

# WEEKLY SESSION NOTES

SENATE REPUBLICAN POLICY COMMITTEE

## Monday, January 25, 2021

There were no final passage votes taken in the Senate on Monday.

## Tuesday, January 26, 2021

[Senate Bill 2](#) (K. Ward) proposes three distinct and separate amendments to the Pennsylvania Constitution. The first proposed change would amend Article I by adding Section 29 which states, “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania because of the race or ethnicity of the individual.” The second would amend Article III, Section 9 to explicitly exclude from the presentment requirement concurrent resolutions related to the termination or extension of a disaster emergency declaration as declared by an executive order or proclamation. The final change would amend Article IV by adding Section 20 to require the passage of a concurrent resolution by the General Assembly for the Governor to extend an emergency declaration beyond 21 days. Upon expiration of the declaration, the Governor could not declare a new emergency based on the same or substantially similar facts without the passage of a concurrent resolution by the General Assembly expressly approving the new disaster emergency declaration. A proposed constitutional amendment must pass the General Assembly during two separate, consecutive legislative sessions before it is presented to the voters for approval. **[Passed: 28-20.](#)**

[Senate Resolution 17](#) (Corman) honors the life and achievements of former Pennsylvania Governor and United States Attorney General Richard “Dick” Lewis Thornburgh. **[Adopted: 48-0.](#)**

[Senate Resolution 18](#) (K. Ward) honors the life and achievements of Representative Michael “Mike” Reese. **[Adopted by Voice Vote.](#)**

## Wednesday, January 27, 2021

[Senate Bill 87](#) (Baker) would amend Title 18 (Crimes and Offenses), Title 23 (Domestic Relations) and Title 42 (Judiciary and Judicial Procedure) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes to enhance penalties related to child pornography and to establish a Task Force on Child Pornography. Specifically, the legislation would:

- Increase the grading for child pornography offenses when the child depicted is either under the age of ten or prepubescent; and
- Require the Sentencing Commission to provide for a sentence enhancement within sentencing guidelines for child pornography offenses where the child depicted is known to the defendant or if indecent contact with a child is depicted and the child depicted is under the age of ten or prepubescent.

The measure would also establish the Task Force on Child Pornography composed of the individuals delineated in the bill to conduct a review to ascertain any inadequacies relating to the offense of child pornography in Section 6312 (relating to sexual abuse of children) of the Crimes Code. Appointed members of the Task Force would have to be individuals who have experience in investigations or prosecutions or are victims of child pornography or sexual abuse. The Task Force could hold public hearings necessary to obtain the information required to conduct its review. Action by the Task Force would have to be ratified by a majority vote. Within one year of its first meeting, the Task Force would be required to submit a report with its recommendations to the Governor, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Speaker of the House and the chairs of the Senate and House Judiciary Committees. The Task Force report would have to be adopted at a public meeting and would be considered a public record under the Right-to-Know Law. **Passed: 46-2.**

**Senate Bill 109** (Pittman) would amend the Fiscal Code to repeal Article I-C, Subarticle J, relating to the Mortgage and Rental Assistance Grant Program and to appropriate:

- \$145 million to the Department of Community and Economic Development to establish the Hospitality Industry Recovery Program to alleviate revenue losses and operating expenses for hotels, restaurants, bars and taverns. The funding would have to be allocated to all 67 counties via a block grant in an amount equal to the county's proportional population. Grants would be processed and administered by certified economic development agencies on behalf of counties.
- \$150.023 million in emergency education relief to aid students and teachers in non-public schools to be administered by the Department of Education in accordance with federal guidance; and
- \$47.075 million through the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund to entities that received limited funding through previous COVID-19 federal funding sources to include career and technical centers (\$17.5 million), intermediate units (\$17.5 million), Charter Schools for the Deaf and Blind and Approved Private Schools (\$7.075 million), and the State System of Higher Education (\$5 million).

The legislation would also allocate \$569.808 million for the Rental and Utility Assistance Grant Program to all 67 counties proportionally based on population. By September 30, counties would have to identify an excess or shortfall in funding. The excess funding would be reallocated to counties identifying a need for additional funding. The amount of \$145 million would be transferred from the Workers' Compensation Security Fund to the COVID-19 Response Restricted Account to be utilized for the Hospitality Industry Recovery Program. The transferred funds would have to be repaid by July 1, 2029. Federal funds received for the mitigation of general revenue losses incurred as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency could be used to repay the fund. **Passed: 48-0.**

**Senate Resolution 21** (Argall) honors the life and achievements of Pennsylvania State Senator David J. Arnold, Jr. **Adopted: 48-0.**