

WEEKLY SESSION NOTES

SENATE REPUBLICAN POLICY COMMITTEE – MARIO M. SCAVELLO, CHAIRMAN

Wednesday, February 3, 2021

[Senate Bill 81](#) (Langerholc) would amend Title 42 (Judiciary and Judicial Procedure) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes to allow expert testimony in a criminal proceeding relating to domestic violence. Specifically, the legislation would amend Section 5920(a) to provide that a court may qualify an expert witness in a criminal case regarding: (i) any crime listed under Subchapters H (relating to registration of sexual offenders) and I (relating to continued registration of sexual offenders) of Chapter 97; (ii) an offense under Title 18, Chapters 30 (relating to Human Trafficking) and 31 (relating to sexual offenses); and (iii) a criminal proceeding for a domestic violence offense. The expert would assist the trier of fact in understanding the dynamics of sexual violence and domestic violence, victim responses to sexual violence and domestic violence and the impact of sexual violence and domestic violence on victims. **Passed: 49-0.**

Thursday, February 4, 2021

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

Friday, February 5, 2021

[Senate Bill 49](#) (Langerholc) would designate the bridge, identified as Bridge Key 8659, carrying State Route 3037, also known as William Penn Avenue, over the Norfolk Southern and Lehigh Valley Rail Management rail lines in the City of Johnstown, Cambria County, as the Reverend Andrew William Tilly, Jr., Bridge. **Passed: 48-0.**

[Senate Bill 84](#) (Martin) would amend the County Code to require that, in second class A through eighth class counties, vacancies in the office of district attorney be filled by the first assistant district attorney upon a showing that he or she satisfies the requirements of Section 1401 of the County Code. That person would serve until the first Monday in January following the next municipal election occurring not less than ninety days after the occurrence of the vacancy. If the first assistant district attorney is unwilling or unable to serve, or does not satisfy the requirements of Section 1401, the judges of the court of common pleas would fill the vacancy by the appointment of a competent person. **Passed: 48-0.**

[Senate Bill 85](#) (Martin) would amend the Second Class County Code to require that vacancies in the office of district attorney in second class counties be filled by the first assistant district attorney upon a showing that he or she satisfies the requirements of Section 1401 of the County Code. That person would serve until the first Monday in January following the next municipal election occurring not less than ninety days after the occurrence of the vacancy. If the first assistant district attorney is unwilling or unable to serve, or does not satisfy the requirements of Section 1401, the judges of the court of common pleas would fill the vacancy by the appointment of a competent person. **Passed: 48-0.**

[Senate Bill 86](#) (Martin) would amend Title 53 (Municipalities Generally) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes to prevent home rule counties from modifying the procedure for the filling of vacancies in the office of district attorney. **[Passed: 39-9.](#)**

[Senate Bill 109](#) (Pittman) would amend the Fiscal Code to provide for programs responding to COVID 19. The legislation would:

- Allocate \$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 or community development financial institutions on behalf of counties. 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;
- Establish parameters for the \$150.023 million in federal 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. The Department would be prohibited from imposing eligibility criteria in addition to the federal law or guidance;
- Provide for the allocation of \$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 (\$20 million), Charter Schools for the Deaf and Blind, Approved Private Schools and private residential rehabilitative institutions (\$8.075 million), the State System of Higher Education (\$5 million) and Community Colleges (\$14 million);
- Establish the Rental and Utility Assistance Grant Program within the Department of Human Services funded by \$569,808,000 of federal money provided through the Federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program. Funds would have to be allocated 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; and
- Exclude forgiveness of Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Loans and Economic Impact Payments (stimulus checks) from the definition of income under Article III (Personal Income Tax) of the Tax Reform Code. **[Concurrence in House Amendments: 48-0.](#)**