
WUC

Water Utility Council of the
PA-Section, American Water
Works Association (PA-AWWA)



GOVERNMENT RELATIONS UPDATE

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*PA- Section, American Water Works Association
National Association of Water Companies
Water Works Operators' Association of Pennsylvania*

PUC Urges Utilities to Help Consumers “Prepare Now” for Cold Weather, Higher Heating Bills

As part of its 13th year of “Prepare Now” education efforts, the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) urged utilities to take extra steps to help consumers – especially those on limited and fixed incomes – to prepare for winter heating costs.

A [letter](#) signed by the five PUC Commissioners has been sent to all of Pennsylvania’s electric and natural gas utility companies under the PUC’s jurisdiction, asking them to join the Commission in educating consumers about the many winter assistance programs and services that are available. The letter also includes specific suggestions for utility companies and emphasizes that they have more flexibility to make allowances for payment-troubled customers than the PUC does, under the law.

The PUC’s Prepare Now campaign provides consumers with simple tips to lower their energy bills, including shopping for electricity and natural

gas, as well as ways to conserve energy around the house. It also offers information about low-income programs that help consumers restore and maintain service.

“Many utility consumers who need assistance are still unaware of the programs available to help them restore or maintain utility service. Just as the Commission will be reminding consumers who call us about the availability of such programs, we urge all utilities to increase their outreach efforts to make sure that consumers receive information about any program for which they may be eligible,” the Commissioners wrote.

The Prepare Now campaign encourages consumers on limited or fixed incomes to call their utility about [programs](#) to help heat their homes or pay their energy bills such as Customer Assistance Programs (CAPs) and Low Income Usage Reduction Programs (LIURP). It also appeals to the companies to increase efforts to educate consumers about other programs, such as grants under the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) – which is administered by the [Pennsylvania Department of Human Services](#) (DHS).

At the same time, the Commission is reminding all parties – consumers and utilities alike – that

Chapter 56 of the Public Utility Code imposes an obligation of good faith, honesty and fair dealing.

The PUC's message is simple – Prepare Now for winter energy costs:

- Learn more about conservation.
- Check your electric and natural gas bills and supplier contracts.
- Use PAPowerSwitch.com and PAGasSwitch.com to shop for services.
- Look into programs that help low-income customers maintain service.
- Explore other steps to reduce long-term heating and energy consumption – such as weatherization programs, the addition of insulation and/or the installation of energy efficient appliances and lighting, which many consumers can do themselves.

Consumers interested in more information about these important programs can visit the PUC website, www.puc.pa.gov, and click on the "Prepare Now" link; follow social media messages that contain the #PrepareNow tag; or call the PUC at 1-800-692-7380.

Consumer outreach specialists from the PUC are active across the state, conducting or participating in workshop events, free seminars, roundtable discussions and community fairs. During those events, plain language materials and literature designed to educate consumers about assistance programs and their rights are handed out. Materials include information on consumer rights in dealing with terminations and reconnections, available low-income programs and tips on how to "Prepare Now" for winter. For more information on hosting a PUC consumer outreach specialist at a community event, please call 717-787-5722.

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission balances the needs of consumers and utilities; ensures safe and reliable utility service at reasonable rates; protects the public interest; educates consumers to make independent and informed utility choices; furthers economic development; and fosters new technologies and competitive markets in an environmentally sound manner.

For recent news releases and video of select Commission proceedings or more information about the PUC, visit our website at www.puc.pa.gov. Follow the PUC on Twitter – @PA_PUC for all things utility. "Like" Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission on Facebook for easy access to information on utility issues.

Source: PUC Press Release, 10/29/2015

Senate Republicans Push Budget Override Effort

Responding to growing pleas from schools and community groups to release overdue state funding, Senate Republicans led an effort to override Governor Wolf's veto of an emergency budget passed last month by the General Assembly.

Senate leaders emphasized that the override would have provided badly needed funding while negotiations continue on a final budget agreement. The override required a two-thirds majority, or 33 votes. **While all 30 Republican Senators voted for the measure, the emergency funding veto override vote received no Democrat support.**

"Governor Wolf's veto of our Emergency Funding Budget last month showed his refusal to put the needs of our schools and social service organizations first," said Senate President Pro Tempore Joe Scarnati (R-25). "Our schools and human service organizations are in critical need of funding to keep their doors open and should not be held hostage during this budget impasse. As legislators, we have a duty to help our communities and today's veto override vote of the Emergency Funding legislation took a necessary step to provide vital support while a final budget is negotiated. As we continue to move forward, we remain committed to ensuring that the final 2015-16 budget respects taxpayers and hardworking families across Pennsylvania."

