

# the PACOG News

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Spring 2020



Pennsylvania's Keystone for Intergovernmental Cooperation

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## The 2020 Census



The 2020 Census counts every person living in the 50 states, District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories (Puerto Rico, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands).

The count is mandated by the Constitution Article 1, Section 2, stating that the country conduct a count of its population once every 10 years. The 2020 Census will mark the 24<sup>th</sup> time that the country has counted its population since 1790.

The census provides critical data that determines how much funding local communities receive for key public services. Every year, billions of dollars in federal funding go to hospitals, fire departments, schools, roads, and other resources based on census data. The results of the census also determine the number of seats each state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives and is used to draw congressional and state legislative districts.

The census is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, a nonpartisan government agency. The Census Bureau is bound by federal law to protect your information and keep it confidential. Data is used only for statistical purposes and is compiled with other households, never identifying your home or any person in your home.

In mid-March, households began receiving official Census Bureau mail with detailed information on how to respond to the 2020 Census. If you live in the United States, you are required by law to complete the 2020 Census.

By April 1, 2020, every home will have received an invitation to participate in the 2020 Census. You will have three options for responding: online, by phone, or by mail. April 1 is also Census Day, which means that, when completing the census, you should include everyone living in your home on April 1, 2020. During the months of May through July census takers will begin visiting homes that haven't responded to the 2020 Census. In December, the Census Bureau will deliver apportionment counts to the President and Congress as required by law.

Please be aware that the Census Bureau will *never* ask you for: your social security number, money or donations, anything on behalf of a political party, your bank or credit card account numbers. Additionally, there is no citizenship question on the 2020 Census.

The U.S. Census Bureau has an excellent website, [www.2020census.gov](http://www.2020census.gov), with sections entitled: "Get the Facts," "How to Respond," "Why Your Answers Matter" and "Privacy and Security." The Pennsylvania website, [www.pa.gov/census](http://www.pa.gov/census) states that: "In Pennsylvania, we're committed to working together to make sure all our neighbors are included in the census. We encourage all Pennsylvanians to learn more about the 2020 Census, your role as a resident, and explore ideas and downloadable materials you can use to help spread the word about the upcoming census."

Help shape the future in Pennsylvania by completing the Census!

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

**Huntingdon County COG (HCCOG)** hosted a special coalition meeting of Huntingdon County municipal leaders, county officials, fire service providers and EMS personnel to develop a countywide strategy and means to thwart the staffing, recruiting, retention, and financial issues facing local emergency response organizations. Education is an important next step to increase municipal and public awareness and provide pertinent information. It was suggested that local governments include fire departments and EMS personnel at their monthly meetings. The passage of emergency services legislation is also a priority. Future meetings are anticipated.

A recent meeting of the **Warren County Intergovernmental Co-Op Municipal Secretaries/Administrators Group** featured presentations on DCED (the Center for Local Government Services), On-Lot Sewage Systems, and the 2020 U.S. Census.

**Beaver County COG** held their Winter Symposium entitled "People, Place, Policy: Shaping Transformative Places Together!" on February 12 at the Beaver Falls Middle School Auditorium. Speakers discussed from a local, regional and national perspective what it means to invest in the places where we live and how we activate our neighborhoods to build the future together. The COG is also advertising seminars in Pittsburgh regarding recent changes made to the Uniform Construction Code (UCC) by the UCC Review and Advisory Council.

**SEDA COG** has named John A. Brown, a former Northampton County elected executive, as the new COG executive director, replacing Bill Seigel who retired.

The **Central Keystone COG (CK-COG)** has named Rodney Neitz as COG Director. Rodney has been with the COG since 2001, most recently as the Building Code Official since 2014. CK-COG pools resources to more efficiently administer services for municipal residents throughout 47 municipalities encompassing 6 counties. By doing that, CK-COG is able to provide services that would not otherwise be economically practical. The agency provides a wide range of services including: zoning, building permits, UCC inspections, rental permits, day care inspections, and retail and auto dealership occupancy inspections. CK-COG also provides services for street signage, and health and safety inspections for Personal Care Homes and more.

**Western Chester County COG (WCCCOG)** initiated its seventh year electing a board and reporting a financially healthy organization. They recently had a guest speaker at their COG meeting, Patricia Rooney, from Fair Districts PA, who talked about the issue of gerrymandering and the need for fair redistricting to be a bipartisan effort. Fair Districts PA has worked with a bipartisan group of legislators to draft legislation that will create an independent redistricting commission tasked with being nonpartisan, impartial and transparent in the way district lines are drawn. The presentation encouraged municipalities to support the effort through the adoption of a municipal resolution.

