



STATE REP. PERRY STAMBAUGH

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Always Ready to Serve the 86th District!

WINTER 2025/2026

Keystone State Budget Impasse Ends, Although Financial Future Shaky

The PA General Assembly in mid-November adopted a record-breaking \$50.1 billion 2025–26 state budget, \$2.2 billion more than last year's and a stunning \$5.7 billion above the latest PA Independent Fiscal Office projected Commonwealth revenues for the year of \$44.4 billion.

The General Appropriations bill passed the state House by a 156–47 vote. Related "code" bills (Fiscal, Education, Human Services), which contain policy directives, also advanced.

To "balance" the 2025–26 books, the "official" (though disputed) \$4.155 billion budget surplus — which, interestingly, stood at approximately \$8 billion in January 2023 when Gov. Josh Shapiro took office — was fully depleted while \$1.17 billion in lapsed and special (shadow) fund monies were moved around.

For the current fiscal year, at least, the governor and legislative leaders left their paws off our state "savings account" — the roughly \$7.52 billion Rainy Day Fund. Given that most legislators have no appetite or will for trimming the budget, and finding new revenue sources or economy-boosting policies everyone can agree on remains extremely difficult (such as the right "fee" structure for skills games), draining the Rainy Day Fund to keep the budget constitutionally balanced could begin in 2026–27.

At some point over the next few years the only available "financial fix" left for keeping PA solvent will be raising taxes — personal income, sales and use, business, perhaps even applying state taxes on retirement income for the first time. The Commonwealth Foundation estimates that PA could be looking at a \$1,500 to \$2,000 tax hike per household.

Electricity Challenges Discussed During Four-State Summit

In late October I joined a delegation of lawmakers from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, and Virginia in the state Capitol for the first in a series of meetings examining ways to restore electric affordability and reliability across the Mid-Atlantic region.

Because all four states are served by Valley Forge, Pa.-based PJM Interconnection, the organization that manages the bulk electric transmission system and oversees the competitive wholesale power market for Pennsylvania and all or parts of 12 other states, we share the same crisis — skyrocketing consumer electric bills; the potential collapse of our grid due to surging electric demand (from data centers and overseas manufacturing returning home to increased electrification of transportation and commercial heating/cooling) and not enough power plants to supply it; and the very-real specter of rolling brownouts and blackouts.

During the session we delved into the economic and grid-reliability consequences of rising clean energy mandates and taxes, aging infrastructure, and market disruptions, while identifying practical steps to strengthen the PJM network.



As part of the confab I discussed House Bill 1272, legislation I introduced that would allow electric distribution companies to invest in, and if necessary, once again own new electric generation resources to fill gaps when power supplies fall short. Importantly, net revenues from these investments would be returned directly to customers.

No Mileage, No Pension, No Per Diem, No Travel Expenses

Keeping in mind that legislative pay and perks come from YOUR tax dollars, I have honored this four-part pledge when it comes to compensation:

No Mileage: I don't request any payment for driving to the Capitol on session days or for hearings, going to my district offices, or traveling on legislative business. I see travel as a regular part of my job, just as you commute to work without being paid mileage for it.

No Pension: I am among a handful of Pennsylvania legislators who have refused a state pension, which I believe is clearly prohibited by Article II, Section 8 of the state Constitution. With Pennsylvania burdened by \$60 billion and counting in pension debt, not taking a pension is the responsible thing to do.

No Per Diem or Travel Expenses: I don't receive "extra" pay by taking per diems, which in many ways have been abused and become something of a racket. I further don't seek reimbursement for any travel costs (hotel rooms, meals, etc.) when attending legislative hearings around the state. Again, this is part of my job, and my salary (your tax dollars) can cover it without any need to double-dip into more tax dollars.

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Keystone State Budget Impasse Ends... (Continued)

As part of negotiations, the Republican-controlled state Senate — one-third of the budget decision-making structure (along with the Shapiro administration and majority House Democrats) — ended up settling for a higher spending amount than the flat-line budget they had previously passed. In exchange for the concession, the governor agreed to end PA efforts to participate in the 11-state Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) compact. (Joining RGGI was originally imposed under a 2019 executive order by then-Gov. Tom Wolf but since has been tied up in the courts; regulations associated with that order will now be abrogated.)

In addition, Gov. Shapiro approved language that carbon-tax efforts like RGGI could not proceed again without legislative action.

Worries over PA entering RGGI have both crimped investment in building desperately needed baseload (24/7) power plants (which would be mostly fueled at present by natural gas) and limited opening new natural gas wells — all of which has spiked consumer electricity costs.

Republicans also wrung a deal to bring greater accountability, transparency, and efficiency to how ALL state agencies handle permit applications. The wording sets clear timelines for reviewing permit applications, creates a permit tracking system, and ensures applicants receive timely, consistent answers and not endless delays. Importantly, it allows third parties to review permit applications and requires permits to be "deemed approved" after a set number of days if a delay on the permit decision occurs and the application



Ways to Stay in the Know About PA Legislation

Pennsylvania House votes, debates, and bills — and much more — can be accessed via the General Assembly website. Learn more at palegis.us.

Once there, you can research legislators from various areas, read bills and amendments, review text of floor debates in official journals, and see how House members voted on the floor and in committee. Committee meeting schedules and co-sponsorship memos are also available.

The State Treasury maintains OpenBookPA, a vast resource of data and information related to state finances — including the Fiscal Health Scorecard, daily updates for every state fund, and information about Treasury's consumer programs — along with the Contracts e-Library, which allows people to search all state contracts valued at \$5,000 or more. www.patreasury.gov/openbookpa/

The PennWATCH website allows citizens to keep tabs on the state budget, spending, revenue, and employees. Pennsylvania also makes it easy for people to review state purchases, lobbyist registrations and reports, and campaign finance reports. www.pennwatch.pa.gov

To look up existing statutes, go to the Statutes section of the General Assembly's website. From there you can choose to review consolidated statutes, unconsolidated statutes, the state Constitution, recently enacted laws, rules and regulations (PA Code), the PA Bulletin, and more. www.palegis.us/statutes

The Office of Open Records (OOR) maintains information about Pennsylvania's Right-to-Know Law (RTKL) and Sunshine Act, including information about filing a request for records, a database of Agency Open Records Officers, and a Citizens' Guide to the RTKL. The OOR also provides information about filing an appeal when a RTK request is denied and provides a variety of training resources, including PowerPoint presentations and videos. www.openrecords.pa.gov/

OUT and ABOUT in the 86th DISTRICT





Always Ready to Serve You

Out of 203 PA State House districts, the 86th Legislative District is the 14th largest in area. To bring services closer to all constituents, I offer office hours at the following locations:

Perry County: 417 W. Main St., New Bloomfield, PA 17068 | **717-582-8119**

Open: Monday–Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (except holidays)

Juniata County: 28 Industrial Circle, Mifflintown, PA 17059 | **717-436-6001**

Open: Monday–Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (except holidays)

Lack-Tuscarora EMS Social Hall: Second Wednesday of the month (9 a.m. to 2 p.m.)
9320 PA-75, East Waterford, PA 17021

East Waterford office dates for 2026: January 14, February 11, March 11, April 8, May 13, June 10, July 8, August 12, September 9, October 14, and December 9. (No November date due to Veterans Day.)

Shine Coffee Company: Third Wednesday of every other month (9 a.m. to 1 p.m.)
204 N. Front St., Liverpool, PA 17045

Liverpool office dates for 2026: January 21, March 18, May 20, July 15, September 16, and November 18.