Hours before the vote, Auditor General Eugene DePasquale told members of the Senate Democrat Policy Committee that the lack of state funding is having a devastating financial impact on schools throughout Pennsylvania. School districts have

already borrowed nearly a half-billion dollars - plus interest payments of \$15 million - because of the budget impasse, and that number may double by Thanksgiving.

"This hardship is completely unnecessary - the money is there and the state hasn't stopped collecting taxes," said Senate Majority Leader Jake Corman (R-34). "Governor Wolf is holding schools, food banks, rape crisis centers and other social service agencies hostage to his plan for huge tax increases that simply have no support. We are all frustrated. The reality is that budget issues are going to take additional time to resolve. This is about getting money to the schools and those in our communities who need it. "

"Pennsylvania cannot afford the Governor's massive tax hikes and record high spending levels," Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Pat Browne (R-16) said. "However, school districts, non-profits and agencies should not be punished while a final budget agreement continues to be negotiated. We have a responsibility to fund these vital services and this vote today on an emergency budget would have ensured that we meet those obligations to provide for the citizens of the Commonwealth."

Today's vote marks the fifth time since June 30th that the legislature has attempted to have a fiscally responsible budget enacted and keep money flowing to schools and organizations.

Source: Senate Republican Communications, 10/28/2015

DEP Secretary Quigley Convenes Fourth Meeting of Governor Wolf's Pipeline Infrastructure Taskforce

More than two dozen commenters participated in the fourth meeting of Governor Tom Wolf's Pipeline Infrastructure Taskforce on Oct. 28 held at DEP's South-central Regional Office in Harrisburg. The meeting, chaired by DEP Secretary John Quigley,

was the most well attended meeting of the task force to date.

In addition to hearing comments from the public, members heard presentations from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, and the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Recommendations by members of the 11 workgroups are due Nov. 2. A draft report will be available for public comment on Nov. 6. The group's final report is due to Governor Tom Wolf by February 2016.

Video of the meeting is available on DEP's YouTube channel.

Source: DEP News, 10/29/2015

Update on DEP Investigation into Scranton Sewer Malodor Event

DEP has identified the chemicals within the malodorous substance discovered in the Scranton sewer system in the vicinity of the Greenridge section of the city on the night of Sept. 24, 2015. DEP is continuing to investigate the source of the substance.

After analysis, DEP has determined that the malodorous substance is a chemical mixture of a petroleum product, similar to diesel fuel or home heating oil and a number of other chemicals, such as, terpenes and methylated cyclosiloxanes, which are not typically associated with petroleum products.

Read [more](#).

Source: DEP News, 10/29/2015

Good Samaritan Cleanups of Abandoned Mines Focus of Congressional Hearing

DEP Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation Director Eric Cavazza testified before a Congressional Committee on Oct. 21 about opportunities for and impediments to Good Samaritan cleanups.

Cavazza testified on behalf of the Interstate Mining Compact Commission and the National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs. He told members of the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment that the enactment of Good Samaritan legislation would be immensely helpful to the States' and Tribes' ongoing efforts to remediate the vast quantities of AML sites remaining, and those continuing to manifest.

"We have seen the results from this type of approach in states such as Pennsylvania, which enacted its own Good Samaritan law to provide protections and immunities related to state clean water requirements for those groups and individuals who were not legally responsible but who voluntarily undertook the reclamation of abandoned mine lands or abatement of mine drainage," Cavazza said. "However, under the Pennsylvania Good Samaritan program, these groups are still exposed to potential liability under the federal Clean Water Act for their good deeds, which is having a chilling effect on watershed cleanup efforts."

To view the video of the hearing, click [here](#).

Source: DEP News, 10/29/2015

States Focus On Strategies to Improve Oral Health

Governors are at the forefront of health care transformation in their states and are finding health policies that both improve the health of all citizens and the quality of health care while reducing costs for states and state residents. One area of focus is improving oral health, according to a report released today by the National Governors Association (NGA).

Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease among American children. Last year, millions of children received no dental care. Although many

Americans enjoy relatively good oral health, low-income families are disproportionately affected by dental-related disease.

Health Investments that Pay Off: [Strategies to Improve Oral Health](#) looks at prevention options that show evidence of improving oral health care. Tooth decay and other oral health complications are preventable and several prevention and early treatment options are safe, effective and economical.

