



GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

From Milliron and Goodman Government Relations, LLC, Harrisburg, PA

**Berks County
Water & Sewer**
ASSOCIATION

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Chapter 102 Electronic Permit System to be Released Monday (Jan. 25th)

Select functionality available during initial release

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is finalizing development and testing of an electronic permitting (ePermitting) system for Chapter 102 permit applications for stormwater discharges associated with construction activities.

The initial release of the Chapter 102 ePermit system will occur on Monday, January 25, 2021. The system is accessed through **DEP GreenPort**

https://www.depgreenport.state.pa.us/pls/apex/f?p=110:12:::P12_REQUEST_ID,P12_OAM_REQ,P12_ERROR_CODE,P12_SEC_ERROR_MESSAGE,P12_LAUNCH_DATE:null,null,null,null,20210121

"Increasing the availability of online permitting is another way DEP is improving efficiency and providing certainty for applicants," said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell. "This new option for

applications will reduce workload for staff, allowing improved permit reviews."

The Chapter 102 ePermit system will save time for applicants, County Conservation District (CCD) staff, and DEP reviewers. One of the overall goals of DEP's ePermitting effort is to improve the efficiency of submission and reviews of permit applications and Notices of Intent (NOIs) and allow faster responses to applicants regarding permit submission, review, and issuance. The system will also include online payment of certain fees for applications, will reduce the expense of printing design drawings, and make information available in real-time to the public (which will increase transparency). DEP and CCD are still accepting paper applications; however, DEP expects to eventually completely replace paper applications with electronic submission.

DEP's Bureau of Clean Water administers the statewide Erosion and Sediment Control (E&S) program under Pennsylvania Code Title 25 (Environmental Protection) Chapter 102. Chapter 102 requires a permit from DEP for construction activities involving one or more acres of earth disturbance, timber harvesting and road maintenance activities involving 25 or more acres

of earth disturbance, and oil and gas and other activities involving five or more acres of earth disturbance.

The initial release of the Chapter 102 ePermit system will include new NOIs for coverage under the PAG-02 General NPDES Permit for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Construction Activities and NOIs for PAG-02 amendments of coverage for applications that were originally processed in the ePermit system.

Development of the Chapter 102 ePermitting effort was built on other DEP ePermitting efforts, including the Oil and Gas Management and Chapter 105 ePermitting efforts. The Chapter 102 effort engaged CCDs, PennDOT, and engineering consultants.

Please contact RA-EPChapter102@pa.gov and visit the **Chapter 102 ePermit website** <https://www.dep.pa.gov/Business/Water/CleanWater/StormwaterMgmt/Stormwater%20Construction/Pages/Chapter-102-ePermit.aspx> for information on trainings and other resources.

Source: DEP Press Release, 1/21/2021

Governor Wolf Announces \$178 Million Investment in Water Infrastructure Projects in 11 Counties

On January 20, 2021, Governor Tom Wolf announced the investment of \$178 million for 14 drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater projects across 11 counties through the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority (PENNVEST). "This continued focus on improving and investing in our infrastructure is vital for strong communities," said Gov. Wolf. "Partnering with community leaders to make these investments, which ensure increased access to clean drinking water and provide stable environments for Pennsylvanians to work and live, is paramount to our regrowth as a commonwealth."

The funding for these projects originates from a combination of state funds approved by voters, Growing Greener, Marcellus Legacy funds, federal grants to PENNVEST from the Environmental Protection Agency, and recycled loan repayments from previous PENNVEST funding awards. Funds for these projects are disbursed after expenses for work are paid and receipts are submitted to PENNVEST for review.

"These investments are not just in today's improvements, but in our homes and businesses for generations to come," said Gov. Wolf. "Strong communities and healthy Pennsylvanians depend on clean water and thrive where there is secure infrastructure."

