



Pennsylvania School Boards Association

legislative report

January 6, 2017



PSBA remains on the frontline for public education during new legislative session challenges

As we embark on another new year and another new legislative session, it is clear some challenges lie ahead for Pennsylvania's public schools. The federal K-12 education climate may be looking toward increasing school choice and privatization of education as primary education policy goals. At the state level, we face a structural budget deficit of approximately \$600 million and the need (and some political desire) for major reforms within the pension, property tax and charter school laws.

While these are not small challenges, we assure you that PSBA is working harder than ever to advocate for our legislative priorities and platform goals. We are optimistic about the opportunity this spring to revisit pension reform with the primary goal of achieving better financial stability for school districts. We are working with a number of education and community business partners to create viable solutions for property tax reforms that maintain school districts' ability to generate revenue for education. We are formulating another approach to charter school law reforms that make sense. And, we are working broadly toward a goal of an on-time state budget with an investment for Basic Education Funding, but also gathering and creating resources to help members throughout the process.

Despite these unknowns, PSBA is fighting to support public education and our members' needs. It will become a critical time for you to join in the advocacy by remaining in contact with your state and U.S. legislators. Please stay tuned for legislative updates, action alerts and budget resources. Also, don't forget to save the date and register for your local [Winter Town Hall meeting](#) for networking, budget updates and more.

2017-18 General Assembly convenes



The 2017-18 session of the General Assembly convened on Jan. 3 as required by the state's constitution that calls for legislators to meet on the first Tuesday of January each year. The session opened with the swearing in of 28 new legislators and 197 returning members from both the Senate and House of Representatives.

In the Senate, where half of the 50 seats were up for election, there were 25 senators sworn into office. Of that number, there are 19 returning members and six new members. Overall, the Republicans hold a 34 -16 seat majority in the Senate. Sen. Joseph Scarnati (R- Jefferson) was re-elected as president pro tempore.

In the House, all members were up for election. There are 22 new members of the House of

Representatives. The Republicans in the House have a 121-81 seat majority with one vacancy. A special election will be held to fill the seat formerly held by Rep. Leslie Acosta, who resigned this week to face federal charges. Rep. Mike Turzai (R-Allegheny) was re-elected as the Speaker of the House.

Following the swearing-in ceremonies, each chamber adopted its rules for conduct and procedures. Of particular interest in the House is a change that shortens the amount of time for review before the House can take a final vote on legislation amended by the Senate from 24 hours to just six hours. The change in the House rule matches the six-hour rule that exists in the Senate.

The Senate and House adjourned and will reconvene on Monday, Jan. 23.



Senate, House select standing committee chairs

The Senate and House of Representatives have announced the chairs for their standing committees. The Senate Education Committee will be chaired by Sen. John Eichelberger (R-Blair) and Sen. Andrew Dinniman (D-Chester). The House Education Committee will be chaired by Rep. Dave Hickernell (R-Lancaster) and Rep. James Roebuck (D-Philadelphia). While committee memberships have not yet been announced, here is the list of Senate and House committee leaders:

[Here is the complete list of the Republican Senate Committee Chairs](#)

[Here is the complete list of the Democratic Senate Committee Chairs](#)

[Here is the complete list of Republican and Democratic House Committee Chairs](#)

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State News

Gov. Wolf to present budget address February 7

On Tuesday, Feb. 7, Gov. Tom Wolf will be presenting his 2017-18 state budget proposal before a joint meeting of the Senate and House of Representatives. Challenges are certain for the new budget as the state faces a projected \$603.76 million revenue shortfall. This week the state Department of Revenue released its December 2016 General Fund revenue collections, which was

\$105.2 million less than anticipated. Fiscal year-to-date General Fund collections total \$13.5 billion, which is \$367 million below estimate.

Following the governor's budget address, the Senate and House Appropriations Committees will convene hearings in February and early March on specific components of the proposal. Dates for the budget hearings will be announced as soon as they become available.

PSBA will be providing members with complete coverage of the governor's budget proposal, budget details and resources for school boards.

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Other News

Pennsylvania ranks 8th in the nation in Quality Counts 2017 report

This week *Education Week* released its *Quality Counts 2017* report. The report looks at how states are preparing their plans to implement the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) by the 2017-18 school year. The report also provides report cards for each state, with Pennsylvania earning a B- and ranking 8th in the nation. Pennsylvania received an overall score of 80.2 out of 100, while the national average is a C with a score of 74.2.

Pennsylvania received these scores on the specific areas of the report:

Chance for Success Index: B- (81.4), ranks 15th in the nation

- Early Foundations: B+ (87.2), ranks 21st in the nation
- School Years: C+ (78.5), ranks 13th in the nation
- Adult Outcomes: C+ (79.2), ranks 23rd in the nation

K-12 Achievement Overall: C (74.6), ranks 10th in the nation

- Status: C (73.3), ranks 12th in the nation
- Change: C- (71.1), ranks 12th in the nation
- Equity: B- (81.8), ranks 33rd in the nation

School Finance Overall: B (84.5), ranks 8th in the nation

- Equity: B (84.5), ranks 34th in the nation
- Spending: B (84.5), ranks 9th in the nation

[Click here to see the *Quality Counts 2017* report](#)

[Click here to see Pennsylvania's report card](#)

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Pennsylvania School Boards Association

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