

PSATS NewsBulletin

DECEMBER 2022

A NEWSLETTER
CONTAINING
THE LATEST
INFORMATION
ON LEGISLATION
AND NEWS OF
INTEREST TO
TOWNSHIPS

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Challenges to FCC Broadband Maps Due January 13

The Federal Communications Commission recently released new broadband coverage maps, broadbandmap.fcc.gov, which will be used to distribute billions in federal funding for unserved and underserved areas. Anyone can submit an online challenge to correct locations, broadband availability, and broadband speeds.

PSATS and the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority urge township officials to review the maps and share them with your residents. The maps show both fixed and mobile broadband coverage, which was submitted by broadband providers. **Township officials should visit the map to search for their communities to determine whether the information listed by the FCC is accurate, specifically those areas in need of land-based broadband service.**

The map's accuracy is crucial for the commonwealth to receive sufficient federal funding to ensure high-speed internet access for all Pennsylvanians. **Challenges to the maps are due January 13** to be considered for federal funding.

To learn more, including how to submit challenges, go to psats.org and choose the broadband article on the home page.

PSATS Conference Registration Opens January 10!

Registration for PSATS 2023 "Road to the Future" Annual Conference and Exhibit Show opens at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, January 10. If you want to learn all you can about township government and how to better carry out your many responsibilities as a township official, there is no better opportunity than the PSATS Annual Conference, which will be held in Hershey April 23-26!

Here's what you need to do at your annual organization meeting on Tuesday, January 3, so that you can be ready to register:

1 – Identify your conference attendees.

2 – Designate one voting delegate from the following township officials who will be attending the conference: board/council member, secretary, treasurer, or manager. The voting delegate votes on behalf of your township at the business meeting on April 25.

Make sure you're ready to register online. To receive the discounted conference member rate, you will need the PSATS ID number for **each** person attending the conference and every registrant needs a unique email address. Instructions for checking your township's PSATS account are included in your conference materials packet. If you need to make any changes to your data, be sure to take care of this by January 9.

PSATS is encouraging every township to register online. It's easy and saves you money!

Plan to send at least one person from your township to the Annual Conference, which is your once-a-year opportunity to learn all you can about township government, network with your peers, meet with exhibitors, and set PSATS policy. **Want to learn more?** Go to conference.psats.org.



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Do your township
leaders
demonstrate
exceptional
dedication
to public service?
Nominate them
for the 2023
Governor's Award
for Local
Government
Excellence!

Capitol Roundup

2021-2022 Legislative Session Ends — The 2021-2022 session of the General Assembly officially ended November 30. The new session will begin January 3. All legislation for the 2021-2022 session that did not make it to the governor's desk has now "died," including any bills reported in any PSATS publications during 2021 and 2022.

Nominations Open for 2023 Governor's Award! — Do your township leaders demonstrate exceptional dedication to public service? Nominate them today for the 2023 Governor's Awards for Local Government Excellence. These awards recognize local officials for their success at improving the quality of life in their communities. Nominations are accepted until **January 17, 2023**. To learn more, go to dced.pa.gov/governors-awards-for-local-government-excellence/

Shapiro Appoints Advisors — Gov.-Elect Josh Shapiro has begun to appoint key advisors for his administration. Dana Fritz will serve as chief of staff, Larry Hailshom Jr. as executive chief of staff, Jennifer Selber as general counsel, and Uri Monson as state budget secretary.

Legislative Caucuses Hold Leadership Elections — The legislative caucuses recently held leadership elections for 2023-2024 and these results are included in the January 2023 issue of the *Pennsylvania Township News*.

Senator Kim Ward of Westmoreland County will serve as the Senate Pro Tempore. She is a former township supervisor and the first female to ever hold the position.

Sen. Gordner Resigns, Special Election Scheduled — State Sen. John Gordner resigned from the state Senate to serve as counsel to State Senate Pro Tempore Kim Ward. Over his career in the Senate, Gordner sponsored several bills that amended the Second Class Township Code to implement PSATS resolutions.