A list of project summaries follows:

Drinking Water Projects

Blair County

- **Altoona Water Authority** - received a \$21,000,000 loan to upgrade and rehabilitate the Bellwood Dam, a 119-year-old dam whose spillway was recently reported as severely deficient by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The project will restore structural integrity of the dam and allow for improved control of water withdrawal from the reservoir.
- ***Altoona Water Authority** - received a \$9,900,000 loan to improve the Bellwood water treatment facility, including the installation of new raw water metering and ozone generation and injection systems. The project will improve treatment to remove giardia and cryptosporidium, while also increasing the general reliability and quality of community drinking water.

Lehigh County

- ***Lehigh County Authority** - received a \$2,000,000 loan to replace two high lift pump variable frequency drives and add a third drive. The project will continue the supply of finished drinking water and ensure appropriate capacity levels are achieved for the supply area.

Snyder County

- ***Middleburg Municipal Authority** - received a \$4,031,176 loan and a \$555,024 grant to replace approximately 10,000 feet of cast iron and asbestos cement pipe with ductile iron pipe, while adding a new 290,000-gallon water storage tank and a 163,000-gallon standpipe tank. The project will satisfy the requirements of a DEP Consent Order, reduce water loss through leaking pipes, and ensure safe potable drinking water for the supply area.

Wastewater Projects

Allegheny County

- ****Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority** - received a \$7,750,000 loan to rehabilitate roughly 7.4 miles of wastewater collection line in the Brighton Heights, Hazelwood, and South Side slope areas of Pittsburgh. The project will address a DEP Corrective Action Plan and reduce discharges into the Monongahela and Ohio rivers.

Lycoming County

- **Franklin Township** - received a \$2,757,804 grant to construct the Lairdsville sanitary sewer system, consisting of 8,500 feet of piping, laterals, and a pumping station. The project will address existing malfunctioning onlot sewage systems and ensure proper treatment of raw sewage.

Mercer County

- **Perry Township** - received a \$3,950,500 grant to implement an Act 537 sewage plan which includes the installation of 42,500 feet of pressure mains, grinder pumps, and a wastewater treatment plant. The project will extend wastewater service to the Hadley and Camp Perry areas of Perry Township, meet regulatory requirements, and eliminate a number of onlot "wildcat" sewage systems, which currently have a failure rate of 86%.

Mifflin County

- **Brown Township Municipal Authority** - received a \$2,100,000 loan to construct a secondary clarifier for the existing wastewater service area. The project will serve 1,197 residential customers, adding redundancy by replacing and decommissioning current clarifiers that do not meet peak flow conditions.
- **Union Township Municipal Authority** - received a \$1,781,522 loan and a \$1,618,478 grant to install a new aerobic digester and pump station with three new pumps, aeration blowers, and upgrades to existing storage tanks. The project will achieve compliance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) and improve discharge into the Kishacoquillas Creek, a tributary of the Susquehanna River.

Philadelphia County

- ****City of Philadelphia** - received a \$100,115,000 loan to construct a 300-million-gallon-per-day preliminary treatment facility, including a diversion structure to reroute wastewater from existing sewer interceptors and new screening and grit removal systems. The project will address numerous requirements under the federal Clean Water Act and the Pennsylvania Clean Streams Law, while also reducing the combined sewer overflows into the Delaware River.

Stormwater Projects

Clarion County

- **Hawthorn Borough** - received a \$158,267 loan and a \$1,179,583 grant to install approximately 6,430 feet of storm sewer, inlets, and grass swales. The project will alleviate flooding and increase water quality through the use of grass swales, designed to infiltrate stormwater.

Delaware County

- ****Stormwater Authority of the City of Chester** - received a \$9,963,539 grant to address localized flooding in the Veteran's Park area of the City of Chester by installing approximately 1,600 feet of pipe, inlets, porous

panels, and a regional stormwater control basin. The project will improve water quality through the use of capturing inlets and address critical safety hazards caused by first-floor residential flooding.

Lackawanna County

- **Lace Building Affiliates, LP** - received a \$2,554,667 loan to provide stormwater relief for the redevelopment of the Lace Village in Scranton, including 5,923 feet of storm sewer, a 200-gallon rain barrel, and underground detention basins. The project will prevent flooding on the redevelopment site, which is located in an environmental justice community, and employ green infrastructure.

