

MEDIA ADVISORY

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TO: Editors, News Directors and Assignment Editors

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RE: **STATEMENT BY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION
OF PENNSYLVANIA ON THE COMMONWEALTH BUDGET**

Douglas E. Hill, executive director of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) today issued the following statement concerning the announcement of the Governor's proposed budget for FY 2010-2011:

Pennsylvania's economy continues to feel the impacts of a very slow recovery, a reality reflected in Governor Rendell's 2010 – 2011 budget proposal released today. It is our belief that even in this environment, core government services provided by counties on behalf of the state must be the last to be cut, and the first restored when the economy improves.

Counties are diligently working to manage programs and services in the face of funding cuts in last year's adopted budget, further reduced in the Governor's mid-year budget freeze announced only days after counties adopted their own budgets for 2010. And in the previous fiscal year, counties were forced to cope with the effects of two mid-year budget reductions from the Governor. In the perfect storm of the current fiscal crisis, case loads and service demands have increased at the same time funding has decreased. With each successive year of cuts, the service delivery system is further weakened, requiring more and more counties to make the kinds of budget and staffing cuts that affect the quality of life of local residents.

Counties are calling on the General Assembly to adopt a fair and timely budget. A fair budget will maintain state funding to support services that benefit the health of local communities, including particularly human services, environmental programs and funding for courts and corrections. We are pleased to hear that state leaders are taking steps to assure a budget is adopted by June 30. Counties cannot afford another protracted impasse like the one they endured last year. The cash flow issues cost local taxpayers millions statewide, some local service providers shut down temporarily or went out of business completely, and local budgets have not recovered from the loss of reserve and interest funds caused by the impasse.

The Association is reviewing the funding levels in the Governor's 2010 – 2011 spending proposal and will issue a more detailed evaluation in the next couple of days. However, we note that, since 2002, funding has been cut for a wide variety of services provided by counties. Even during better economic times, funding levels fell far short of increases in costs and demands for service. The result has been an erosion of the state's commitment to fund mandated and necessary core government services, and a greater burden passed to local taxpayers.

The Association is encouraged that the Governor recognized that local communities need revenue to offset costs associated with Marcellus development, including environmental, emergency management, human services, and infrastructure costs in the host counties and municipalities. While the Association has no position on enactment of the proposed severance tax – the Association's priority for Marcellus is restoration of assessability for property tax

purposes that was lost in a 2002 PA Supreme Court decision – the Association does nonetheless support redistribution of a share of the proposed severance tax to impacted counties and municipalities.

We stand ready to work with the state on all fronts. Counties will stand up for local taxpayers by advocating adequate funding for mandated and necessary services to assure the health of our communities. We will continue to seek mandate relief where appropriate, and will look for support to achieve cost-savings measures to help counties stretch limited program dollars for the greatest efficiency and effect.

For more information on historical budget issues since 2002 as well as analysis of the Governor’s 2010 – 2011 budget proposal, please visit <http://www.pacounties.org/Pages/2010-11CommBudget.aspx>.

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CCAP is the voice of county government, a statewide, nonprofit, nonpartisan Association representing all of Pennsylvania’s 67 counties. CCAP membership includes the county commissioners, council members, county executives, administrators, chief clerks and solicitors.

CCAP strengthens the counties’ abilities to govern their own affairs and to improve the well-being and quality of life for every Pennsylvania resident. It advocates for favorable state and federal legislation, programs and policies on behalf of counties. CCAP is committed to service excellence through education, information, insurance, technology and other programs that support effective county government.

CCAP’s legislative and regulatory policies promote flexibility and autonomy for county government. CCAP supports county leadership that is responsive to the needs and circumstances of the people. CCAP stands against state and federal actions that limit fiscal, administrative or programmatic authority over those developed locally.

Founded in 1886, CCAP is an affiliate of the National Association of Counties.