

Pennsylvania Perspective for Thursday, February 20, 2025

Pennsylvania

Shapiro Admin. Adopts “Aggressive Wait and See” Approach to Funding Freeze

Pennsylvania officials are awaiting further guidance on federal funding cuts — impacting infrastructure, energy, transit, and more — with Governor Josh Shapiro’s office suing five federal agencies over \$1.2 billion in inaccessible grant funding. Community and Economic Development Secretary Rick Siger emphasized the potential negative impact on the state’s economy and research institutions. The Pennsylvania Capital-Star has [more](#).

Gov. Shapiro Nominates Education, Environmental Protection Secretaries

Gov. Shapiro has nominated Dr. Carrie Rowe, a former school superintendent and current Deputy Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education, as Secretary of Education and Acting Secretary of Environmental Protection Jessica Shirley to serve in the position permanently. WHTM has [more](#).

PA Senate Leader Sheds Doubt on Likelihood of Marijuana Legalization

State Senate Appropriations Chair Scott Martin (R-Berks/Lancaster) expressed skepticism that a deal to legalize recreational marijuana will be reached this year, jeopardizing a key revenue component of Gov. Shapiro’s proposed 2025-26 budget. PennLive has [more](#).

Women’s Health Caucus Advocates for Maternal Health, Childcare Funding

The Pennsylvania Women’s Health Caucus is pushing for increased funding for Black maternal health, expanded childcare access, and free menstrual products for lower-income residents in the upcoming state budget. The Keystone has [more](#).

State-Owned Universities Seek Funding Increase to Prevent Tuition Hikes

Pennsylvania higher education officials are requesting a \$40.3 million funding boost to avoid tuition hikes at state-owned universities — which would impact 80,000 students — aiming to maintain steady enrollment and support the economic competitiveness of the state’s higher education institutions. Center Square Pennsylvania has [more](#).

Audit Reveals Issues in DCNR Grant Selections

An audit by state Auditor General Timothy DeFoor found that the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) did not always follow competitive processes for awarding grants, raising concerns about transparency and accountability. PoliticsPA has [more](#).

Data Privacy Bill Criticized as Weak by Advocates

Pennsylvania lawmakers are pushing for a consumer data privacy bill modeled on industry-supported legislation, but critics argue it places the burden on consumers and lacks strong protections. WITF has [more](#).

Three Mile Island Reactor Restart Ahead of Schedule



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Constellation's \$1.6 billion project to restart the Three Mile Island Unit 1 reactor is ahead of schedule, expected to create over 600 full-time jobs and bring significant economic benefits to Central Pennsylvania. City & State Pennsylvania has [more](#).

Philadelphia

Mayor Parker Appoints New HOME Initiative Leader

Mayor Chelle Parker has appointed housing nonprofit leader Angela Brooks to oversee the HOME initiative, which aims to create or preserve 30,000 affordable housing units in Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Inquirer has [more](#).

Eviction Filings Drop Thanks to Successful Diversion Program

Philadelphia's Eviction Diversion Program, the now-permanent program that helps mediate conflicts between landlords and tenants to avoid court, has significantly reduced eviction filings. The Philadelphia Inquirer has [more](#).

PHL Hit 30M Passengers in 2024, Highest Since Pre-Pandemic

Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) saw more than 30 million passengers in 2024, marking a full recovery from the pandemic, with further increases expected due to new flight routes and upcoming major events in 2026. WHYY has [more](#).

Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh Council Members Address School Tax Diversion Lawsuit

Pittsburgh City Council members addressed the lawsuit filed by a Mt. Oliver resident and PPS over diverted tax revenue, following last week's dismissal of a similar case seeking a countywide property tax reassessment. The Council emphasized the need to resolve the long-standing issue to support proactive growth for the city's schools.

Richey Set to Become Allegheny County GOP Chair

Sewickley attorney Jason Richey is poised to become the next chairman of the Republican Committee of Allegheny County after his opponents dropped out of the race. The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review has [more](#).

Metro Pittsburgh Office Vacancy Rates on the Rise

The office vacancy rate in metro Pittsburgh has surged to 21.9% in 2024 due to reduced demand for office space post-pandemic, with potential solutions including office-to-residential conversions and a \$600 million Downtown revitalization plan. Axios Pittsburgh has [more](#).

Federal

Beltway Briefing — DOGE: A New Age of Intentional Disruption

As the Trump administration and its Department of Government Efficiency work to streamline the federal government by reducing its size and workforce, their actions are increasingly colliding with a mountain of lawsuits. Listen to the latest episode featuring Public Strategies' Mark Alderman, Towner French, and Kyle Anderson [here](#).

Rep. Thompson: Farm Bill Delay Affects Everyone, Not Just Farmers

U.S. Representative Glenn "GT" Thompson (R-PA-15), who chairs the House Committee on Agriculture, emphasized the urgency of passing the overdue \$1.5 trillion Farm Bill. Rep. Thompson also expressed concerns over President Donald Trump's proposed tariffs and ongoing federal



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employee layoffs. WHTM has [more](#).

Coveted Voters Disillusioned with American Democracy

Participants in a Pennsylvania focus group expressed concerns about political polarization and the negative influence of social media, highlighting dissatisfaction with both major parties and a desire for more civility in politics. Politico has [more](#).