Philadelphia County

- ****City of Philadelphia** - received a \$6,720,000 loan to address stormwater issues in the southwest Lawncrest neighborhood of North Philadelphia by installing 31 green infrastructure systems, including tree trenches, bumpouts, and stormwater trees. The project will improve water quality conditions and reduce the amount of untreated effluent entering the Delaware River in an environmental justice area.

* denotes projects that are funded with Drinking Water State Revolving Funds

** denotes projects that are funded with Clean Water State Revolving Funds

Source: Governor Wolf's Press Office, 1/20/2021

SRBC Marks 50th Anniversary, Highlights Accomplishments

This year marks the Susquehanna River Basin Commission's (SRBC) 50th anniversary. The effective date of the Susquehanna River Basin Compact, which authorized the creation of the Commission, was January 23, 1971.

"It's a good time to reflect on our role in the management of the river basin's water resources and how the events of the past half century have shaped SRBC," says Andrew Dehoff, SRBC Executive Director.

"Some of our most noteworthy accomplishments include state-of-the-art flood forecasting and early warning systems, the development of water storage agreements, long term water quality monitoring, effective water withdrawal regulations, and contributions to the Chesapeake Bay restoration," says Dehoff. "All of SRBC's efforts are in support of meeting the river basin's public, economic, and ecological needs."

Since 1971, SRBC has been dedicated to fulfilling its mission as a federal-interstate compact. Its duty is to coordinate the management of water resources across state lines, which requires a strong commitment from its member states of New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland along with the federal government, represented by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

In celebration of its golden anniversary, state and federal leaders and partners are applauding SRBC's achievements over the years. Among those sending congratulatory letters and citations are the Honorable PA Governor Tom Wolf, Honorable US Senators Pat Toomey and Bob Casey Jr., and the PA State Senate and PA House of Representatives. In addition, PA Secretary of Conservation and Natural Resources Cindy Adams Dunn and Executive Directors of the Delaware River Basin Commission, Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin and Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation have sent congratulatory remarks.

Former Commission chair Aneca Y. Atkinson, Deputy Secretary for the Office of Water Programs in the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, remarked on the occasion, "I am proud to represent the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a Commissioner for the Susquehanna River Basin Commission and to celebrate the 50th anniversary of this important effort. For five decades the Susquehanna River Basin Commission has worked as a partnership in balancing the needs of communities with larger state and federal goals, for

the overall benefit of all involved. Today, thanks in part to the efforts of the Susquehanna River Basin Commission and its members, we see cleaner water and healthier communities throughout the watershed. I look forward to working with the Susquehanna River Basin Commission in our ongoing commitment to improving water quality in the Susquehanna River Basin and am honored to help usher in the next 50 years of cooperative conservation and protection of this critical watershed."

SRBC is launching today an anniversary campaign that will include special features in its newsletter and social media posts, an online historical story map that covers SRBC's history and landmark achievements, and special events throughout the coming months.

To kick-off the celebration, the Commission is pleased to announce a new proposed Comprehensive Plan that articulates its vision, goals, and objectives for the basin over the next two decades. Marking the halfway point in the 100-year Susquehanna River Basin Compact, the 2021 plan will employ the latest scientific and technological advances to continue the Commission's collaborative work - whether it involves water supply, water quality, floods and droughts, or ecosystem health. Cross-cutting challenges such as climate change and environmental justice will also be addressed. The Commission is accepting public comments on the **Draft 2021 Comprehensive Plan** <https://www.srbc.net/our-work/programs/planning-operations/comprehensive-plan.html> through February 19, 2021.

Source: SRBC Press Release, 1/21/2021

Pennsylvania's Unemployment Rate Declines to 6.7 Percent in December

*Unemployment Rate Declines for Eighth
Consecutive Month*

On January 22, 2021, the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) released its employment situation report for December 2020.

