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POLICY TRACKER



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FOCUSED RESEARCH AND
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CHALLENGES,
OPPORTUNITIES, AND
POTENTIAL NON-PARTISAN
SOLUTIONS.*

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FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION



Federal Transportation Reauthorization

Background

The federal surface transportation reauthorization program—totaling approximately \$77 billion in annual spending—requires renewal. The current authorization is set to expire in September 2026. Over the past 30 years, the federal government has directed nearly \$1.5 trillion in taxpayer funding toward improving safety and infrastructure to support stronger environmental and public health outcomes. Many of these traditional programming approaches have become outdated, however, and they have not yielded substantial improvements to safety, infrastructure conditions, congestion, or emissions. Furthermore, revenues from the federal transportation program have historically been placed in a trust that is protected during appropriations processes, but these funds have not sufficiently covered program costs in more than 15 years. Extra tax dollars have been used to fill the gap. Bipartisan efforts are now focusing on modernizing the system to meet the demands of the 21st century.

Reforms will be necessary to continue enhancing public health, safety, and quality of life while ensuring that infrastructure systems are sustainable and resilient. Although new funding sources, such as the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)—also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law—have made historic investments, modernization must go beyond simply increasing funding. Yet to maximize the impact of these investments, the ways accessibility, success, and progress are measured must also evolve.^[1]

Significance

Annual average daily traffic counts for I-81 in Wilkes-Barre Township and I-80 in Foster Township have increased from 2015 to 2023 (by 4.7 percent and 10.3 percent, respectively). PA-307 experienced an 8.1 percent decrease in traffic counts during that period.

Daily vehicle miles of travel along Lackawanna County's 144.5 linear highway miles increased by 5.2 percent from 2022 to 2023. Daily vehicle miles of travel along Luzerne County's 177.7 linear highway miles decreased by 1.1 percent from 2022 to 2023.

Wayne County's 6.6 linear highway miles increased significantly to 29.3 miles between 2022 and 2023. This increase in highway miles is associated with a 226.1 increase in daily vehicle travel miles. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, this increase can be attributed to classification changes to the national highway systems.

Regionally, the number of pedestrian crash deaths has increased as well.

Recommendations

Shifting away from traditional policies can help drive better decision-making around national transportation improvements. Updated performance measures that focus on efficiency and environmental benefits could reduce construction costs over time, inform more effective parking and land-use strategies, and expand rail electrification and other sustainable transportation advantages.

Reconnecting and reinvesting in existing communities should be prioritized to support local economies, including the repair and maintenance of current infrastructure rather than expanding new roadways unnecessarily. Additional improvements should include expanding world-class transit options, strengthening national and regional passenger rail networks, and supporting the growth of electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure. Future transportation design must also prioritize safety and accessibility over speed alone. This includes preparing for autonomous vehicles (AVs) by ensuring roadways and guardrails are designed to reduce risks rather than simply allowing faster

FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION

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FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION



Federal Transportation Reauthorization (cont.)

travel. Finally, modernizing program administration will require holding agencies accountable to taxpayers and updating outdated transportation standards.[2]

Acting upon these recommendations will spur the advancement of the federal transportation program and its alignment with current-century conditions:

Replace outdated performance measures.

Transportation decisions still rely on metrics from the 1965 Highway Capacity Manual, including the Level of Service (LOS) method, which grades roads from A (low volumes and minimal delays) to F (oversaturated traffic and long delays). A more modern approach should assess how transportation investments support local development goals and walkability rather than simply optimizing vehicle speed.

Monitor accessibility through multimodal travel needs. Transportation Performance Management standards should focus on how easily people can reach workplaces, services, and daily destinations – particularly those who rely on transit, walking, or cycling due to limited vehicle access. Funding should prioritize projects that strengthen connections and reduce travel barriers.

Redefine how success and progress are measured. Improving public health, reducing congestion, and boosting transit ridership should guide future funding decisions. Tools already exist that can better evaluate program effectiveness, such as the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement emissions calculator and Georgetown Climate Center's Transportation Investment Strategy Tool.

Update environmental review processes to reflect modern goals. There is a need for environmental review processes that evolve alongside transportation improvements.

Accelerating 'net-benefit' projects, which are intended to improve access, safety, and environmental conditions, can help communities advance green spaces and resilient infrastructure without unnecessary delays.[3]

Source

[1] Transportation for America. (2025, October 3). Reauthorization policy platform. Transportation For America. <https://t4america.org/reauthorization/>

[2] Ibid.

