received about \$704,000 meant to improve quality, efficiency and the effectiveness of health care delivery in the communities they serve, according to a news release.

"Community health centers provide coordinated, comprehensive and patient-centered care to millions of Americans," said HHS Deputy Secretary Eric Hargan, in a prepared statement. "They have a track record of delivering quality care at significantly lower cost and are vital partners in our movement toward a health system that delivers quality, affordable, value-based health care for all Americans."

The funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration was distributed locally to:

- Cornerstone Care -- \$108,746, with locations in Burgettstown, Uniontown, Washington and Waynesburg
- East Liberty Family Health Care Center -- \$69,627
- North Side Christian Health Center -- \$17,494
- Primary Health Services Inc. -- \$100,282 with locations in Braddock, Hill District, Friendship, Homewood, McKeesport, Hazelwood, West End, Wilksburg and Homestead
- Primary Health Network -- \$283,466 with locations in Beaver, Butler, Indiana, Lawrence, Mercer and Westmoreland counties
- Squirrel Hill Health Center -- \$45,000
- Sto-Rox Family Health Council Inc. -- \$79,216

Source: [Pittsburgh Business Times](#)

### **Flood of state redevelopment grants precedes election**

A flood of grants for high-profile projects in the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program are being announced by Gov. Tom Wolf and lawmakers. The distribution of RACP grants becomes an advantage for incumbents during an election year. Lawmakers are quick to take credit for these major projects in their districts. The state has awarded nearly \$44 million worth of RACP grants as of last Friday, according to the Office of Budget website at [www.budget.pa.gov](http://www.budget.pa.gov).

The largest grant awarded so far in the current funding round is \$6 million for a

planned robotic device development and assembly plant in York. Amid complaints about too much debt financing and controversy over some projects, a law was passed in 2013 to scale back the program and set a \$125 million annual cap for grants. The law provides for a public comment period, requires applicants to submit a business plan and emphasizes that projects are to be evaluated on their impact on jobs and readiness to go. House Speaker Mike Turzai, R-Allegheny, has pushed for a smaller RACP program as part of a wider focus on reducing state debt. A law enacted last year reduces the outstanding debt limit for RACP to \$3.15 billion from \$3.45 billion over five years. Turzai hopes for Senate action on [House Bill 83](#), a House-passed bill that uses a different approach to repay new capital debt, and therefore, save taxpayer dollars by reducing the amount spent on interest.

Source Capitolwire: "Flood of state redevelopment grants precedes election" by Robert Swift

### **More good employment news for PA in July**

While the state's unemployment rate has been declining as of late, it has been doing so mostly because people have been leaving the state's workforce ... until July. Last month, Pennsylvania's unemployment rate dipped to 4.2 percent while the civilian labor force – those working or looking for work – grew. Although the labor force grew by only 7,000 individuals (representing growth of about one-tenth of a percent), that growth was due to 15,000 more individuals being added to the state's employed population (and 8,000 people dropping off of the jobless rolls). Despite that growth in employment, Pennsylvania's employed population in July was 10,000 fewer than it was a year earlier, and the civilian labor force was 50,000 less in July 2018 than it was in July 2017. The news from the state's employers was more muted, with only a net increase of 2,100 jobs from June to July. That next-to-no-percentage growth was due to a net 3,100 jobs lost in the goods-producing industrial sectors and a net 5,200 jobs added by Pennsylvania's service-providing sectors. The big gainers were the Professional and Business Services (net 2,700 added) and Education and Health Services (+2,700) sectors, while the biggest losses were in the Trade, Transportation and Utilities (-4,000), Construction (-1,600) and Manufacturing (-1,600) sectors. Compared to July 2017, last month's job totals were 71,900 (or 1.2 percent) better.

