

# the PACOG News

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Pennsylvania's Keystone for  
Intergovernmental Cooperation

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## PACOG

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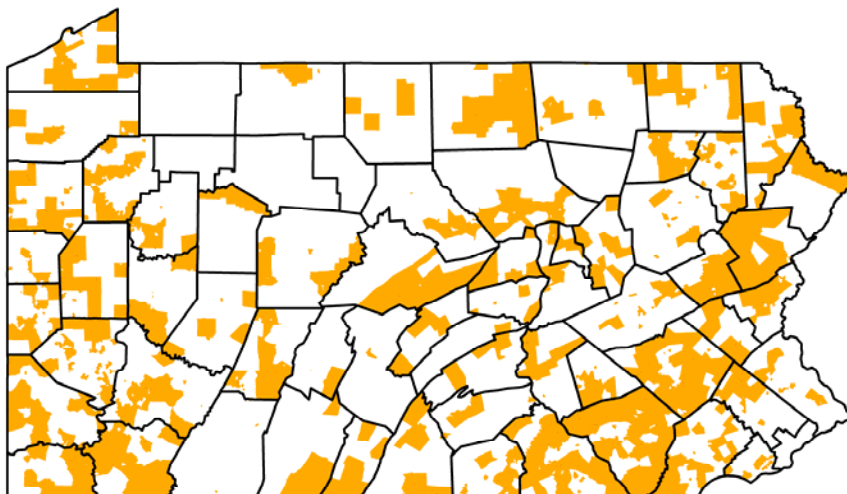
## Inter-Municipal Cooperation

Inter-municipal cooperation comes in many forms, including informal “handshake agreements,” Act 177 Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreements, and the more formal and complex Councils of Government (COGs). There is no one form of cooperation that is best for everyone – municipalities can choose the form that works best for their situation.

Some examples of inter-municipal cooperation are: code enforcement and joint boards of appeals, mutual aid agreements, joint bidding and purchasing, equipment sharing, grant writing, cable TV franchising, recycling/refuse collection, stormwater management, and shared recreation facilities. For a comprehensive list of Intergovernmental Projects from A to Z, go to the PACOG website, [www.pacog.com](http://www.pacog.com).

The Center for Rural Pennsylvania analyzed data from the Governor’s Center for Local Government Services to determine how many Pennsylvania municipalities participated in the following activities: (1) shared municipal comprehensive plans, (2) shared municipal zoning (3) regional police forces (4) purchasing of police services from another municipality. Municipalities that participated in one or more of these activities were called Cooperators.

## Municipal Cooperators



Municipal Cooperators

(continued on Page 2)

## Inter-Municipal Cooperation (continued from Page 1)

There are approximately 2,560 municipalities in Pennsylvania. Of that total, 848 municipalities were identified as Cooperators. Non-Cooperators, those municipalities that did not participate in any of the activities, totaled 1,712.

The extent of inter-municipal cooperation among the Cooperators was analyzed. If a municipality participated in 3 of the 4 activities it was a “Super Cooperator;” participation in 2 activities was a “Moderate Cooperator;” participation in any 1 activity was a “Limited Cooperator.”

- 16 municipalities were Super Cooperators
- 124 were Moderate Cooperators
- 708 were Limited Cooperators

According to 2016 data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Governor’s Center for Local Government Services, the 848 Pennsylvania municipalities that were Cooperators included:

- 12 cities, 337 boroughs, 27 townships of the first class and 472 townships of the second class.
- 53% rural and 47% urban municipalities
- 38% in western Pennsylvania, 32% in central Pennsylvania, and 30% in eastern Pennsylvania

Some other interesting average characteristics of Cooperator municipalities include:

- 4,027 residents; statewide average of 4,994 residents:
- 14.5 square miles and a population density (number of persons per square mile) of 276; statewide the average municipality was 17.5 square miles with a population density of 284 persons.
- 10% of the population was non-white; statewide 19% of the population was non-white.
- homeownership rate was 73% compared to the statewide rate of 69%.
- average household income of \$76,364; statewide, the average household income was \$75,235.
- 28% of the adults (25+ years old) have a bachelor’s degree or higher; statewide 29% of the adults have a bachelor’s degree or higher.
- poverty rate of 11%, compared to 13% statewide.
- 6% unemployment rate; the statewide unemployment rates 7%.
- \$336 in total municipal taxes per person; statewide, the average was \$658 in municipal taxes per person.
- \$2.87 million in average municipal expenditures, or \$733 per person; statewide average was \$7.7 million in municipal expenditures or \$1,512 per person.
- An average of 10 full-time municipal employees and 9 part-time employees; statewide, the average was 24 full-time municipal employees and 11 part-time employees.

