
BCW&S

**Berks County
Water &
Sewer Association**

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS UPDATE



March 15, 2020 – Issue 99

Scarnati & Corman Issue Statement on Senate Session Schedule

Senate President Pro Tempore Joe Scarnati (R-25) and Senate Majority Leader Jake Corman (R-34) have issued the following statement regarding next week's session schedule:

"The Senate will not convene for session on Monday, March 16. The Senate will be on a 12-hour-call. At this time, we plan to be in session on Tuesday and Wednesday (March 17 & 18).

"We remain committed to working with the Governor and House Leaders to address the needs of our Commonwealth due to COVID-19. Protecting public health continues to be our top priority."

Source: Senate Republican Communications, 3/15/2020

No Change to Special Election Dates

Elections in 8th, 18th and 58th districts will be held as scheduled Tuesday, March 17

While recognizing that the COVID-19 virus is requiring people to make many sacrifices in their day-to-day lives, Speaker of the House Mike Turzai (R-Allegheny) announced today the special elections for the 8th,

18th and 58th legislative districts scheduled for Tuesday, March 17, will be held as scheduled.

"The impact of the COVID-19 virus is being felt by all of us, and I applaud the statewide efforts to practice social distancing and increased disinfecting in public spaces. These same practices will be in place on Election Day, but they do not require the rescheduling of the special elections," Turzai said. "When you consider that absentee ballots have already been applied for and returned, these elections are already underway."

Turzai consulted with House Parliamentarian Clancy Myer in reaching this conclusion. In the attached letter, the parliamentarian explains his concerns for changing the date, including increased confusion for voters and disenfranchising absentee voters, including members of the military, who would have to re-apply for absentee status.

"I believe it is not only not advisable but also counterproductive to issue a new writ of election establishing an election date later this spring." Myer said.

"In the 8th district, the Bucks County Board of Elections is prepared to sanitize the space and protect voters as much as possible, in the same manner grocery stores, restaurants and other businesses are doing at this time," Turzai said. "Voters are encouraged to bring their own blue or black ball point pens. These are smart moves to protect the public while also encouraging this important act of democracy to continue without delay."

"The voters of the 8th, 18th and 58th legislative districts deserve to be represented in these trying times just as much as any other Pennsylvanian. I look forward to fair and accurate elections, so the voices of all Pennsylvanians can be represented in the hall of our chamber in the months ahead."

Source: Speaker Turzai Press Release, 3/14/2020

Gov. Wolf Offers COVID-19 Community Preparedness and Procedures Materials

To help make the public aware of COVID-19 preparedness and procedures, the Wolf Administration has created a library of free outreach materials for businesses, organizations and anyone interested in displaying important messaging on COVID-19.

The materials are available at **PAcast** <https://pacast.com/m?p=17885>.

"The goal is for everyone to have access to and be encouraged to share the information important to stopping the spread of COVID-19," Gov. Wolf said. "Please help us share awareness while using caution and protecting yourself"

Posters are available in multiple sizes and every Pennsylvanian is encouraged to make them accessible to their community of friends, community or religious group members, and business associates to print and post. The administration also expects the posters to be available in newspapers across the state for residents to tear out and post throughout their communities.

Properly sized graphics are available at **PAcast** <https://www.pacast.com/> for social media. Gov. Wolf also encourages everyone to make use of COVID-19 social media content on the Pennsylvania Department of Health's **Facebook** <https://www.facebook.com/pennsylvaniadepartmentofhealth> and **Twitter** <https://twitter.com/pahealthdept?lang=en> pages.

The most up-to-date information, including video graphics, footage of all of the governor's press conferences and b-roll, is also available at PAcast <https://www.pacast.com/>. Additional materials will be added to the library as they become available and as the situation evolves.

Source: Governor Wolf's Press Office, 3/14/2020

Wolf Administration Issues Guidance to Non-essential Businesses as Part of COVID-19

Mitigation Efforts Businesses in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery counties urged to close for 14 days

On March 14, 2020, the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), in consultation with the Department of Health (DOH), issued guidance for non-essential businesses in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Governor Tom Wolf has strongly urged non-essential businesses in the four counties to close during their county-specific mitigation periods to protect employees, customers, and suppliers and limit the spread of the virus through personal contact and surfaces. DCED and DOH are reaching out to businesses through a **letter** <https://dced.pa.gov/download/letter-from-secretary-levine/?wpdmdl=93426&refresh=5e6d4f14ea1d11584221972> to provide guidance on the types of businesses that are urged to close. The letter also indicates to businesses that financial assistance opportunities are available to mitigate the financial impact of closures.