Pennsylvania's unemployment rate was down 0.1 percentage points over the month to 6.7 percent in December, the eighth consecutive monthly decline. The U.S. rate remained unchanged from November at 6.7 percent. The commonwealth's unemployment rate was 2.1 percentage points above its December 2019 level while the national rate was up 3.1 points over the year.

Pennsylvania's civilian labor force – the estimated number of residents working or looking for work – decreased 15,000 over the month due to declines in both employment and unemployment.

Pennsylvania's total nonfarm jobs were down 37,600 over the month to 5,606,000 in December. The December decline followed seven consecutive monthly gains. Jobs decreased in 7 of the 11 industry supersectors, but the largest contributor was leisure & hospitality (-36,900). The largest gain was in trade, transportation, and utilities, up 18,700 jobs due to increases in all component sectors – wholesale trade, retail trade and transportation, warehousing & utilities.

Additional information is available on the L&I website at www.dli.pa.gov

Note: The above data are seasonally adjusted. Seasonally adjusted data provide the most valid month-to-month comparison.

Source: PA Department of Labor & Industry Press Release, 1/22/2021

CBF Sues EPA for Failing to Protect Watershed Residents and the Bay from Particulate Pollution

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) and environmental and public health partners today sued EPA for refusing to strengthen air quality limits for small, airborne particles (known as

particulate matter). Major sources of particulate matter pollution include industrial facilities, power plants, vehicle tailpipe emissions, and large poultry operations.

Joining CBF in filing suit in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit are American Lung Association, Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future, Conservation Law Foundation, Environment America, Environmental Defense Fund, National Parks Conservation Association, Natural Resources Council of Maine, Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, and Union of Concerned Scientists.

EPA decided last month not to update particulate matter standards set back in 2012, even though the most up-to-date science shows that the current standard does not sufficiently protect public health. The Clean Air Act requires the standards to "accurately reflect the latest scientific knowledge."

Stronger particulate matter controls would also benefit the Bay cleanup by reducing emissions of ammonia and nitrogen oxides, which cause **nitrogen deposition** <https://www.cbf.org/issues/air-pollution/> into the Bay and its waterways. Nitrogen is one of the three pollutants that must be reduced to achieve the goals of the **Chesapeake Clean Water Blueprint** <https://www.cbf.org/how-we-save-the-bay/chesapeake-clean-water-blueprint/what-is-the-chesapeake-clean-water-blueprint.html> by the 2025 deadline.

EPA's decision to leave weak particulate matter limits in place also ignored a growing body of evidence that communities of color and low-income communities are exposed to more particulate matter pollution and are disproportionately vulnerable to the harm it can cause than wealthier White communities.

Finally, EPA's flawed review process for reviewing the current standard repeatedly marginalized scientific expertise and abandoned long-standing practice. For example, EPA arbitrarily disbanded an independent expert panel that previously helped the agency conduct an unbiased, rigorous scientific assessment of the particulate matter safeguards.

In a related action on January 13, Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, all located in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, joined 12 other states and New York City in filing a similar **suit** <https://www.mass.gov/doc/naaqs-pm-petition/download> challenging EPA's decision not to tighten current particulate matter limits.

CBF Staff Litigation Attorney Ariel Solaski made the following statement about the case:

"The Trump EPA's decision to retain dangerously weak fine particulate matter standards is contrary to the Clean Air Act and the scientific record. It is also the result of a deeply flawed review process that repeatedly marginalized scientific expertise. People living in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and the effort to restore the health of the Bay will pay a high price for EPA's failure.

"Strong limits are essential to protecting the health of the more than 18 million people who live and work in the Bay's 64,000 square-mile watershed. Watershed communities facing environmental injustices, whose members are especially susceptible to particulate matter pollution, will unjustly bear the heaviest burden.

"CBF will fight to reverse EPA's arbitrary and illegal refusal to strengthen particulate matter standards. The watershed's most vulnerable residents and the health of the Chesapeake Bay deserve nothing less."