Thank you to The Center for Rural Pennsylvania for the above statistics. The Center for Rural Pennsylvania ([www.rural.palegislature.us](http://www.rural.palegislature.us)) is a bipartisan, bicameral legislative agency that serves as a resource for rural policy within the Pennsylvania General Assembly.

## COG Talk... What's Happening in Our COGs?

The Lawrence County planning office, county administrator and commissioners met to discuss the reorganization of the **Lawrence County COG**. The COG decided to hire Alan Kugler (director of PA Futures, the Pennsylvania Electronic Government Consortium, and a PACOG consultant) as its consultant to assist the COG in reorganizing and providing direction going forward. The COG would be administered by the county planning office staff.

**Capital Region COG** held its Annual Dinner in January and hosted Congressman Scott Perry who shared information on cyber terrorism. The COG held joint bids in 12 categories and received 60 bids. The CapCOG joint bidding process saves their 41 members time, financial and human resources. The COG is preparing for their 2018 Surplus Equipment and Vehicle Auction that will be held on July 18 at Sporting Hill Elementary School

**Central Westmoreland COG** renewed their service contract with Building Inspection Underwriters of PA. The COG's vehicle purchase program (cooperative purchasing) hit an all-time sales high in 2017. The COG has over 350 associate members throughout PA and 26 regular members within Westmoreland County. The COG was also a partner in helping Scottsdale Borough purchase a "new" used police vehicle without using any taxpayers money, with a grant of \$2,500.

The **SEDA COG** Natural Gas Cooperative will be adding Northumberland County to the other five counties (Centre, Clinton, Juniata, Mifflin and Perry) that work to bring natural gas into rural areas. The cooperative pursues projects, funding and partnerships for energy infrastructure projects.

**Northern Schuylkill COG** is exploring the implementation of a joint code enforcement program with the **Central Keystone COG** and is searching for funding opportunities for this venture. There is definite value in meeting and sharing ideas with another COG.

## New PennDOT National Guard Registration Plate

PennDOT has issued a new military registration plate for members of the Pennsylvania National Guard. The department worked closely with the Pennsylvania National Guard to develop the design. The registration plate has the standard colors of blue, white and yellow and a Pennsylvania National Guard approved emblem. The fee for the plate is \$21. The form to apply for this registration plate is available on the website.

## Miscellany

The **Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)** is offering both **paid and unpaid internships**, which are available to full-time college students. The number of positions varies from year to year. For more information and to apply, go to the DCNR website, [www.dcnr.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.pa.us).

In January 2018 Governor Wolf signed a **statewide Opioid Epidemic Disaster Declaration** to devote more resources to the problem. The administration has now launched an **Opioid Data Dashboard** to provide data to inform the public of efforts to help fight overdoses and addiction. To view the dashboard, go to <https://data.pa.gov/stories/s/9q45-nckt/>. Governor Wolf also announced the **Pennsylvania Overdose Information Network (ODIN)**, which is a centralized repository to track overdoses, naloxone administrations, and investigative drug information that may be used by police, public safety, and healthcare professionals to better track and share all types of information related to opioid abuse in their communities.

Governor Wolf has created **statewide task force to give recommendation on three areas of school safety**: how to address the health care needs of students who need help, how to improve school safety in school buildings, and how to improve teachers and staff responses, should an incident happen. The Governor and Auditor General Eugene DePasquale will co-chair the task force with representatives of administrators, parents and nurses, and perhaps students in the future.



## Spotlight on Montour County COG

The Montour County “Council of Governments” (MCCOG) is an inter-municipal organization comprised of a number of Montour County municipalities. Membership in the Council of Governments allows the participants to cooperate for their mutual benefit in performing certain functions and obtaining services, equipment and materials.



The COG consists of the boroughs of Danville, Riverside and Washingtonville, and the townships of Anthony, Derry, Liberty, Limestone, Mayberry, Valley and West Hemlock. These municipalities represent a population of about 15,000 citizens.

A recent undertaking was the merging of the Montour and Columbia Counties 911 dispatch centers, with the new center being the Eastern Regional 911 Center located in Bloomsburg. Readdressing sessions were offered to residents to ease the transition. Readdressing was necessary in order to meet federal government requirements. This project was about public safety and enabling emergency responders to quickly locate incidents.

Implementation and compliance with the Uniform Construction Code is important to the MCCOG and a Uniform Construction Code Board of Appeals is a program that is open to all municipalities. In 2016 the Montour County Council of Governments voted unanimously to decrease the cost of building permits by 30 %. In 2017 MCCOG passed a resolution “Establishing the penalty fees to be imposed on any person who commences work requiring a building permit before obtaining the necessary permits as approved by the MCCOG board members.” The penalty fee shall be equal to, and in addition to, the original fee.

Bi-monthly meetings of the COG are held and provide the opportunity for each municipality to express their thoughts and ideas and issues for consideration by fellow members. This interchange of information is not only helpful but also strengthens the bonds of members of the COG. Many times the problems that one municipality is facing is very similar to that of other municipalities and a discussion of the issue and possible resolutions benefits everyone. Communication and continuing dialog between the COG and its members are important functions of the COG.

