Recap of Recent Legislative Achievements

**Act 28 of 2020** allows boroughs having an at-large system with no wards and less than 3,000 in population to reduce the number of council members.  
*Resolution 2017-7*

**Act 58 of 2020** amends the Urban Redevelopment Law to allow all municipalities, regardless of size, the ability to create a redevelopment authority.  
*Resolution 2019-06*

**Act 61 of 2020** allows governments to provide a tax exemption for up to 10 years for any improvements and new construction on mixed-use properties in deteriorated areas.  
*Resolution 2019-1*

**Act 91 of 2020** is a comprehensive measure of 13 legislative proposals that supports recommendations put forth in the Senate Resolution 6 Commission that addresses fire department retention, recruitment, and training. These include increasing the amount of funding available through the Volunteer Loan Assistance Program; requiring the state fire commissioner to be confirmed by the Senate; and reauthorizes the Fire/EMS grant program through 2024.

**Act 98 of 2020** allows rural cooperatives or cable companies who want to run broadband cable to use the existing infrastructure held by cooperatives.

**Act 101 of 2020** permits boroughs to file condemnation orders on properties unfit for human habitation or are structurally dangerous with the recorder of deeds office.  Act 101 ensures a borough will not have to start the condemnation process all over if a condemned property is sold.  
*Resolution 2019-2*

**Act 114 of 2020** amends the Fiscal Code to allow municipalities to extend the maturity date of Tax Anticipation notes to the end of 2022. This bill was in response to the COVID-19 emergency and gives municipalities another fiscal tool to meet revenue shortfalls.

**Act 132 of 2020** creates the Underserved High Speed Broadband Funding Program to support the expansion of broadband in rural and underserved areas.

**Act 48 of 2019** allows a referendum on various new types of liquor licenses so voters can choose if their municipality would stay completely dry, allow limited sales, or convert to wet.  
*Resolution 2017-16*

**Act 51 of 2019** changes the requirements for setting the annual tax levy from an ordinance to a resolution if the borough is keeping the same tax rate or lowering it.

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Have a Question?  
PSAB’s Government Affairs Department Can Help.

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**Legislation Would Seek to Cleanup Cemeteries**

State Sen. Marty Flynn (D-Lackawanna/Luzerne) will introduce legislation that provides a mechanism for neglected burial grounds to be rehabilitated and maintained in communities across the state.

Unkept burial grounds are not only an eyesore to the community, but also are an affront to the dignity of those laid to rest therein. Current law governing neglected burial grounds was enacted in 1923 and is woefully outdated and inadequate. Flynn said his legislation would update language with a clear path to address and restore blighted, unsightly burial grounds.

The legislation clarifies the process by which residents may bring forward concerns about a community cemetery, including that petitioners must reside in the municipality in which the respective burial ground is located. The Court of Common Pleas in the county in which the burial ground sits will then order the local governing body of the municipality to remove any overgrowth and blight to return the grounds to good condition.

The cleanup of the burial grounds is to occur twice annually.

Finally, the legislation removes an outdated provision capping expenditures at $30 per burial ground.

As of the deadline of Borough News, the legislation had not been introduced.

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**Bill Seeks to Fund Code Enforcement Efforts in Communities**

House Bill 1827, introduced by State Rep. Bob Merski (D-Erie), would make it easier for municipalities to battle blight by creating a grant program to fund code enforcement programs, hire inspectors for those programs, or add more staff to fortify existing programs.

“We need to make it easier for municipalities to break the vicious cycle that occurs when vacant, blighted properties reduce tax revenues available for public services like code enforcement, leading to further vacancies, declining property values, and more people leaving the area,” Merski said. “Even before the pandemic, municipalities were struggling to keep code enforcement programs funded. COVID-19 only aggravated those problems by stretching budgets to the max.”

Merski said the competitive grant program would be administered by the state Department of Community and Economic Development, and municipalities would be required to provide matching funds.

The bill has been referred to the House Urban Affairs Committee.
Bill Would Ban Deceptive Tactics in Police Interrogations

State Rep. Angel Cruz (D-Phila.) has proposed a bill that would ban deceptive tactics in police interrogations. Under state law, police officers are permitted to use deceptive tactics to secure a confession or incriminating statement. Practices that attempt to get suspects to confess to a crime, even if they didn’t commit one, have become commonplace during custodial interrogations. This is due to the assumption that only the guilty would confess.

“My legislation would prohibit law enforcement officers from using deceptive interrogation tactics against any individual suspected of a crime. No innocent suspect should be pressured into confessing to a crime they didn’t commit,” said Cruz.

According to The Innocence Project, more than 30% of wrongful convictions that have been overturned by DNA evidence as a result of false confessions, were attributed largely to deceptive interrogation tactics.

Cruz said that deceptive tactics do not ensure that any statement provided by the accused is valid. “Presenting false information and misleading a suspect can lead to the accused admitting to a crime they did not commit,” he said, pointing to the recent case where three Philadelphia cops were charged for their role in the wrongful conviction of Anthony Wright.

Wright was falsely convicted of rape and served a 25-year sentence. One of the factors that led to Wright’s conviction was that he signed a confession paper, because the cops told him that he would only be allowed to go home if he signed it.

As of the deadline of Borough News, this bill had not been introduced.

How Can You Track Legislation?

PSAB members can stay current on bills that are moving through the legislature. You can also read bill summaries and find out which legislators are sponsoring bills of interest to boroughs. You can find this information under the Legislative tab on www.boroughs.org/legistive.
Expansion of Neighborhood Improvement District Act Sought

State Reps. Carrie Lewis DelRosso (R-Allegheny/Westmoreland) and Robert Matzie (D-Beaver/Allegheny) have introduced bipartisan legislation (HB 1761) that would amend the Neighborhood Improvement District (NID) Act to allow more flexibility in the creation of districts, while also streamlining the process to allow for maximum return on investment.

“Our tourism and hospitality industries are hurting like never before as they try to recover from the pandemic,” said Lewis DelRosso. “It is important that we provide counties and municipalities all the necessary policy tools to promote and enhance economic growth.”

The NID Act was first enacted in 2000 and allows local governing bodies and their residents to create a NID to implement special assessments on their properties in order to finance public infrastructure improvements. House Bill 1761 would provide the same simplified process and flexibility already afforded to NID authorization in Philadelphia County to the rest of the state.

“Ensuring that an adequate funding stream is available has long been a goal of stakeholders for our region and around the state, and this legislation will do just that,” Matzie said. “It’s clear that dollars spent to promote our communities are supporting jobs and the economy and is the definition of community and economic development. It’s a win-win at a time when the industry needs it the most.”

The bill will be considered by the House Urban Affairs Committee.