

PSATS NewsBulletin

JANUARY 2010

RECEIVED
FEB 04 2010

BY: MM

A MONTHLY
NEWSLETTER
CONTAINING THE
LATEST
INFORMATION
ON LEGISLATION
AND NEWS OF
INTEREST TO
TOWNSHIPS

Your numbers will
influence your
township's liquid
fuels distribution
and other dollars
your community
receives over the
next decade.

Census 2010 Fast Approaching Township Officials Will Play Major Role in Ensuring an Accurate Count

Census 2010 is just around the corner, and townships have a vested interest in ensuring an accurate population count.

Why? These numbers have a direct impact on how much funding Pennsylvania receives and how much political clout it has for the next 10 years. It is essential for townships to fully and actively participate in the census because many others are organizing major efforts to count each and every resident in cities and urban areas. This could shift the balance of power in Harrisburg if rural and suburban areas are undercounted. Closer to home, your numbers will also influence your township's liquid fuels distribution and other dollars your community receives over the next decade. That's why it is so important for your township to get involved and make sure that *all* of your residents are counted.

To promote and ensure the success of Census 2010, townships may form a Complete Count Committee to organize events. They can also urge residents to complete and return their questionnaires by placing signs in the township office and including information in their newsletters and on their Web sites. (*To find out more about the Complete Count Committees, see the April 2009 issue of the Pennsylvania Township News.*)

The U.S. Census Bureau will begin mailing forms in just a few weeks and has already started encouraging everyone living in the U.S. to complete and mail their 10-question census form by "National Census Day," April 1.

For more information about Census 2010, how to promote it, and how to form a Complete Count Committee, log onto www.2010.census.gov or call the U.S. Census Bureau's Philadelphia regional office at (215) 717-1074.



PENNSYLVANIA STATE ASSOCIATION
OF TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS

4855 WOODLAND DRIVE
ENOLA, PA 17025
TELEPHONE: (717) 763-0930
FAX: (717) 763-9732
INTERNET: WWW.PSATS.ORG

Don't Miss PSATS' 88th Annual Educational Conference

PSATS is always working to provide township officials and staff with the best possible conference experience, and this year is no different. We've come up with some new ideas for the 2010 event, scheduled April 18-21 at the Hershey Lodge, and improved some tried-and-true favorites, too. And the best part is, you still have plenty of time to register. (*See the next page for the details.*)

When you arrive in Hershey, make sure you don't miss these offerings, some of which

The general session on Wednesday, April 21, will start at 8:30 a.m. so you will have plenty of time to quiz candidates in the race to be Pennsylvania's next governor.

have been moved from their traditional day and time to make room for new events.

- ◆ The **Roadmasters Roundtable** is moving from its usual Monday slot to Sunday, April 18, from 1 to 2:30 p.m. Be sure to join this lively and practical discussion of real-world issues by those who know the job inside and out.
- ◆ The **Secretaries/Managers Q&A Session** will be held on Sunday, April 18, from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. This time slot will allow those attending Sunday's "Basic Training for Municipal Secretaries and Administrators" workshop to also participate in this popular Q&A session.
- ◆ The opening general session on Monday, April 19, will feature political pundit, humorist, and **grassroots motivator Patrick Haggerty**. His topic: Why it is *critical* for township supervisors to have a seat at the legislative table.
- ◆ The general session on Wednesday, April 21, will start at 8:30 a.m. so you will have plenty of time to quiz candidates in the race to be **Pennsylvania's next governor**.

The delegate registration fee is \$175 until March 31 and \$190 thereafter. The guest registration fee is \$95. To register or for more information, call PSATS at (717) 763-0930 or log onto www.psats.org and click on the state conference link.

The Capitol Roundup

Lawmakers Legalize Table Games, Rendell Backs Natural Gas Tax, and Pressure is on to Enact County Sales Tax

Read on to learn the latest from Harrisburg on issues of interest to township officials:

One budget process ends as another begins — In early January, the General Assembly passed legislation to legalize table games at casinos, and Gov. Ed Rendell promptly signed the measure into law as **Act 1 of 2010 (SB 711)**. It took effect January 7. Ironically, this final piece of the 2009-2010 state budget was wrapped up barely a month before Rendell is scheduled to unveil his 2010-2011 spending plan. The governor's official budget address is set for February 9.