[3] Salerno, C. (2025, July 23). Dragging the Federal Transportation System into the 21st Century. Transportation For America. <https://t4america.org/2025/07/23/dragging-the-federal-transportation-system-into-the-21st-century/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=bcf1ca04-6005-469d-be6d-d5c932bca3fa>

TODDS AS TOOLS FOR WEALTH PRESERVATION AND UPWARD ECONOMIC MOBILITY

TODDS AS TOOLS FOR WEALTH PRESERVATION AND UPWARD ECONOMIC MOBILITY

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TODDS as Tools for Wealth Preservation and Upward Economic Mobility

Background

Economic stability at the household level allows families to withstand shocks such as recessions, environmental disasters such as floods, and public health challenges such as COVID-19. It is essential for wealth-building, which helps establish long-term stability across generations. Such financial security is connected to better academic, behavioral, health, and career outcomes compared to low- or no-wealth households. On a broader scale, wealth-building allows for financial independence and reduces reliance on social services and public benefits.[1]

Improved economic status at the household level relies on several key concepts, including homeownership. Through equity-building and appreciation, as well as potential tax savings, homeownership fosters wealth-building along with the opportunity to pass real estate to the next generations. These inheritances are subject to taxes and they may be vulnerable to creditors, but nonetheless afford heirs the opportunity to build on an investment asset.

Regionally and statewide, the shares of homeowners have declined and the shares of renters have grown.

Significance

Successful transfer of wealth from one generation to the next requires that the transfer process be as efficient and cost-effective as possible – particularly for households with limited resources. For these

families, burdensome processes such as probate may heighten the risk of losing the properties and the value they offer. Probate refers to the court-supervised management of a deceased individual's estate, with an appointed executor if no will is involved. People with low incomes are less likely than their counterparts to have wills.[2]

Transfer-on-Death Deeds (TODDS) are mechanisms by which properties may be transferred without the costly and time-consuming nature of probate. Bills allowing TODDS have been enacted or introduced in more than half the states. Pennsylvania allows TODDS as they relate to financial assets, but not real estate.

Through the Real Property Transfer on Death Act, the Uniform Law Commission models language that may be adapted for states to enact TODDS. Policy may allow property owners to use TODDS to designate beneficiaries, to modify TODDS at any time, and to maintain ownership rights until death.

Additionally, TODDS may be enacted alongside measures allowable through the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act (UPHPA), which offers protections when partitioned ownership presents challenges. In these cases, several individuals who have rights to the same property may receive rights of first refusal to buy when co-owners wish to sell, and they allow traditional market sales rather than auctions when buyouts do not occur. This prevents loss of property value due to speculation.[3]

Housing Tenure: Owner-to-Renter Comparison										
	2010*		2020*		2021		2022		2023	
	Owner	Renter								
Lackawanna	69.8%	30.2%	63.0%	37.0%	65.3%	34.7%	65.4%	34.6%	65.4%	34.6%
Luzerne	71.0%	29.0%	65.4%	34.6%	67.6%	32.4%	67.3%	32.7%	67.8%	32.2%
Wayne	82.4%	17.6%	79.5%	20.5%	80.7%	19.3%	81.9%	18.1%	81.9%	18.1%
Pennsylvania	73.1%	26.9%	67.3%	32.7%	69.2%	30.8%	69.2%	30.8%	69.3%	30.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5 Estimates and Decennial Estimates*

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TODDS as Tools for Wealth Preservation and Upward Economic Mobility (cont.)

In Pennsylvania, there is an opportunity for lawmakers to introduce policy conforming to language modeled through the Real Property Transfer on Death Act, similar to policy most recently enacted in Delaware (HB 147) and enacted in Utah in 2024 (HB 24). There is also an opportunity to incorporate measures designed through the Uniform partition of Heirs Property Act to offer protections in circumstances with multiple heirs.

Sources

- [1] Wealth-building opportunities. Urban Institute | Upward Mobility Initiative. (n.d.). <https://upward-mobility.urban.org/framework/rewarding-work/wealth-ops>
- [2] Gallup. (2025, March 26). How many Americans have a will?. Gallup.com. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/351500/how-many-americans-have-will.aspx>
- [3] JPMorganChase. (n.d.-b). Model language substantively similar transfer-on-death deeds: A state-. <https://www.jpmorganchase.com/content/dam/jpmc/jpmorgan-chase-and-co/documents/transfer-on-death-deeds.pdf>