A special election is scheduled for January 31 to fill the remaining two years of the term for the 27th Senatorial District, which covers all of Columbia, Northumberland, Montour, and Snyder counties and some parts of Luzerne County.

Vacancies Lead to Confusion over House Majority — Vacancies in the House due to resignations and a death are leading to confusion over majority control, leading to competing calls for special election, all for February 7. All three vacancies, the 32nd, 34th, and 35th House District, are in Allegheny County. The controversy is now headed to court. The House Speaker is expected to be elected when the chamber returns on January 3, where the Republicans will hold a 101-99 majority with three open seats.

OOR's E-File Portal Open for Township Use — The second phase of the Office of Open Record's rollout of its E-File Portal is online. During this phase, the OOR will require every third appeal that involves a local agency to be processed through the E-File Portal. OOR encourages voluntary use of the portal for appeals. Go to openrecords.pa.gov for more.

Show Off Your Township's Road Project

Did your township complete a road or bridge project in 2022 that enhanced safety in your community? Consider entering the 2023 Road and Bridge Safety Improvement Contest. Entries must include visible improvements, such as the installation of guide rails, stop signs, or other safety features; road widening and resurfacing; traffic rerouting; bridge repair or replacement; or sight distance improvement. The deadline is **March 3, 2023**.

Brochures with entry forms are enclosed with this *Bulletin*. Winners will receive their awards at PSATS' 2023 Annual Educational Conference and will be the subject of a *Township News* article. For more information, go to www.psats.org/road-and-bridge-safety-awards/.

Governor Signs New Laws

Act 104
creates new
programs
funded by the
fireworks tax in
Act 74 of 2022
to help recruit and
retain volunteer
firefighters
and EMS
personnel.

The following new laws impacting townships were recently signed into law and take effect January 3, 2023 unless noted otherwise.

[Act 104 of 2022](#) increases the time limit on additional funding for merged fire and EMS companies from the Fire Company and EMS Grant program from 10 to 20 years. The act increases the cap on fire company grants from \$15,000 to \$20,000 and from \$10,000 to \$15,000 per EMS company.

The act **creates new programs funded by the fireworks tax in Act 74 of 2022. This includes a loan forgiveness and tuition assistance program for active volunteer firefighters** and volunteer EMS providers of up to \$1,000 per year for full-time students and \$500 per year for part-time students; scholarships for EMS personnel and reimbursement for EMS agency recruitment and retention costs; fireworks public safety education; reimbursement to bomb squads for storage and destruction of illegal fireworks; and capital grants for municipal and combination fire departments and emergency services training centers.

Act 104 requires the Office of the State Fire Commissioner to make online access to training through an education certification management system, including registration, transcripts, and certificates. The act extends the deadline for the State Fire Advisory Board's report to change the Fire Relief Funding Formula and Fire Relief Services to December 31, 2023. The act allows volunteer fire tax credits to be established by resolution. **Act 104 addresses several PSATS Resolutions** and PSATS urged the governor to sign this act.

[Act 130 of 2022](#) regulates the operation of highly automated vehicles (HAVs) with and without a driver and authorize testing conditions for these vehicles, including platooning. The act directs the state Department of Transportation to oversee and regulate the operation of HAVs. This act has various effective dates.

[Act 145 of 2022](#) increases the maximum allowable weight for commercial vehicles powered by electric batteries from 80,000 to 82,000 pounds.

[Act 151 of 2022](#) requires the state and local governments to notify affected individuals within seven business days following determination of a breach of personal information, such as driver's license number, financial account numbers or credit or debit card numbers, medical and health insurance information, and username and password. The act requires local governments to notify the district attorney of the breach within three business days. Act 151 takes effect May 1, 2023.

[Act 155 of 2022](#) allows a 17-year-old to train for an interior firefighting module with live burns if they have permission to engage from a fire chief and a parent or guardian. The Jr. Firefighter is required to be under the supervision of a credentialed Pennsylvania State Fire Academy Instructor. Act 155 addresses a PSATS resolution and PSATS urged the governor to sign this act.