## Office of Open Records

A report was recently released by the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee entitled “Costs to Implement the Right-to-Know Law.” The following recommendations were included:

For the General Assembly:

1. Require agencies to provide detailed Agency Open Records Officer (AORO) contact information annually or whenever there is a change.
2. Require agencies to post required and detailed contact information on their websites.
3. Require all state and local government AOROs attend one OOR training course annually.
4. Authorize OOR to establish reasonable hourly fees for commercial/other exceedingly time-consuming requests.

For the Office of Open Records (OOR):

1. Create a searchable website database with all AORO contact information; update as necessary.
2. Develop training and informational materials for all AOROs
3. Develop and post training videos and informational materials directed at requesters
4. Collect data from AOROs annually on the number of requests received, monitoring for any significant changes in trends.

Please note that the Office of Open Records has a new physical and mailing address: 333 Market Street, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17011-2234. Other contact information has not changed.

## Signed Legislation

- ✓ **Act 10 of 2018**—amends **Megan’s Law**. The primary intent of the act is to provide for greater public safety by ensuring convicted sexual offenders remain subject to registration requirements in the wake of recent court decisions impacting Pennsylvania’s implementation of the Sexual Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA). The legislation will ensure that as many as 12,000 sexual offenders remain on Pennsylvania’s registry and subject to the regulations in place at the time of their offense – either a 10-year or lifetime registration. This bill also addresses gaps in supervision of sexual offenders by providing for a mandatory three-year probationary period at the completion of their maximum state sentence.
- ✓ **Act 69 of 2017**- expands the **Department of Military and Veterans Affairs registry**, by enlisting other agencies to identify veterans who might be helped by receiving federal, state or local benefits.

## Pending Legislation

- ◆ **SB 21** – the “Employment First Act” would promote the **employment of working-age Pennsylvanians with disabilities**. It would establish Employment First, the Governor's Cabinet for People with Disabilities and the Employment First Oversight Commission.
- ◆ **SB 251**- permits municipal police to use **radar/lidar for speed enforcement**. Municipalities must pass an ordinance allowing the use of radar/lidar and must post signs in the community indicating its use. **HB 2148** a 6-year pilot program to allow police to use radar.
- ◆ **SB 761** – a constitutional amendment to **allow gubernatorial candidates to select their Lieutenant Governor** running mate.
- ◆ **SB 979** – amends the PA Consolidated Statutes Title 53 to require municipalities to offer their full-time police **officers the opportunity to purchase pension credits**, up to a maximum of 5 years, for previous part-time or full-time service with other departments.
- ◆ **SB 1019** – would amend Title 35, Emergency Management, and incorporate language that **would enable COGs to be established for the purpose of “Regional All-Hazard and Emergency Management” taskforces**. Also coordinates disaster preparedness, emergency management and local preparedness; recognizes counterterrorism task forces; and incorporates the use of modern technology.
- ◆ **SB 1055** - would create a “Blue Alert” system for **when police are looking for someone suspected of killing or injuring a law enforcement officer**. It would activate an emergency alert response similar to the Amber Alert system for child abductions and would speed up the capture of violent criminals who kill or seriously injure local, state or federal law enforcement officers. Officials would be able to send out warnings on smartphones, radio and TV broadcasts and PennDOT’s electronic highway message boards.
- ◆ **HB 99** – **amends the Borough Code** to allow emergency purchases/contracts to be exempt from bidding requirements.
- ◆ **HB 913-916**- amends the Incorporated Town Code, Borough Code, First Class Township Code, and the Third Class City Code to allow for **stormwater management fees**. This package would enable municipalities to assess a reasonable and uniform fee on all properties to help pay for stormwater management costs.
- ◆ **HB 1098** – would amend the Local Tax Enabling Act to exempt anyone who meets state and federal income tax exemption requirements from paying **local earned income taxes**.
- ◆ **HB 1233** – would allow family members and mental- health professionals to get **outpatient treatment sooner for people struggling with mental illness**, before they become a threat to themselves or others. The bill would provide a continuum of services for seriously mentally ill people who are unable or unwilling to seek treatment. The intent is to address troubled minds before worse case scenarios like mass shootings occur.
- ◆ **HB 2002** – would lower the **state’s personal income tax rate** from 3.07% to 2.82%, resulting in household savings and small business savings.

## **IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER**

**Spring PACOG Board of Delegates Meeting**

**Note Revised Date: Friday, April 13, 2018**

**10 AM to 2 PM**

**Centre Region COG, State College**

**PACOG 2018 Annual Conference**

**Friday, October 5, 2018**

**9 AM to 4 PM**

**Centre Region COG, State College**