



February 1, 2021

State Legislative UPDATE

Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education

The pandemic has uniquely changed the delivery of the governor's annual Budget Address, which Governor Wolf will deliver by video to the General Assembly tomorrow Tuesday, February 2nd, at approximately 11:15 a.m. Watch [PCN's coverage](#) of the Budget Address or view live [House](#) or [Senate](#) video.

Governor Wolf late last week offered a preview of his 2021 agenda, "in which Pennsylvania businesses and workers have a path toward recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic, building on bipartisan progress by removing barriers to help everyday Pennsylvanians succeed, and demanding accountability through government reform." Read more [here](#) about the issues on which Governor Wolf is calling for action.

The Budget Address comes at a time when Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education has shown resolve, creativity, and success, both before and during the current pandemic.

In October 2020, the State System's Board of Governors [approved a resolution](#) that authorized Chancellor Greenstein to seek \$487 million in state appropriations for 2021-22 (a 2% increase over the current year). The System is also seeking \$25 million for System Redesign efforts as part of a multi-year request approved by the Board in 2019.

"We enjoy a collaborative, candid, and supportive partnership with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania," said Chair Cindy Shapira in October about the budget request. "We acknowledge that the State has many challenges to confront due to the coronavirus pandemic, and we also have a strong case to make that the State System is critical to the success of Pennsylvania's economic future. That success depends on robust support from the Commonwealth that keeps tuition low..."

We look forward to continuing conversations with the General Assembly as it deliberates a 2021-22 budget in the coming months.

Senate

Session & Committee Activity

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

"The state Senate is not scheduled to be in session today, and is slated for session on Tuesday, starting at 11 a.m.," reports Capitolwire.

Last week the Senate approved [SB 109](#), a comprehensive \$912 million relief package to help restaurants, schools, employers, and tenants impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The legislation, now before the House, amends the state Fiscal Code to allocate, among other things, \$197 million for education programs, including \$5 million to support the State System's restructuring initiative. Read more [here](#).

The chamber also passed [SB 2](#), a constitutional amendment to limit the length of future emergency disaster declarations unless an extension is approved by the General Assembly.

Under current law, a governor's emergency declaration can last up to 90 days and be renewed by the governor indefinitely. Under the proposed constitutional amendment, the emergency declaration would be limited to 21 days unless the General Assembly approved a longer duration. It also clarifies that the legislature is not required to present the resolution ending the declaration to the governor for his consideration.

SB 2 also provides for a constitutional amendment prohibiting the denial of equal rights based on race or ethnicity, bringing the Pennsylvania Constitution in line with the U.S. Constitution.

The bill is now before the House of Representatives for consideration. As a constitutional amendment, the legislation must be approved by the General Assembly in two consecutive legislative sessions before being put on the ballot for voters to decide. The measure was approved by the General Assembly in the previous legislative session.

In committee activity, the Senate Judiciary Committee meets this week to consider Rep. Jim Gregory's statute of limitations bill that would provide a two-year window for childhood sexual abuse victims to submit claims in civil court:

- [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.

Along with SB 2, this matter can potentially go to the voters as a referendum question in the May 18 Primary Election.

House of Representatives

Session & Committee Activity

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

"The state House of Representatives has cancelled its session for Monday, February 1st, and all of the legislative standing committee meetings for the day," reports Capitolwire. The chamber will meet Tuesday at 11 a.m. for legislative business.

In floor activity last week, the chamber approved legislation that would limit emergency declarations to 21 days. [HB 55](#) provides the declaration could be extended with approval of the House and Senate. Currently, a governor's emergency declaration can last up to 90 days and be renewed by the governor indefinitely.

The General Assembly approved last session a similar bill. Should House Bill 55 or Senate Bill 2 be approved again this session, the question would be put forth to voters, potentially as soon as the Primary Election.

This week the chamber is expected to advance SB 2, as well as SB 109, legislation that would appropriate COVID-19 relief. Read the weekly schedule [here](#).

Committees will discuss various issues, include the impact of COVID-19 and vaccine deployment.

Looking ahead, on February 9th, at 1:00 p.m., the House Appropriations and Education Committees will hold a joint hearing for the purposes of receiving an update from Chancellor Greenstein pursuant to [Act 50 of 2020](#). Watch the livestream [here](#).

Bill Tracking Report

Legislation and co-sponsorship memos of interest:

HOUSE

[SB 109](#) (Pittman): Amends the Fiscal Code, in emergency COVID-19 response, repealing provisions relating to Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency. 02-01-21 H Set on the House Calendar

[HB 288](#) (O'Neal): Provides for regulatory compliance, requiring each agency to designate a regulatory compliance officer. 01-27-21 H Introduced as a bill

[HB 296](#) (Diamond): Clarifies that a record created in whole or in part by a government agency cannot be a trade secret or confidential proprietary information and therefore cannot be exempt from access. 01-27-21 H Introduced and referred to committee on House State Government

[HB 354](#) (Isaacson): Amends Public School Code, in miscellaneous provisions relating to institutions of higher education, providing for payment of salary in cases of leave due to COVID-19. 01-29-21 H Filed

[HCO1074](#) (Rowe): Provides public notice of public employee collective bargaining

agreements prior to approval. 01-25-21 H Filed

[HCO1139](#) (Rozzi): Allows a homeless minor to apply to high school or post-secondary schools, as well as contract for a variety of services. 01-29-21 H Filed

[HCO1142](#) (Rozzi): Requires post-secondary institutions to provide homeless youth priority for on-campus housing, develop plans for housing during breaks, and provide a homeless youth liaison. 01-29-21 H Filed

SENATE

[SB 13](#) (Hughes): Provides for mandatory Statewide employer-paid sick leave for employees and for civil penalties and remedies. 01-28-21 S Introduced and referred to committee on Senate Banking and Insurance

[SB 132](#) (Fontana): Provides standards for carbon monoxide alarms in dormitories; and imposing penalties. 01-26-21 S Introduced and referred to committee on Senate Education

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.

Jennifer Hoover
Director of Governmental Relations
jhoover@passhe.edu
(717) 720-4021



www.passhe.edu | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [YouTube](#)

The content of this message and related hyperlinks is for information purposes only and does not necessarily express the views of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, or its agents.