[Act 165 of 2022](#) creates the offense of endangering a public safety official if a person intentionally communicates the restricted personal information of a public safety official or their family or household member with reckless disregard or intent that the information will be used to threaten, intimidate, or facilitate a crime against the public safety official or their family. The act defines restricted personal information as the individual's image, name, social security number, home address, phone number, personal email, or home fax number. Act 165 addresses a PSATS resolution and takes effect February 15, 2023.

To view these acts, go to legis.state.pa.us.

Don't Miss PSATS Training Opportunities!

Don't miss these in-person and virtual training options! Go to learn.psats.org for details.

- **Upcoming Webinars:** PSATS has a great line up of upcoming webinars, including recruiting volunteer firefighters on **January 5**, tackling the municipal chart of accounts on **January 18**, and best practices for local bridge owners on **January 25**.
- **ABCs for Elected Auditors:** PSATS will hold a virtual class on the responsibilities of elected auditors on **January 19**. The session will cover the nuts and bolts of conducting a thorough audit and how to navigate DCED's online reporting requirements.
- **Steering Through Difficult Township Situations:** This virtual class will be held **January 24** and attendees are encouraged to send in their own challenging situations for possible discussion in class.
- **In the Line of Fire: Best Practices in Police Department Management:** This upcoming in-person class will be held in Chester County on **January 24** and Lehigh County on **February 16**. The course will arm the attendees with practical guidance to conduct a meaningful assessment of their departments to ensure compliance with federal and state law.

This and That...

Be sure to check this section each month, where you will find important reminders and information.

- **Show Me the Money! Grants Available for Townships!** — Can your township benefit from a state or federal grant or loan? Check out the many opportunities currently available to townships in this month's handy insert.
- **E-Tides Retiring February 24, Transition to myPATH** — E-Tides will be retired on February 24, as the state Department of Revenue is transitioning all accounts to myPATH.pa.gov. The new site will be used for the REV-1667 Annual Withholding Reconciliation Statement, 501R Employer Deposit Statement of Withholding Tax, and RCT-900 Public Utility Realty Report. Township officials should create a myPATH user profile in the new system now (*choose "sign up now" in the login box*) to migrate their township account. For more, go to revenue.pa.gov and choose "myPath Information." Contact the Department at (717) 425-2495 ext. 72841 or email myPATH@pa.gov with any questions or issues with your account.
- **2023 Bid Limits Announced** — The Department of Labor & Industry published notice of the 2022 bid limits in the December 10, 2022 issue of the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. On January 1, 2023, the minimum purchase amount that will require the advertisement for bids will increase from **\$21,900 to \$22,500**. In addition, the minimum purchase amount for telephone quotes will increase from **\$11,800 to \$12,200**. While the increase in the consumer price index was 8.2% for the 12-month period ending September 30, there is an annual cap of 3% on increases to the bid limits.
- **2023 Tax Chart and Advertising Requirements Released** — The 2023 PSATS Employer-Employee Tax Chart and 2023 Advertising Requirements for Townships are available by logging onto psats.org and choosing "Newsroom" and then "Publications & Brochures." **Note:** A copy of both documents are included with this issue of the *News Bulletin*.
- **IFO estimates record 2022 Natural Gas Impact Fees** — The Independent Fiscal Office estimates that the 2022 natural gas impact fees will total \$274.8 million, 17% higher than 2021 and the highest on record. The primary reason is a high average annual price of natural gas.
- **DCED Clarifies Report Fields** — The 2023 Report of Elected and Appointed Officials will collect information about township property and liability insurance policies, including carrier name and coverage limit. Please note this is asking for information about township policies, not individual officials. The report will be available after January 1 on the Municipal Statistics website. Questions? Email RA-munistats@pa.gov or call 888-223-6837.
- **New Labor Law Poster** — Townships need to replace the "Know Your Rights" labor law poster issued by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. It was updated in October and is available free of charge at <https://www.eeoc.gov/poster>. Post with other labor law posters.