Source: CBF Press Release, 1/19/2021

DEP Provides \$1 Million in Support as 26 More Counties in Chesapeake Bay Watershed Begin Developing Plans to Improve Local Water Quality

State Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan reaches a milestone, with all counties signed on

On January 22, 2021, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced it has awarded approximately \$1 million in grants to support 26 counties in the upper half of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed in developing Countywide Action Plans to improve local water quality.

The counties join eight others in the lower half of the watershed who developed Countywide Action Plans in 2019 and 2020. All 34 counties that were asked to create and carry out plans to reduce local nutrient and sediment pollution as part of the state **Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan** [https://www.dep.pa.gov/Business/Water/Pennsylvania%E2%80%99s%20Chesapeake%20Bay%20Program%20Office/WIP3/Pages/Phase-III-WIP-\(Watershed-Implementation-Plans\).aspx](https://www.dep.pa.gov/Business/Water/Pennsylvania%E2%80%99s%20Chesapeake%20Bay%20Program%20Office/WIP3/Pages/Phase-III-WIP-(Watershed-Implementation-Plans).aspx) have now signed on.

"This is an exciting first in Pennsylvania's longtime work to improve the health of the watershed," said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell. "Having all counties on board demonstrates a new level of community commitment to improving local waters and protecting the benefits they bring to our lives. It also reflects the effectiveness of new partnerships by state agencies and the agriculture, forestry, wastewater, and business sectors to support this local work. DEP will do everything we can to sustain this action for healthy waters."

DEP awarded \$1 million in grants from the Environmental Stewardship Fund to support local development of planning teams and Countywide Action Plans of best management projects to reduce nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment pollution. These pollutants are building up in streams, rivers, and lakes as a result of human activities such as applying fertilizers, plowing and tilling agricultural fields, and stripping away trees and vegetation, increasing streambank erosion.

To make the most of limited funding, the 26 counties have formed groups to develop 10 Countywide Action Plans. Each group applied for and was approved for up to \$100,000 in grant funding.

- Group 1: Chester, Berks, and Schuylkill counties

- Group 2: Lackawanna, Luzerne, and Susquehanna counties
- Group 3: Lycoming and Northumberland counties
- Group 4: Tioga, Potter, and Bradford counties
- Group 5: Snyder and Union counties
- Group 6: Montour, Columbia, and Sullivan counties
- Group 7: Clinton, Clearfield, and Cambria counties
- Group 8: Blair, Huntingdon, and Fulton counties
- Group 9: Dauphin and Perry counties
- Group 10: Juniata and Mifflin counties

The DEP grants are part of multiyear agreements to support counties' participation in **Pennsylvania's Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan** [https://www.dep.pa.gov/Business/Water/Pennsylvania%E2%80%99s%20Chesapeake%20Bay%20Program%20Office/WIP3/Pages/Phase-III-WIP-\(Watershed-Implementation-Plans\).aspx](https://www.dep.pa.gov/Business/Water/Pennsylvania%E2%80%99s%20Chesapeake%20Bay%20Program%20Office/WIP3/Pages/Phase-III-WIP-(Watershed-Implementation-Plans).aspx) to meet federal obligations to improve the health of the bay.

The state plan takes a **Healthy Waters, Healthy Communities** <https://www.depgis.state.pa.us/chesapeakebaywatershed/index.html> approach, giving county teams control of local water quality improvement, while providing as much data, technical assistance, funding, and other support as possible. It encourages and equips counties to develop strategies and determine project sites and types that will benefit their communities and farmers, municipalities, businesses, and other landowners while restoring the environment.

Adams, Franklin, Lancaster, and York counties completed their Countywide Action Plans in 2019 and began to enlist partners, pursue funding sources, and break ground on projects in 2020. Bedford, Centre, Cumberland, and Lebanon counties submitted their draft plans to DEP in December and are in the process of finalizing them.

All or part of 43 Pennsylvania counties are in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The remaining nine counties have low levels of nutrient and sediment pollution and are not requested to develop Countywide Action Plans.