**Adams County COG** has adopted two resolutions: one supporting specific amendments to the PA Open Records Law to allow for a fair, recuperative fee to be charged for labor time spent on non-constituent requests, and one in support of the implementation of the recommendations provided by the Senate Resolution 6 Final Committee Report regarding policy changes for volunteer fire and EMS services.

## Automated Work Zone Speed Enforcement Program

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PTC), in partnership with the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), are implementing a statewide Automated Work Zone Speed Enforcement (AWZSE) program intended to: reduce work zone speeds, improve driver behavior, improve work zone safety for workers and motorists, save worker and traveler lives, and complement existing enforcement by the PSP.

The program began in the middle of March. Before entering an enforcement area motorists will see signs notifying them of the presence of work zone cameras. The cameras will only be used in those zones when highway workers are present.

For vehicles that are detected exceeding the posted speed limit by 11 miles per hour or more, the AWZSE system will record an image of the license plate, capture the vehicle speed and identify who the vehicle is registered to. A violation notice is prepared and mailed to the vehicle owner. Penalties are as follows: First offense – warning letter; Second offense – violation notice and \$75 fine; Third (and subsequent) offense – violation notice and \$150 fine. These are civil penalties only, not criminal penalties. No points will be applied to a person's license and there will be no impact to the person's merit rating for insurance purposes. Violations may be contested up to 30 days from the mailing of the notice.

AWZSE uses portable systems (vehicle or other apparatus-mounted) to detect and record vehicles exceeding work zone posted speed limits by 11 miles per hour (mph) or more using electronic speed timing devices (radar or nonradar). In 2018 the PA General Assembly enacted Act 86, to pilot an AWZSE program within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Revenue from the fines that are collected will cover expenditures related to the program. In the event that all expenditures related to the program are covered and excess revenue remains, that excess revenue is distributed for the first 3 years to PSP recruiting, training and equipment, and to the Transportation Agency (PennDOT or PTC) where the violation occurred, and to the Motor License Fund. For years 4, 5 and 6 of the program all revenue goes to the Transportation Agency (PennDOT or PTC) where the violation occurred. More details on this AWZSE program can be found at: <https://workzonecameras.penndot.gov>.

It should also be noted that April 20-24 was National Work Zone Awareness Week, which is scheduled to coincide with the start of the spring construction season. This year's theme is "Safe Work Zones for All: Protect workers. Protect road users." The intent is to bring national attention to motorist and worker safety and mobility issues in work zones.

## Mail-In Election Ballots

Voters in Pennsylvania can now request, online, mail-in election ballots. These mail-in ballots can be used for the June 2 primary election and also for the general election in November. Voters accessing the website, [www.pavoterservices.pa.gov](http://www.pavoterservices.pa.gov), can apply for a mail-in ballot online, request a mail-in ballot, or download and print the application and mail to their county election office or apply in person. Voters can also go to [www.votespa.com](http://www.votespa.com) to apply for a mail-in or absentee ballot and obtain additional election information. An election reform law that Governor Wolf signed in October 2019 included the option for voters to vote by mail for any reason, in an effort to get more people to vote.

## 2020 Governor's Award for Safety Excellence

If you are proud of your safety and prevention program for its impact on reducing employee injuries, financial savings and other achievements, please consider applying for the Governor's Award for Safety Excellence. The purpose of the award is to recognize outstanding prevention programs and the superior efforts that make these program so successful. For more information, go to [www.dli.pa.gov](http://www.dli.pa.gov).

## Records Management

Paper. Paper. Paper. Piles of paper and records and maps everywhere.

What do you do with all those paper records that should be reviewed, organized, preserved, digitized and used for decision making and made available to the public? All of this, in addition to discarding what is no longer needed to be kept.

The non-profit Pennsylvania Electronic Government Consortium (PAeGovC) is helping to resolve the problem with a Municipal Legacy Data Scanning and Digitization Program. The program will use the newest and best standards/practices for records management developed by the PA Local Government Records Committee through the PA Historical and Museum Commission. PAeGovC is working with COGs, other intergovernmental organizations and municipalities across the Commonwealth to develop a comprehensive records management program for local governments. This is being done in partnership with public and private sector organizations and will garner the support and resources needed to implement the program.

The program would be a centralized, web-based online archive/repository of Pennsylvania's local government's public records including: current/historic policies, planning documents, publications, meeting minutes, budgets, ordinances/resolutions, and other data. The program would have user-friendly searching and analytical tools to help local government officials to be more informed and effective. It is also hoped that the public availability of information would significantly decrease the quantity of Right-to Know Requests.

A meeting was held February 21 with representatives from the Department of Community & Economic Development. Kim Bracey and Rick Vilello from the Governor's Center for Local Government Services were in attendance, as was Steve D'Etorre, from the Technology & Innovation department. State officials expressed support for the effort and future meetings are anticipated to further explore partnership opportunities.