"We are committed to keeping all Pennsylvanians safe and healthy, and we are taking every measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19," said DCED Secretary Dennis Davin. "We continue to report new cases of coronavirus every day, and additional steps must be taken to stop the spread. Therefore, we strongly urge non-essential

businesses across Pennsylvania to do their part by temporarily closing to help mitigate the spread of this contagious virus."

Non-essential businesses include community and recreation centers; gyms, including yoga, barre and spin facilities; hair salons, nail salons and spas; casinos; concert venues; theaters; bars; sporting event venues and golf courses; retail facilities, including shopping malls and except for pharmacy or other health care facilities within retail operations. Restaurants are urged only to remain open for carry-out and delivery orders.

"We understand that small businesses are an economic driver in Pennsylvania, and a temporary closure will be a financial and community disruptor," Davin said. "However, our top priority is maintaining public health and safety of all Pennsylvanians and taking these proactive steps now can help mitigate a potential community spread. DCED is committed to working with the business community to provide helpful resources for financial assistance."

DCED offers working capital loans that could be of assistance to businesses impacted by COVID-19. **Resources and information** will be posted to <https://dced.pa.gov/resources/> as they become available. The U.S. Small Business Administration, in addition to local funding partners, may also be a source of assistance for affected businesses.

The Wolf Administration strongly encourages businesses to act now before the governor or the Secretary of Health finds it necessary to compel closures under the law for the interest of public health, including section 7301 of the Emergency Management Services Code.

Source: PA DCED Press Release, 3/14/2020

PA COVID-19 Update – March 15, 2020

Last updated 12:00 p.m.

To date, there are 63 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Pennsylvania.

Counties impacted to date include:

Allegheny (3)
Bucks (4)
Chester (2)
Cumberland (5)
Delaware (7)
Lehigh (1)
Luzerne (1)
Monroe (6)
Montgomery (24)
Northampton (1)
Philadelphia (6)
Pike (1)
Washington (1)
Wayne (1)

COVID-19 How to get tested

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Publishing/Images/COVID-19%20How%20to%20Get%20Tested.png>

COVID-19 Testing Factsheet

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/COVID19%20Testing%20Factsheet.pdf>

Frequently Asked Questions

What is coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some causing illness in people and others circulating among animals, including camels, cats and bats.

The 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new virus that causes respiratory illness in people and can spread from person-to-person. This virus was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

What are the symptoms of coronavirus?

Symptoms of COVID-19 can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

The symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure. Reported illnesses have ranged from people with little to no symptoms to people being severely ill and dying.

How can the coronavirus spread?

Human coronaviruses spread just like the flu or a cold:

- Through the air by coughing or sneezing;
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands;
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it;
- Occasionally, fecal contamination.

How can I help protect myself?

Prevention:

- Cover coughs or sneezes with your elbow. Do not use your hands!
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Clean surfaces frequently, including countertops, light switches, cell phones, remotes, and other frequently touched items.

Contain: if you are sick, stay home until you are feeling better.

In addition, it is recommended that Pennsylvanians take time to prepare now. View the **PA Emergency Preparedness Guide** at <https://www.ready.pa.gov/BeInformed/EmergencyPreparednessGuide/Pages/default.aspx>.

Should I wear a mask or respirator in public?

The CDC does not recommend wearing masks or respirators outside of workplaces settings (in the community). A respirator is a personal protective device that is worn on the face or head and covers at least the nose and mouth. Most often, spread of respiratory viruses from person-to-person happens among close contacts (within 6 feet). It is important that these devices are readily available to health care workers and others who need them.

Should I cancel my trip to a country with a level 3 travel advisory?

Yes. The CDC recommends travelers avoid all nonessential travel to countries with a level 3 travel advisory at this time. For more travel information, visit our **Travelers Page** at <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus%20Travelers.aspx>.

Should I cancel my international travel because of novel coronavirus?

The CDC recommends avoiding all nonessential travel to a country with a level 3 travel advisory. For travel advice for other countries, please visit that country's Destination Page at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list> or Travel Health Notices <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list> page on the CDC's website.

What about animals or animal products imported from China?

The CDC does not have evidence to suggest that animals or animal products imported from China pose a risk for spreading COVID-19 in the United States. This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes available.

