

**Week of March 14, 2016**

**PSTAP LEGISLATIVE UPDATE – HARRISBURG HEADLINES**

**SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET LEGISLATION SENT TO THE GOVERNOR’S DESK**

This week, the Republican controlled General Assembly advanced a supplemental appropriation bill (HB1801) to end the 2015-16 budget impasse by enacting a $30.025 billion FY2015-16 budget with no tax increases. The bill would increase spending from the state's main bank account by about $870 million, and deliver half the public school aid increase, or roughly $200 million, that Governor Wolf had initially sought for fiscal year 2015-16, which began July 1 of last year. The bill passed by a 31-18 vote in the Republican-controlled Senate and a 128-63 vote in the GOP-controlled House. However, Governor Wolf announced that he will officially reject the new spending bill but it remains to be seen if he will veto HB1801 in its entirety. Leaders in both chambers stated that as soon as the FY 2015-2016 budget is put to rest, work will begin immediately on working toward getting the FY 2016-2017 budget done by June 30 of this year.

**MEDICAL MARIJUANA ACT VOTED OUT OF THE HOUSE**

SB3, otherwise referred to as the Pennsylvania's Medical Marijuana Act, cleared the House after hours of debate and the adoption of several amendments this week. If enacted, SB3 would make Pennsylvania the 24th state to legalize medical marijuana. Under the provisions of the bill, the medical marijuana program would: 1) Establish a tax on medical marijuana and a create a fund; 2) Create a medical marijuana research program; 3) Regulate the maximum price of medical marijuana through the health department; and 4) Petition the FDA and DEA to study a medical condition when the department's database contains 25 people with the same condition. Qualified patients would be required to obtain identification cards from the Department of Health, which is charged with establishing a statewide registry of patients, caregivers, physicians and what types and amounts of medical marijuana can be issued. The Senate must vote to approve the insertion of the House amendments to SB3 prior to the bill getting sent to the Governor’s desk. That vote could occur as early as next week.

**PA IMPLEMENTATION OF FEDERAL CLEAN POWER PLAN IS ON HOLD**

During a hearing before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Infrastructure, Environment, and Government Operations, Department of Environmental Protection Sec. John Quigley told members that the department’s efforts to develop a state implementation plan for the federal Clean Power Plan has been put on “low boil” after the US Supreme Court put a stay on the plan’s implementation until the federal judiciary decides the ultimate fate of the federal mandates.

**GOVERNOR WOLF DEMANDS GOOD GOVERNMENT**

This week, Governor Wolf held a press conference demanding the Republican controlled General Assembly adopt good government initiatives. His “Government that Works” reform plan is comprised of a number of initiatives he characterized as “a start” towards making “democracy work better in Pennsylvania”. Specifically, the reform plan would require the legislature to tackle five specific changes: ban officials from accepting gifts; require them to detail all sources of outside income, including how much they earn; place limits, for the first time, on individual and PAC contributions to campaigns; require applicants for state contracts to disclose all political contributions; and beef up State Department staffing to oversee compliance with campaign finance and lobbying rules. Pennsylvania is one of the few states that has no caps on the size of political donations and in an election year, with a continued budget impasse, it is highly unlikely the General Assembly will take up the Governor’s call to action.

**HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETS TO VOTE TWO BILLS**

The House Finance Committee met this week to consider two bills. SB879, otherwise referred to as “The Pennsylvania ABLE (Achieving a Better Life Experience) Act” allows the Treasury Department to establish and maintain a savings program through which ABLE savings accounts may be opened for eligible individuals for payment of qualified disability expenses. It also allows the department to utilize the administrative or investment structures of the Tuition Account Program established by the Tuition Account Programs and College Savings Bond Act without separately soliciting proposals for assistance in the management of all or part of the program. SB879 was unanimously voted out of committee.

HB176 Grove, otherwise referred to as “The Law Enforcement Grant Program Act” provides for grants to regional police departments; and imposes powers and duties on the Center for Local Government Services and the Department of Community and Economic Development. Under provisions in the bill, the center shall award grants to eligible law enforcement agencies for vehicle acquisition, cameras, speed timing devices, uniforms, police and emergency equipment, training, personnel costs, and community law enforcement efforts. $2 million shall be transferred annually from the State Gaming Fund to the department for the purpose of issuing grants under this Act. The bill was reported as committed with Rep. Mary Jo Daley (D-Montgomery) voting in the negative.

**PENNSYLVANIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION SCHEDULE:**

**2016 SENATE SESSION SCHEDULE**

**March** 21, 22, 23

**April** 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13

**May** 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18

**June** 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30

**2016 HOUSE SESSION SCHEDULE**

**March** 21, 22, 23

**April** 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13

**May** 2, 3, 4, 16, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25

**June** 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30

**ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE**

The Department of Revenue announced several new lottery games in the March 19th edition of the Pennsylvania Bulletin.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF BANKING**

The Pennsylvania Department of Banking issued a notice in the Pennsylvania Bulletin setting the maximum lawful rate of interest for residential mortgages for the month of April 2016 at 43/4%.