Source: Capitolwire: Under the Dome

### **PA senator looks for ways to help rural hospitals**

State Sen. Lisa Baker, R-Luzerne, who chairs the Senate Health and Human Services Committee, said she's introducing legislation to help rural hospitals, many of which she indicated "are struggling to keep the doors open." During Fiscal Year 2017, 62 hospitals reported negative operating margins according to a report by the Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council (PHC4). The Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP) in May told Capitolwire rural hospitals receive 56 percent of their payments from Medicare (41.7 percent) and Medicaid (14.3 percent), while non-rural hospitals get a combined 46.3 percent of their payments from those two programs. Baker says her new legislation, seeks to establish a Rural Health Redesign Center (RHRC) to develop a more predictable payment plan for rural hospitals, creating a fixed budget to standardize reimbursements for those hospitals. The effort would initially be funded by a \$25 million grant from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation, but since the RHRC will operate as a public-private partnership, independent from the commonwealth, it would also have the capacity

to raise funds from other sources, such as foundations.

Source: Capitolwire: Under the Dome

### **Administration seeks to double number of work apprentices by 2025**

The Wolf administration plans to use \$7 million in new state aid to help expand apprentice work programs beyond their traditional perch in the industrial trades. The \$7 million for the apprenticeship training program under the Department of Labor and Industry is in the Fiscal Year 2018-19 state budget. It is part of an overall \$40 million PA Smart initiative to support apprenticeships and career and technical education. Currently, there are more than 16,000 registered apprentices statewide. The administration hopes to double that number in both traditional and non-traditional fields by 2025. Apprenticeships are a way to provide high school students with an alternative career path to college and help employers meet a demand for skilled employees, said Labor and Industry Secretary Jerry Oleksiak and Community and Economic Development Secretary Dennis Davin. Davin said they are a way to bridge a gap in the workforce between what skills employers are looking for and the skills that many job applicants have. The Wolf administration wants to set up apprenticeship programs in such new fields as cybersecurity and early child care. The \$7 million will be distributed as grants by the state Workforce Development Board.

Source: Capitolwire: Under the Dome

### **Pa. Supreme Court rules in favor of Gov. Wolf's order on home care workers**

Pennsylvania's Supreme Court ruled Tuesday to allow a February 2015 executive order by Gov. Tom Wolf concerning home care workers to stand.

The governor had said the order was aimed at improving care and working conditions, but opponents of the order said it was a stealth attempt to unionize such workers, who care for elderly or disabled individuals directly in their homes. Mr. Wolf's order "did not exceed his constitutional powers," Justice Debra Todd wrote in the majority opinion.

The Governor's executive order, which he signed shortly after taking office, established an advisory group on home care workers and said the Human Services Secretary shall "recognize a representative for the direct care workers for the purpose of discussing issues of mutual concern," and said the state would share updated lists of such care workers with "an employee organization that has as one of its primary purposes the representation of direct care workers in their relations with the Commonwealth or other public entities."

Source: [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)

### **Temporary regulations issued for medical marijuana research**

Legislation that was prompted by a legal challenge to the state medical marijuana research program has resulted in new temporary rules being issued to allow eight academic clinical research centers to conduct studies for the use of medical marijuana to treat various conditions. Back in March, other temporary regulations for the research program were issued, but they got derailed by a lawsuit challenging the pairing of the research centers with "clinical registrants," a term for a medical marijuana grower/processor and dispensary that have contracted with a center to provide medical marijuana for research projects. According to the lawsuit's plaintiffs - who were able to get a temporary injunction against the medical research component - the state changed the rules governing the

research initiative months after growers/processors/dispensaries invested millions of dollars in licensing and start-up costs and the new research component will flood the commercial market for medical marijuana, thereby hurting their businesses. The legislation approved by the General Assembly and signed by Gov. Tom Wolf in June sought to clarify the provisions of the research program to address the issues identified by the plaintiffs, though critics claim the legislation didn't go far enough to limit the operations of the clinical registrants.

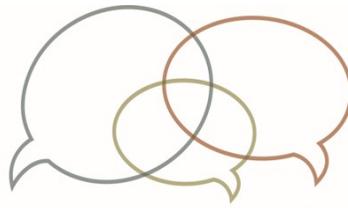
Source: Capitolwire: Under the Dome

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### ***Legislation***

- [HB 2603: Act re Office of Inspector General](#)
- [HB 2442: Amends Const. Workplace Misclassification Act](#)
- [HB 2605: Amends Title 58 re pipeline impact fee](#)
- [HB 2606: Act re strengthening collective bargaining](#)

***Prepared by:***



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