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PA Chamber Gears Up for Busy Fall Agenda

Focus continues on combating punitive tax increases that will hurt PA's competitive edge

As the summer draws to a close, the PA Chamber is gearing up for a busy fall. This season always marks a flurry of activity for our organization – particularly towards the end of September, when our annual Chamber Dinner takes place. Additionally, with the legislature scheduled to return to session in the coming weeks, we are keeping an eye on a number of legislative proposals – including a tax increase package that would place significant additional burdens on Pennsylvania's business community.

As we enter into the third month of the state's fiscal year, Pennsylvania is still without a completed budget. There continues to be disagreement between legislative leaders and the Wolf administration on how to pay for the \$32 billion spending plan that became law in early July. As calls to address the budget deficit and spending gap intensify, the PA Chamber is continuing to combat efforts to impose punitive taxes that will hurt the state's business climate and overall competitive edge. As I discussed in last month's column, the \$600 million tax increase plan that passed the Senate in July would have a negative impact on the state's overall economy. This tax package – which included a new tax on natural gas users and the natural gas industry; as well as increased taxes on energy and phone use – would significantly increase the cost of doing business in the Commonwealth, hurting our state's overall competitive edge. Particularly troubling is the fact that this tax package would attack one of our state's most valuable competitive resources – accessibility to affordable energy sources.

The House has been less than receptive to the Senate's revenue package, with leadership calling a number of the taxes "non-starters". A faction of the House Republican caucus has been working on a plan that uses lapsed dollars from various state funds and closes the budget hole without any taxes. However, there's no word yet on whether this proposal has the support of a majority of House legislators – not to mention the Senate and the Wolf administration. With the House scheduled to be back in session on Sept. 11, we are continuing to encourage our members and our local chamber partners to [contact](#) their state representative and urge them to vote "no" on higher energy and phone taxes.

In other PA Chamber news, we are finalizing preparations for a number of events over the next couple of months – including the premier event of the year for the state's business community – the 33rd Annual Chamber Dinner. This year's program will feature a keynote address by award-winning veteran journalist and *Fox News Sunday* host Chris Wallace. Following his speech, Wallace will moderate an in-depth conversation with former White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card and former White House Press Secretary Jay Carney. All three speakers will offer key insights into the political landscape in Washington, D.C. – sharing their perspectives on the evolving relationship between the media and our elected officials. We hope you can join us on Monday, Sept. 18 at the Hershey Lodge. For more information on the program, or to register or sponsor, visit www.chamberdinner.com.

Gene Barr
President and CEO

PA Chamber of Business and Industry

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*The **Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry** is the state's largest broad-based business association, with its statewide membership comprising businesses of all sizes and across all industry sectors. The PA Chamber is The Statewide Voice of Business™.*