Jurisdiction	Year	Bill Number	Status
Connecticut	2025	HB 6896	Introduced
Delaware	2025	HB 147	Enacted
Iowa	2025	HF 125/SF 408	Introduced
New Jersey	2025	S 3376/A 4539	Introduced
Rhode Island	2025	SB 141	Introduced
Tennessee	2025	SB 984	Introduced
New Hampshire	2024	HB 68	Enacted
New York	2024	S 8306/A 8806	Enacted
Mississippi	2020	SB 2851	Enacted
Montana	2019	SB 225	Enacted
US Virgin Islands	2019	32-0327	Enacted
Maine	2018	LD 123	Enacted
Utah	2018	HB 94	Enacted
Texas	2015	SB 462	Enacted
Alaska	2014	HB 60	Enacted
South Dakota	2014	HB 1077	Enacted
Washington	2014	HB 1117	Enacted
West Virginia	2014	SB 3	Enacted
District of Columbia	2013	19-743	Enacted
New Mexico	2013	SB 107	Enacted
Virginia	2013	SB 1093	Enacted
Nebraska	2012	LB 536	Enacted
Hawaii	2011	SB 105	Enacted
Illinois	2011	HB 1153	Enacted
Nevada	2011	SB 88	Enacted
North Dakota	2011	HB 1138	Enacted
Oregon	2011	SB 815	Enacted



STATE LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING

A curated briefing of state legislative proposals and recent legislative actions

STATE BRIEFINGS

- Classroom Supplies Grants and Tax Credits
- Increasing the Minimum Wage
- Reinvestment in Housing
- Bridge Repair
- 2025-2026 Budget

House Bill 1910: Classroom Supplies Grant Program

On October 1, House Bill 1910 was introduced to establish a state grant program that would provide funding to educators and other support staff for the purchase of classroom supplies. The program is intended to support teachers and school personnel who often spend their own money on materials necessary for effective student learning. Following its introduction, House Bill 1910 was referred to the Finance Committee.

House Bill 1900: Classroom Supplies Tax Credit

Nearly a week after the introduction of House Bill 1910, House Bill 1900 was introduced on October 6, to further support teachers who purchase classroom supplies with their own funds. Although educators may claim a \$300 federal tax deduction, this legislation would establish a \$100 refundable state tax credit. According to the memo to House members, studies indicate that teachers spend an average of more than \$800 of their own money each year on supplies needed for their students. House Bill 1900 was referred to the Finance Committee and is currently under consideration.

Senate Bill 1093: Increasing the Minimum Wage

On November 17, Senate Bill 1093 was introduced to increase Pennsylvania's minimum wage. Though other legislation addressing minimum wage modernization remains under consideration, Senate Bill 1093 proposes a phased increase to \$11.00 per hour by 2028. Pennsylvania's minimum wage has not been raised since 2009 and remains among the lowest in the nation, failing to keep pace with rising costs of living. The bill would raise the minimum wage to \$9.00 per hour in 2026 and \$10.00 per hour in 2027. Senate Bill 1093 was referred to the Labor and Industry Committee following its introduction.

Senate Bill 979: Reinvestment in Housing

On November 19, Senate Bill 979 received its first consideration in the Urban Affairs and Housing Committee. The bill seeks to reduce tax increases associated with home investments and encourages property owners to reinvest in their homes without the immediate consequence of higher taxes. Property improvements can trigger a reassessment by increasing a home's value, and this legislation would prohibit reassessment when improvements are equal to or less than 20 percent of the home's assessed value.

Senate Bill 1070: Efficient Use of Funding for County and Municipal Bridge Repair

On December 8, Senate Bill 1070 received its third consideration and final passage to the Pennsylvania House. Senate Bill 1070 aims to make the use of Marcellus Legacy Fund dollars for county bridge replacement and repairs more responsible and flexible. Any remaining funds would be used for preemptive repairs on municipal bridges within the county to prevent them from becoming at risk.

Governor Shapiro Signs 2025-26 Budget into Law

On November 12, Governor Shapiro signed the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Budget into law following months of negotiations. The \$50.1 billion budget accommodates key priority areas, including education, tax relief, workforce development, support for seniors and vulnerable populations, and innovation and economic growth. The budget also includes nearly \$8 billion in surplus funds to maintain fiscal responsibility.



FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING

A curated briefing of federal legislative proposals and recent legislative actions

119th Congress Overview

Since the formation of the 119th Congress (2025-2026) in January 2025, 6,546 bills were proposed in the House and 3,392 bills were proposed in the Senate. There have been more resolutions, concurrent resolutions, and joint resolutions in the House (938, 64, and 133, respectively) compared to the Senate (539, 24, and 98, respectively). Conversely, the Senate has submitted significantly more amendments than the House (3,957 legislations and 114 legislations, respectively). There have been 47 pieces of public legislation enacted since the beginning of 2025, and although no private laws have been passed, 13 have been introduced.