Source: PA DOH Website

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>

PUC Prohibits Residential Utility Terminations, Consistent with Governor's Proclamation of Disaster Emergency

Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) Chairman Gladys Brown Dutrieuille signed an **emergency order** http://www.puc.pa.gov/general/pdf/Emergency_Order_M-2020-3019244_031320.pdf prohibiting electric, natural gas, water, wastewater,

telecommunication and steam utility terminations. The moratorium will remain in place for as long as the Proclamation of Disaster, issued by Gov. Tom Wolf on March 6 related to the Coronavirus, is in effect.

Under the unique circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, establishing a termination moratorium for utility services under the PUC's jurisdiction is consistent with the Governor's Proclamation of Disaster Emergency and the requirements of the Public Utility Code. Under the order, terminations would be permitted in the event of a safety emergency.

"I believe that issuance of an emergency order is appropriate under the unique circumstances," said the emergency order signed by Chairman Dutrieuille. "It is beyond argument that the provision of public utility service is necessary for the safety of the public. This is especially the case under the current challenges that resulted in the Proclamation of a pandemic emergency."

Pursuant to the Commission's regulations governing emergency relief, an emergency order will be issued only when there exists a clear and present danger to life or property or when the relief requested is uncontested and action is required prior to the next scheduled public meeting.

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission balances the needs of consumers and utilities; ensures safe and reliable utility service at reasonable rates; protects the public interest; educates consumers to make independent and informed utility choices; furthers economic development; and fosters new technologies and competitive markets in an environmentally sound manner.

Visit the PUC's website at <http://www.puc.pa.gov/> for recent news releases and video of select proceedings. You can also follow us on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube. Search for the "Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission" or "PA PUC" on your favorite social media channel for updates on utility issues and other helpful consumer information.

Docket No. M-2020-3019244

Source: PUC Press Release, 3/13/2020

Laboratory Accreditation Advisory Committee Meeting Cancellation

The Department of Environmental Protection's April 2, 2020, meeting of the Laboratory Accreditation Advisory Committee is cancelled. The next committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 1, 2020, at 9 a.m. at the Bureau of Laboratories Building, 2575 Interstate Drive, Harrisburg.

Questions concerning the October 1, 2020, meeting can be directed to Martina McGarvey at mmcgarvey@pa.gov or (717) 346-7200. The agenda and meeting materials will be available through the department's **website** <https://www.dep.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx>.

Source: Pennsylvania Bulletin, 3/14/2020
<http://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/Display/pabull?file=/secure/pabulletin/data/vol150/50-11/391.html>

PUC Recognizes 'Fix a Leak Week;' Highlights Importance of Water

On March 12, 2020, the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) highlighted the importance of water, including its safety, efficiency and conservation efforts in conjunction with National "Fix a Leak Week," which is March 16-22, 2020.

The annual **Fix a Leak campaign** <https://www.epa.gov/watersense/fix-leak-week> challenges households across the country to check their fixtures for leaks and consider the environmental and economic impact of wasted water.

"Households across the country are encouraged to check their fixtures for leaks and consider the environmental and economic impact of wasted

water. And also remember that leaks can run, but they can't hide," said David W. Sweet, PUC Vice Chairman and member of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) Committee on Water.

According to the **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

<https://www.epa.gov/watersense/im-water-pledge> (EPA), an estimated 10 percent of all homes have leaks that waste 90 gallons or more per day, and the average household leaks can waste more than 10,000 gallons of water every year. Leaks nationwide equal the annual household water use of more than 11 million homes.

As part of Fix a Leak Week, Pennsylvanians are encouraged to identify and fix leaks around their homes. The PUC and EPA offer the following tips:

- Review your water usage during a colder month, such as January or February. If a family of four exceeds 12,000 gallons per month, there are serious leaks.
- Check your water meter before and after a two-hour period when no water is being used. If the meter changes at all, you probably have a leak.
- Identify toilet leaks by placing a drop of food coloring in the toilet tank. If any color shows up in the bowl after 10 minutes, you have a leak. (Be sure to flush immediately after the experiment to avoid staining the tank.)
- Examine faucet gaskets and pipe fittings for any water on the outside of the pipe to check for surface leaks.

More tips for finding leaks and saving water are available on the **EPA's WaterSense website** <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2017-02/documents/ws-ourwater-detect-and-chase-down-leaks-checklist.pdf>.

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For recent news releases and video of select Commission proceedings or more information about the PUC, visit our website at <http://www.puc.pa.gov/>. Follow the PUC on Twitter – @PA_PUC for all things utility. “Like” Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission on Facebook for easy access to information on utility issues.

Source: PUC Press Release, 3/12/2020

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This newsletter provides general information, not legal advice as to any specific matter. It should not be used as a substitute for appropriate legal advice.