Source: DEP Press Release, 1/22/2021

Agricultural Advisory Board 2021 Virtual Meeting Schedule

The Department of Environmental Protection's Agricultural Advisory Board will meet virtually at 9 a.m. on the following days: March 18; June 10; August 26; October 21; and December 9.

Individuals who wish to join the meetings may do so remotely. Information regarding the meeting and how to connect will be provided on the board's **website**

<https://www.dep.pa.gov/PublicParticipation/AdvisoryCommittees/WaterAdvisory/AAB/Pages/default.aspx>.

Individuals interested in providing public comments during a meeting must sign up prior to the start of that meeting by contacting Jay Braund at jbraund@pa.gov or (717) 772-5636.

Source: Pennsylvania Bulletin, 1/23/2021
<http://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/Display/pabull?file=/secure/pabulletin/data/vol51/51-4/124.html>

EQB Meeting Cancellation

The Environmental Quality Board has **cancelled** the February 16 meeting. The next regular meeting of the board is tentatively scheduled to occur virtually at 9 a.m., March 16.

Information on how to join the meeting, as well as agenda and meeting materials, will be available on the board's **webpage**
<https://www.dep.pa.gov/PublicParticipation/EnvironmentalQuality/Pages/2021-Meetings.aspx>.

Questions concerning the meeting can be directed to Laura Griffin at laurgri@pa.gov or (717) 783-8727.

Source: Pennsylvania Bulletin, 1/23/2021
<http://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/Display/pabull?file=/secure/pabulletin/data/vol51/51-4/143.html>

Senator Lindsey M. Williams Releases Statement on COVID-19 Vaccine Roll Out In Pennsylvania

On January 22, 2021, Senator Lindsey M. Williams released the following statement:

"Our Pennsylvania Department of Health and PA Emergency Management Agency have been working diligently to develop a COVID-19 Vaccination Plan and to roll out vaccinations to the most vulnerable among us. But after more than 10 months of the uncertainty and hardships that this pandemic has brought us, Pennsylvanians are confused and anxious to receive a vaccine, and they deserve clearer communication and more concrete answers. I am asking the Department of Health for a transparent, clearly communicated, and efficient vaccine distribution plan for Pennsylvanians.

There is a dire need for Pennsylvanians to be able "sign up" to be notified of when they are eligible to receive a vaccine and where they can receive it. It appears as though Philadelphia residents have been able to sign up through a website, and individuals are receiving calls telling them if they can make it to a vaccination site within a short period of time, they'll be able to receive a vaccine. We need that sort of notification for all Pennsylvanians. Nearly a million Pennsylvanians have already downloaded the COVID Alert PA app to their phones- this would be a good opportunity to use this existing app to allow individuals to sign up for the vaccine.

We need to partner with our small, local pharmacies to assist with distribution. Many of our communities don't have access to or a relationship with a large corporate pharmacy, but they do have a local pharmacist who is qualified and able to administer vaccinations. These pharmacists know their patients and are in a better position to provide

vaccines as a part of their ongoing care. Other states, like West Virginia, have done exactly this and seen much success. Pennsylvania needs to follow suit. We cannot leave this incredible resource untapped in a task of this magnitude and importance.

I understand that we are at the mercy of vaccine distribution plans that are determined on the federal level and that we are trying to administer every vaccine that we are given. Here in Allegheny County, we have the good fortune to have a large number of healthcare workers, who make up the bulk of Distribution Phase 1A, which is where efforts are currently being focused. This means that our vaccine allocation is quickly used in protecting our front line health care workers. While it makes sense to prioritize the very small number of vaccines that we are receiving, our residents still need more guidance as to when and where they can expect to receive their vaccines.

And our residents also need to be assured that these vaccines are being used responsibly. We have all heard and read reports that UPMC is vaccinating healthy, young administrative employees who work from home or have absolutely no patient interaction. This only adds to the immense frustration felt by all of us, as we search for answers as to when our seniors and those with pre-existing conditions will be able to get their vaccines. I understand that there is a delicate balance between enforcing guidelines and getting vaccines into arms as quickly as possible. Flexibility is needed. However, some level of accountability is also needed - especially when it comes to UPMC, who has eroded the public's trust. The priority list was established for a reason and entities should be held accountable for distributing vaccines to the most vulnerable first.

