



Pennsylvania's **STATE SYSTEM** of Higher Education

January 25, 2021

State Legislative UPDATE

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The House and Senate are in session this week.

The state's three row officers were sworn into office last Tuesday. [Treasurer Stacy Garrity](#) and [Auditor General Tim DeFoor](#) started their first terms. [Attorney General Josh Shapiro](#) began his second term.

Also last week, the Independent Fiscal Office released its Economic and Budget Outlook, offering new five-year projections of state revenues and expenditures.

"The [report](#) examines the demographic, economic, revenue and expenditure trends that will affect the Commonwealth's fiscal condition through fiscal year (FY) 2025-26. Based on

the economic and demographic assumptions used by this report, the analysis projects a substantial surplus for FY 2020-21, but operating deficits for all future years."

Senate

Session & Committee Activity

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The Senate returns to session at 1 p.m. today.

The chamber convened in non-voting session on Friday to receive legislation from the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee:

- [SB 2](#) (Ward) proposes an amendment to the Pennsylvania Constitution to limit emergency declarations to 21 days unless the General Assembly approves a longer duration. The bill also would amend the Pennsylvania Constitution to prohibit the denial of equal rights based on race or ethnicity.

Constitutional amendments require approval in two consecutive legislative sessions and then approval by the voters through a referendum. SB 2 was approved by the General Assembly during the last legislative session.

In committee activity, the Senate Education Committee has yet to organize, though new chairs have been announced. [Senator Scott Martin](#) of Lancaster County was appointed to serve as Republican chair. [Senator Lindsey Williams](#) of Allegheny County will serve as Democratic chair.

House of Representatives

Session & Committee Activity

[House Session Days](#) | [Watch Session Live](#) | [House Calendars](#) | [House Committee Meeting Schedule](#)

The House returns to session today at noon, and it is also scheduled to advance some proposed constitutional amendments:

- [HB 14](#) (Gregory): A Joint Resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania further providing for courts to be open and suits against the commonwealth. Provides that an individual for whom a statutory limitations period has already expired shall have a period of two years from the time that the subsection becomes effective to commence an action arising from childhood sexual abuse, in such cases as provided by law at the time that the subsection becomes effective.
- [HB 55](#) (Grove): A Joint Resolution proposing separate and distinct amendments to the Constitution of Pennsylvania, in declaration of rights, providing for prohibition against denial or abridgment of equality of rights because of race and ethnicity; in legislation, further providing for action on concurrent orders and resolutions; and, in the executive, providing for disaster emergency declaration and management.

Both were approved last session, so passage by both chambers could mean both constitutional amendments could be considered by voters on election day in May.

House committees continue to organize and adopt rules. The [House Education Committee](#), chaired by Reps. Sonney and Longietti, organized earlier this month. On February 9th, this committee and the House Appropriations Committee will hold a joint hearing for the purposes of receiving an update from Chancellor Greenstein pursuant to Act 50 of 2020.

Bill Tracking Report

Legislation and co-sponsorship memos of interest:

HOUSE

- [HB 85](#) (Miller): Seeks to improve the transition to post-secondary schools for students with disabilities by incorporating parts of Senator Bob Casey's federal RISE (Respond, Innovate, Succeed and Empower) Act. Introduced and referred to committee on House Education 1-11-21
- [HCO 876](#) (Kim): Allows in-state tuition for students who attended a high school in this Commonwealth for at least two years and graduated or received a GED. Filed 01-13-21
- [HCO 892](#) (Schweyer): Ensures parity for tuition and PHEAA financial aid for students of immigrant parents. Filed 01-13-21
- [HCO 924](#) (Ciresi): Requires the Department of Education to create a student tenant bill of rights and a one-time online course about living off-campus. Filed 01-14-21

SENATE

- [SB 37](#) (Phillips-Hill): Defines student data, who owns the data, who can correct records, the responsibilities of state and local education entities protecting student data privacy, and the designation and responsibilities of a chief data privacy officer. Introduced and referred to committee on Senate Education 1-20-21
- [SCO 572](#) (Hughes): Establishes the Pennsylvania Student Higher Education Lending Protection (PA Student HELP) Act and aims to address student debt at multiple levels: debt reduction, increased borrower protections and enhanced data collection. Filed 01-15-21

This update is provided as a courtesy of the Office of the Chancellor as a preview of upcoming legislative activity and a review of action on legislative issues of interest to the State System. The State Legislative UPDATE is distributed during legislative session weeks.

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