PAeGovC is also in contact with numerous other groups to gather input, support and participation. PACOG has endorsed this records management program. A draft resolution to participate in the program is available for COGs and municipal consideration. For additional information, or to schedule a presentation to your COG, contact Alan Kugler at [ark@paegovc.org](mailto:ark@paegovc.org) or 814-881-4155.

## 2020 Great American Cleanup

Due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), Pick Up Pennsylvania spring events are cancelled. You are encouraged to participate in the [Pick Up Pennsylvania](#) program this fall. Event registration will tentatively open in August and information regarding supplies and supply distribution will be posted as soon as available.

Recommendations for COVID-19 include social distancing and skipping community events, so this shouldn't include plantings or larger events at a public place or park. But, this is an opportune time to do a solo litter pick up.

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, Department of Transportation offices for supplies are closed, but, you can use your own trash bags to pick up trash. Grab a trash bag, some gloves, and a safety vest or bright colored clothing and fill a bag with trash if you live along a road or highway. You could also take a bag with you as you head towards your favorite trail. For more information, visit [www.gacofpa.org](http://www.gacofpa.org).

## Spotted Lanternfly

Spotted Lanternfly is an invasive species native to China, Bangladesh, and Vietnam. In 2014 it was found in Pennsylvania, and has since spread to 26 counties which are now quarantined. This pest causes serious damage in trees and excretes a sugary substance, called honeydew, that encourages the growth of black sooty mold. This mold is harmless to people, but causes damage to plants. This mold can coat decks and play equipment and affect people's quality of life and ability to enjoy the outdoors during the spring and summer. The Spotted Lanternfly is a huge threat to Pennsylvania's agricultural economy and jobs. The PA Department of Agriculture and the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources are aggressively battling to reduce the population of Spotted Lanternfly and limit the spread.

## Enacted Legislation

- **Acts 3 & 4 of 2020** - amends the borough, township and city codes to **increase the advertising “no bid” threshold for the sale of municipal property** from \$1,500 to \$6,000.
- **Act 12 of 2020** – amends the Election Code, **moving the Presidential primary election day to June 2, 2020 and making several changes to the process of counting mail-in ballots.**
- **Act 15 of 2020** – amends Title 35 of the PA Consolidated Statutes to **clarify that municipalities may conduct meetings by telecommunications device during an emergency declared by the Governor or municipality.** Additionally, the act provides the option of extending the real estate tax deadlines and suspending deadline timeframes of land use permit approvals.
- **Act 17 of 2020** – amends Title 35 of the PA Consolidated Statutes **to grant the Department of Health waivers for staffing requirements for Basic Life Support ambulance units. Also, any officer covered by the Enforcement Officer Disability Benefits Law (Heart & Lung) who contracts COVID-19 or must quarantine due to exposure is eligible for full claims under the Heart & Lung Act.** Claims are limited to 60 days.

## Pending Legislation

- **SB 352** – would create the **Tax Exemption and Mixed-Use Incentive Program authorizing local taxing authorities to provide for property tax exemption incentives for certain deteriorated industrial, commercial, business and residential property** and for new construction in deteriorated areas of communities.
- **SB 607** - would apply only to full-time municipal police officers in full-time departments and would **limit the use of radar or LIDAR for speed enforcement**, would require the passage of an ordinance, and would place a cap on monies received from such activities.
- **SB 940** – would amend the Municipal Code and Ordinance Compliance Act to **provide a process of recording dangerous buildings that have been condemned with the Recorder of Deeds.** This will allow the condemnation order to remain in effect when the property is sold.
- **SB 987** – would amend Title 35 of the PA Consolidated Statutes and **require that the State Fire Commissioner be confirmed by the Senate and establish training and curriculum requirements and create a State Fire Advisory Board.**
- **HB 406** – would amend Title 53 of the PA Consolidated Statutes setting requirements for a municipality to **publicly advertise a meeting before an agreement is finalized to sell/lease a municipally owned or operated sewer or water system.**
- **HB 978** – would amend the **Right-to-Know Law to require the redaction of social security numbers from public records before the records are released or posted online**, or if they have already been posted online, to redact those numbers within six months of enactment of the law.

**PACOG 2020 Annual Conference**  
**October 16 & 17**  
**Wyndham Gettysburg**

46th Annual Conference

**PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION OF  
COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENT**

Wyndham Gettysburg | October 16 & 17, 2020

*FACING THE FUTURE*

**“I WILL PREPARE  
AND SOMEDAY  
MY CHANCE  
WILL COME”**

— *ABRAHAM LINCOLN*