Pennsylvanians deserve clear and direct communication from our government about when they will be able to receive a vaccine and assurance that this procedure is being carried out fairly and equitably. They do not have the time or energy to watch press conferences or to read press releases to find this information. Pennsylvania must catch up to other states in ease of vaccine distribution and communication. I urge the Department of Health to take additional steps to make acquiring the COVID-

19 vaccine easy and accessible for all Pennsylvanians."

Source: Senator Lindsay Williams Press Release, 1/22/2021

Gov. Wolf to Nominate Alison Beam as Secretary of Health, Names Dr. Wendy Braund as Interim Acting Physician General

On January 22, 2021, Governor Tom Wolf announced his intention to nominate Alison Beam to serve as Secretary of the Department of Health and named Dr. Wendy Braund Interim Acting Physician General.

"Alison Beam is a talented public servant who brings years of experience in health care policy and implementation to this position," said Gov. Wolf. "Alison knows that a strong, widely available, and successful vaccination strategy is the path out of the pains of this pandemic. Her foremost and immediate focus will be on the strategic distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine, making sure Pennsylvania receives as many doses as possible from the federal government, and that the Pennsylvania Department of Health coordinates with hospitals, health centers, county and local governments, and pharmacy partners to make this vaccine as widely available as possible to Pennsylvanians everywhere."

Beam currently serves as Deputy Chief of Staff to Governor Tom Wolf, coordinating initiatives and resources across Pennsylvania's departments of Health, Human Services, Drug & Alcohol Programs, Aging and Insurance, as well as the Office of Advocacy and Reform. She has helped coordinate the administration's COVID-19 pandemic response; the rollout of Pennie, Pennsylvania's health insurance marketplace; the Reach Out PA campaign; and the Wolf Administration's health care reform plan. Prior to transitioning to the Governor's Office, Beam served as Chief of Staff to the Pennsylvania Insurance Commissioner. She previously served as Director of Public Policy and Associate Counsel for

Independence Health Group in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Beam graduated from Drexel University School of Law and holds a Bachelor of Science in Health Policy and Administration from the Pennsylvania State University.

Beam will replace outgoing Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine, who has been nominated to serve as Assistant Secretary of Health in the federal Department of Health and Human Services. Beam will assume the role of Acting Secretary effective January 23, 2021.

The governor has also named Dr. Wendy Braund as Interim Acting Physician General, replacing Dr. Rachel Levine in that role.

"Wendy brings years of public health expertise and a commitment to improving public health practice in Pennsylvania to the role of Interim Acting Physician General," said Gov. Wolf. "Wendy has been an integral part of our COVID-19 pandemic response efforts, and that experience will be an asset in this role."

Braund, MD, MPH, MEd, FACPM, currently serves as the COVID-19 Response Director for the Pennsylvania Department of Health. Previously, she was the Director of the Center for Public Health Practice, Associate Dean for Practice, and a Professor of Health Policy and Management at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health. Prior to her time in academia, she served as the Wyoming State Health Officer and Public Health Division Administrator for the Wyoming Department of Health. Before working at the state level, Dr. Braund was employed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, first in the Office of the Assistant Secretary, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion and then at the Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Professions.

Dr. Braund has a BA from Duke University, MEd from the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, MPH from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and MD from the Penn State College of Medicine. She is a 2007 graduate of the Johns

Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Preventive Medicine Residency Program and is board certified in Public Health and General Preventive Medicine. She is a Fellow of the American College of Preventive Medicine.

Dr. Braund will assume the role of Interim Acting Physician General effective January 23, 2021.

Source: Governor Wolf Press Release, 1/22/2021

Senate Committee Advances Proposed Constitutional Amendment to Strengthen Emergency Response

The Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee approved a proposed amendment to the Pennsylvania Constitution today to bolster the state's efforts to respond to emergencies by limiting the length of future disaster declarations, according to prime sponsors Senators John DiSanto and (R-15) and Scott Martin (R-13).