Action by Congress was most common in the policy disciplines of health (with 1,253 bills and resolutions), armed forces and national security (with 925 bills and resolutions), and government operations and politics (with 847 bills and resolutions). Other prevalent disciplines include international affairs, taxation, and crime and law enforcement. There were relatively few actions involving animals; water resources development; families; arts, culture, and religion; and sports and recreation (each with fewer than 100 bills and resolutions). [1]

Current Landscape of Bills and Resolutions Proposed in Congress

Approximately seven percent of the 11,723 bills and resolutions brought before the 119th Congress will become legislation. A total of 47 bills were signed by the President and have therefore been passed. Furthermore, 357 bills with joint resolutions (which must be approved by both chambers in Congress) were enacted or incorporated into other bills. Thirteen bills and resolutions failed to pass since the start of the year. With health being the primary focus of introduced bills and resolutions during this period, 1,196 bills may ,

be organized into subcategories. These subcategories include health care coverage and access (101 bills), health programs administration and funding (86 bills), health care costs and insurance (80 bills), Medicare (71 bills), and health personnel (67 bills).

Overall, 10,451 bills were introduced; 324 passed the House and 70 passed the Senate. Additionally, 404 bills and resolutions have received substantial numbers of votes in one of the two chambers in Congress. Of the 47 legislations enacted and signed by the president, 13 related to different types of finances such as foreign trade or the economy and taxation. Another 12 were associated with energy; environmental protection; and science, technology, and communication. Nine measures pertained to Native Americans and public lands and natural resources. Nine other measures concerned armed forces and national security and crime and law enforcement. Areas including immigration, international affairs, transportation, and health each had one law enacted.

The five most recent actions (in December 2025) include:

- the joint motion of disapproval from both chambers in Congress pertaining to the rule in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska Integrated Activity Plan Record of Decision, which was filed by the Bureau of Land Management (S.J.Res. 80)
- the Secretary of the Interior's authorization of "unique and one-time arrangements for displays on the National Mall and the Washington Monument during the period beginning on December 31, 2025 and ending on January 5, 2026" (H.J.Res. 133)
- the Taiwan Assurance Implementation Act (H.R. 1512)
- the Medal of Honor Act (H.R. 695), an amendment to raise special payable pension rates for recipients
- the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Reauthorization Act of 2025 (H.R. 2483, revising certain Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) programs involving "opioid use disorder prevention, treatment, and recovery, and for other purposes." [2]

FEDERAL BRIEFINGS

- 119th Congress Overview
- Current Landscape of Bills and Resolutions



FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING

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Recent Actions Taken by President

A total of 436 presidential actions were documented since December 6, 2025. Two of the most recent executive orders focus on evaluating set prices and anti-competitive practices within the food supply chain, as well as on the Genesis Mission, which deploys AI software across federal databases. Other executive actions involved presidential nominations and appointments submitted to the Senate in mid-November. Nominations were given for the Bureau Director of Alcohol, Tobacco Firearms, and Explosives; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission General Councilmember; Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection Director; United States Judges for Western District of Arkansas and Southern District of Texas.

Recent presidential proclamations involve National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, the anniversary of the Monroe Doctrine, remembrance of the loss of a West Virginia Army National Guard member, National Adoption Month, and National Energy Dominance Month, and Cybersecurity Awareness Month. Other proclamations pertain to Veterans Day, the 250th anniversary of the Marine Corps, Anti-Communism Week, and exemptions for specific stationary sources from certain Coke Oven Rule pollutant regulations associated with infrastructure, military readiness, and mineral security. The most recent presidential memorandum instructed the Health and Human Services Secretary and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to evaluate recommended primary childhood vaccination practices in peer and developed countries. Another memorandum instructed the Secretary of War and Office of Management and Budget Director to explore funding available to pay the military and allowances related to a lapse in annual appropriations. [3]

Sources

- 1 <https://www.congress.gov/browse>
- 2 <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/>
- 3 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/>

FEDERAL BRIEFINGS

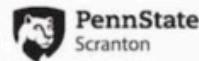
- Actions Taken by President



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The Institute Staff

Teri Ooms, CEO

Jill Avery-Stoss, President

Sarah Bender, Research Analyst

Brigitte Guariglia, Research Analyst

Timothy Ooms, Research Analyst

Ethan Van Gorden, Research Analyst

Michael Shuba, Research Assistant

Jean Holmgren, Communications & Marketing Manager

Emily Bauer, Administrative Coordinator

Policy Tracker

The Institute Contributors

Lead Editor

Jean Holmgren

Communications & Marketing Manager

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