"All children are susceptible to oral health problems, but children below the poverty level are two to three times more likely to suffer from untreated tooth decay," said North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory. "Governors are positioned to utilize strategies to improve oral health, which not only helps vulnerable populations but also the overall quality of health care for all residents."

Examples of such strategies include:

- Dental sealant programs, particularly those administered in schools;
- Routine application of fluoride varnish by primary care providers; and
- Community water fluoridation programs.

To learn more about NGA's health division, please visit www.nga.org/cms/center/health.

Source: National Governors Association Press Release, 10/29/2015

Bill to End Exemption Allowing Stalking, Harassment and Threats of Violence Heads to Governor

Highlighting a special state criminal code exception for business management and labor unions in the Commonwealth, the House voted to prohibit stalking, harassment and threats of violence for everyone, House Majority Leader Rep. Dave Reed (R-Indiana) said on October 27, 2015.

By a vote of 107-91, House Bill 874 passed the House and heads to the governor's desk.

"It is never okay to stalk, harass or intimidate people, and it should never be tolerated - especially in law," Reed said. "While acknowledging most business managers and workers cooperate with each other, the laws of this state should protect all Pennsylvanians from stalking or threats of harm."

Currently, Pennsylvania's criminal code, Title 18, exempts management and organized labor from prosecution for harassment, stalking and threatening to use weapons of mass destruction. It is illegal to call in a bomb scare, or stalk people or their kids, except if the caller or stalker is involved in a labor dispute.

This exception was brought to light last year when the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) arrested 10 members of Philadelphia Ironworkers Local 401, including union leadership, for aiding racketeering and arson, and indicted them under the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act.

According to the indictment, union members repeatedly threatened non-union construction employers with violence unless they hired a certain amount of union members. The indictment noted violence was "deeply ingrained in the structure of their organization." Federal prosecutors brought charges against 12 members of Philadelphia Ironworkers Local 401, and most pled guilty before trial.

"It's unfortunate, but by allowing intimidation, such as harassment, stalking and threats of violence in state law, it took the FBI and United State Attorneys to charge and prosecute under the federal law the criminal actions of some members of Philadelphia Ironworkers," Reed said.

Source: Rep. Reed Press Release, 10/27/2015

Senate Highway Worker Safety Legislation Clears House Committee; Bill

Heads to Full House Chamber for Vote

Legislation aimed at strengthening penalties and increasing fines for distracted and aggressive driving was approved by the House Transportation Committee, according to the bill's sponsors, Senate Democratic Leader Jay Costa (D-43) and Senator Camera Bartolotta (R-46).

The legislation, Senate Bill 887, which passed the Senate in June, toughens penalties for drivers who endanger or kill a highway worker or first responder in a construction zone. The bill also broadens the scope of those considered "highway workers" to include emergency personnel, local government and municipal workers, members of the Pennsylvania State Police, law enforcement, contractors or utility company workers.

"Today's vote by the House committee was another important step in protecting our highway workers and first responders. A vote for this bill is a vote in favor in saving lives," Costa said. "There isn't a text, an email or a phone call that is more important than the lives of those working in construction zones. Slow down, pay attention and you'll save a life."

Under the bill, violators could face fines and penalties exceeding \$1,000 for irresponsible driving in work zones. More serious offenses involving injuries to highway workers or emergency responders could result in a fine of up to \$5,000 and a six-month suspension of the violator's driver's license. Drivers causing the death of a worker would pay a fine of up to \$10,000 and surrender their license for one year.

"The consequences of distracted and aggressive driving in work zones can be catastrophic and the penalties in this legislation are intended to be a deterrent," Bartolotta said. "Construction workers on road and bridge projects risk being involved in an accident every day and it is the General Assembly's responsibility to ensure adequate precautions are established to ensure safety of these work zones."

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health reports that approximately 100 workers are killed and another 20,000 workers are injured every year in highway and street construction accidents.

The bill cleared the committee with a unanimous vote and will now be considered by the full House of Representatives.

Source: Senator Costa and Bartolotta Press Release, 10/27/2015

Water Resources Advisory Committee Meeting

The Water Resources Advisory Committee will meet on November 18, 2015. The meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m. in the Conference Room, Susquehanna River Basin Commission, Harrisburg Office, 4423 North Front Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110-1788.

Questions concerning the meeting should be directed to Sean Gimbel, (717) 783-4693, sgimbel@pa.gov. The agenda and materials for the meeting will be available through the Public Participation Center on the Department of Environmental Protection's (Department) web site at www.dep.state.pa.us (DEP Keywords: Public Participation).

Source: PA Bulletin, [10/31/2015](#)

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