The measure is also sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Kim Ward (R-39).

Under current law, a governor's emergency declaration can last up to 90 days and be renewed by the governor indefinitely. Governor Wolf has used the disaster declaration for nearly a year to suspend state statutes, spend taxpayer dollars without legislative approval, and keep millions of Pennsylvanians from earning a living through his business shutdown orders.

This consolidation of power has led to numerous problems throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, including flawed guidance that negatively impacted long-term care settings, delayed Unemployment Compensation payments to displaced workers, and individual businesses and entire industries being shuttered longer than necessary.

Senate Bill 2

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billinfo.cfm?year=2021&sind=0&body=S&type=B&BN=>

[0002](#) would limit emergency declarations to 21 days unless the General Assembly approves a longer duration. Limiting the length of an emergency declaration would ensure greater cooperation between all branches of government during an emergency and restore the system of checks and balances that Pennsylvania's government was founded upon.

In encouraging passage of the bill, Senator DiSanto said, "I have personally talked to hundreds of constituents and received thousands of emails from those harmed by the governor's orders. With extraordinary powers comes extraordinary responsibility, and regrettably this administration has demonstrated an utter lack of transparency and accountability."

"Allowing one person to hold such an extraordinary amount of power for an extended period of time will inevitably lead to oversights and mistakes that harm Pennsylvania citizens," Senator Martin said. "This Constitutional amendment would restore the balance of power and ensure the voice of the people is represented as we respond to future disasters."

The bill also would amend the Pennsylvania Constitution to prohibit the denial of equal rights based on race or ethnicity. The change would bring the state Constitution into line with the equal protections afforded by the U.S Constitution.

Because Senate Bill 2 would require an amendment to the Pennsylvania Constitution, the bill must be passed by the Senate and House of Representatives in two consecutive legislative sessions and be approved by voters via referendum. The bill was approved by the General Assembly during the last legislative session.

Source: Senate Republican Communications, 1/22/2021

In Memoriam: Patrick Solano, Senior Counselor, 51st Senator, Ambassador, Veteran, Gentlemen

On Saturday, sad news came that Pat Solano passed away at the age of 95 in Luzerne County. **Read more here** https://www.citizensvoice.com/news/patrick-solano-public-servant-to-nine-pa-governors-dies-at-95/article_09d30981-b658-54d5-9339-c88319a097bd.html.

Pat was called the 51st Senator, the ambassador to Northeast Pennsylvania and during his career served in various capacities for nine different Governors, Republican and Democrat.

He was respected, admired and loved for his ability to bridge differences and get things done that benefitted his native Northeast PA, and the entire state.

He was a gentleman, and treated everyone with respect. Now they would call it "old school."

These are qualities that are in short supply in today's politics.

He served in several positions in the Department of General Services, where he was in charge of state-funded building projects, and the Department of Environmental Resources.

But during the Ridge and Schweiker administrations he was Special Counselor to the Governor and worked on many issues, but was of critical help to the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources as they started their new directions in 1995.

A veteran of World War II, Pat was drafted into the military after graduating from Pittston Township High School and flew 23 bombing missions over Germany. **Read more here** https://www.citizensvoice.com/news/wwii-veteran-solano-i-remember-it-all/article_c1878a13-dffa-5d3c-92e4-b04efddd6cb6.html.

Gov. Tom Ridge said of his passing, "Pat somehow survived dozens of bombing runs over Europe, Won two Bronze Stars, and then counseled governors over half a century.

"Pat embodied the Greatest Generation-- a life of honor and service in which he always put others first. He will be deeply missed, but his legacy will be felt here in his beloved Pennsylvania -- and around the world -- forever."

Source: PA Environmental Digest, 1/24/2021
<http://www.paenvironmentdigest.com/newsletter/default.asp?NewsletterArticleID=52072&SubjectID=>

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