Designed to plug a sizeable hole in the current state budget, Act 1 imposes a one-time licensing fee of \$16.5 million on racetrack and state-alone casinos and \$7.5 million on small resorts. Table gaming revenues are also subject to a 16-percent tax, divided as follows: 14 percent will go to the state's general fund and 2 percent to the host county and municipality. Under the new law, much of the local funds must be spent on libraries, tourism boards, development projects, and other institutions.

Rendell to press for natural gas tax — After bids to lease state forestland for natural gas drilling came in significantly higher than anticipated, Gov. Ed Rendell is expected to urge lawmakers to quickly adopt an extraction tax.

The bids would generate \$128.4 million for the state and far exceeded the original projections of \$60 million. As a result, Rendell is reportedly convinced that an extraction tax will not harm the commonwealth's fledgling natural gas industry and will announce

PSATS has been working with other local government groups to urge the General Assembly to include a local share if the state adopts its own extraction tax.

support of the levy in his February 9 budget address. It remains to be seen, however, whether the governor's proposal will include a local share. It's important to note that the State Planning Board recently passed a resolution supporting such a tax with a share for local impact.

Meanwhile, PSATS, guided by a resolution passed at the 2009 state conference, has been lobbying for a local tax on natural gas proceeds. So far, however, lawmakers have been cool to the idea. As a result, PSATS has been working with other local government groups to urge the General Assembly to include a local share if the state adopts its own extraction tax.

Optional county sales tax legislation still on the table — While House Bill 1858 (PN 2533), which would authorize an optional county sales tax, has not seen any action since August, the proposal remains on the table. And it's likely that given the recession's impact on many municipalities, legislators will feel pressure to discuss this issue in the coming year.

Under HB 1858, counties could choose to levy a 1-percent sales tax on the same goods and services subject to the state's 6-percent sales tax. The amended version of the bill would distribute the revenues as follows: 50 percent would be allocated to a county's school districts, 25 percent to the county, and 25 percent to its municipalities.

School districts would be required to use all of the funds to decrease property taxes. The municipal share of the tax would be distributed through a formula based 50 percent on population and 50 percent on weighted tax revenues, defined as a municipality's total tax revenues divided by its per-capita market value.

PSATS opposes the current allocation and has urged legislators to go back to the original proposal, which would distribute 50 percent of the proceeds to the county and 50 percent to municipalities.

Act 32 Report Available, Webinar Scheduled

The state Department of Community and Economic Development recently released its *Earned Income Tax Consolidation System Best Practices Report*, which is available by logging onto www.psats.org and choosing the Act 32 link under "In the News."

This 250-page report is designed to help the newly formed Act 32 tax collection committees get organized and get ready to appoint a collector for 2012, when the act requires countywide consolidation of the EIT. The report includes model bylaws, operational procedures for the committees, a best practices guide on information technology, requests for proposals, model agreements, and sample EIT collection forms.

In addition to the report, DCED is offering a webinar, "Act 32: Earned Income Tax Implementation and Best Practices," from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, February 23. The course, developed for tax collection committee members, will include a review of the best practices report. Attendees may participate via an Internet downlink or can join the live audience at the WITF studio in Harrisburg.

The webinar registration fee is \$50. To register, contact PSATS at (717) 763-0930 or log onto www.palocalgovtraining.org.

PSATS' Newly Elected Officials workshops include topics such as the role of the township supervisor, the Sunshine Law, finance and audits, and land use planning.

Training Opportunities for Township Officials

As a township official, it's important that you stay in the loop, and PSATS can help you do just that at its upcoming workshops. To register for any of the sessions listed below, call PSATS at (717) 763-0930 or log onto www.psats.org, go to "Municipal Training" on the left side of the home page, and click on "PSATS Workshop Registration."

The following sessions will be held in the weeks ahead:

Training for newly elected officials — PSATS' Newly Elected Officials workshops will be held through March 2010 across the commonwealth. This course is designed for new township supervisors as well as current supervisors who would like a refresher on their duties. Topics will include the role of the township supervisor, the Sunshine Law and meeting management, administrative functions, public safety, public works, finance and audits, land use planning, and much more.

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and the sessions end at 4 p.m. Lunch is included in the registration fee, which is \$175 for both sessions and \$115 for one.

Following are the remaining scheduled dates and locations:

- ◆ **February 6 and 13**
 - Lycoming County — Holiday Inn Williamsport
- ◆ **February 13 and 20**
 - Berks County — Albright College, Reading
- ◆ **February 20 and 27**
 - Butler County — Days Inn Butler
 - Luzerne County — Woodlands Resort, Wilkes-Barre
- ◆ **March 6 and 13**
 - Bedford County — The Arena, Bedford
 - Clarion County — Holiday Inn Clarion
 - Cumberland County — PSATS Training Center, Enola
 - Lehigh County — Rodeway Inn Conference Center, Allentown

Register soon before all the seats are filled!

CDL training coming soon — PSATS will be offering training on CDL records management and drug and alcohol testing in May and June at six locations statewide.

The "CDL Records Management" workshop will help employers understand all of the state and federal records they must maintain for commercial motor vehicles and the employees who operate them. The "CDL Drug and Alcohol Testing Supervisory Training" will help supervisory personnel better understand state and federal CDL regulations for drug and alcohol testing. Participants will also learn what to do if they suspect or verify that an employee is under the influence while performing CDL duties.

Additional information about these workshops will be released soon.

If your township enrolls in PSATS 457 Plan before June 30, the annual administrative fee will be waived for 2010.

PSATS 457 Plan Provides Flexible Benefits for Township Employees

The PSATS Trustees 457 Plan is a tax-deferred retirement savings program designed to supplement your township's pension plan while providing employees with an affordable option.

By adding the 457 Plan to your benefits package, you can help employees better plan and prepare for retirement. Plus, if your township enrolls before June 30, the annual administrative fee will be waived for 2010.

PSATS is offering the 457 Plan through a partnership with Summit Financial Corp. of Burlington, Mass., which provides investment counseling, training, and administrative support for the program. Nationwide Financial oversees the plan's investments.

The 457 Plan is a flexible option that allows participants to manage their own account or choose the "do-it-for-me" approach, where professionally managed funds are selected to coincide with an employee's anticipated year of retirement. All full- and part-time employees, including township supervisors, are eligible to participate. The plan is also available to township solicitors and engineers.

For more information or to enroll your township in the 457 Plan, call the PSATS Trustees Insurance Fund toll-free at (800) 382-1268.

This and That...

Be sure to check this section each month, where we will feature important reminders and information about upcoming events.

- **Deadline to sign up for COSTARS salt contract is March 15** —

Don't forget to sign up for next winter's COSTARS road salt contract, which has helped more than 1,000 municipalities cut their costs and guarantee adequate supplies. Townships have until **March 15** to complete the program's 2010-2011 Salt Participation Agreement, which is posted on the COSTARS members page at www.dgs.state.pa.us/costars.

Last year, 1,440 COSTARS members purchased 756,000 tons of road salt, which, when added to PennDOT's requirements, makes Pennsylvania's salt contract one of the nation's largest. Participating municipalities paid \$56.99 per ton, on average.

To sign up, townships must fill out a simple one-page document that can be completed and submitted electronically. Participants are obligated to purchase at least 60 percent of their stated needs but may buy up to 140 percent at the contracted price. Townships may use liquid fuels funds to purchase the materials.

While only registered COSTARS members may participate in the commonwealth's salt contract, it takes just minutes for townships to sign up for this cooperative purchasing program. To learn more, log onto the COSTARS Web site or call toll-free (800) 768-7827.

