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**FROM VOICES  
TO VISION:  
DRIVING POLICY  
WITH PURPOSE**

# FOREWORD

We have been around the state in 80 hearings with a steadfast commitment to bring Pennsylvania a future that embodies Hope, Opportunity, Prosperity, and Excellence in Government.

From Greene and Pike counties to Chester and Erie counties, and many in between, we have listened to hundreds of Pennsylvanians and witnessed the brightest potential for our Commonwealth. Yet, we learned that this potential is being tragically dampened by Harrisburg, the source of most obstacles to opportunity.

What are the obstacles to opportunity?

Pennsylvania's economy is stagnant. We are losing businesses to other states with more competitive tax and regulatory structures. Households are having to settle for unhealthy standards of living. The jobs we have are not family-sustaining, and for those jobs that are, there isn't the workforce to fill them. Because of misaligned policies that neglect the abundance of natural resources beneath our feet, we are facing historic grid reliability issues that could lead to rolling blackouts in the next five years. Most importantly, we have a 19th century school system failing our 21st century children, the future of Pennsylvania.

Eighty hearings later, we report with conviction that Pennsylvania's future is bright if we get Harrisburg out of the way. We can overcome the obstacles to opportunities if we put students first, cut the red tape, put money back into the pockets of our hard-working constituents, and make the world a better place with Pennsylvania energy.

Embodying the many voices of Pennsylvania, this report presents a vision of HOPE.

Pennsylvania stands at a critical moment in history. We will soon embark on America's 250th year, a milestone unachievable without Pennsylvania as the birthplace of this American constitutional republic. There is a legacy to celebrate, but more importantly, a legacy to uphold.

The time for Pennsylvania to dominate is now! This report outlines how we get it done.



Chairman Joshua D. Kail

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**“WE HAVE LISTENED TO  
HUNDREDS OF PENNSYLVANIANS  
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# INTRODUCTION

The House Republican Policy Committee is an incubator of ideas, driven by a desire to enable Pennsylvania and the families that live here to reach their full potential.

During the 2023–2024 legislative session, the Policy Committee sought to answer the question, what does Pennsylvania need? The answer is HOPE.

**Hope for Pennsylvania families through innovative policy solutions that are people-driven and family-focused.**

**Opportunity for family-sustaining jobs.**

**Prosperity for working families.**

**Excellence in government.**

In this report, we identify Pennsylvania’s greatest obstacles to opportunity in the areas of **education, energy, job creation and business reforms, and government efficiency and accountability**. We then put forth policy recommendations in these same areas that are grounded in reality and position Pennsylvania to dominate.

The recommendations are based on the wealth of information we received during the 80 Policy Committee hearings held throughout the 2023–2024 legislative session.

**127**

Hearing Hours

**333**

Testifiers

**13,973**

Miles Traveled

Further information to build upon what is included in this report, such as testimony, testifier biographies, and videos, can be found at [www.pagoppolicy.com](http://www.pagoppolicy.com).



# HOPE THROUGH EDUCATION

*One in eight 9th graders will not graduate high school<sup>1</sup>. The status quo of K-12 education in Pennsylvania is not working for its students, which is why we must reform our education system. We believe in putting students first; that all children deserve access to quality education, regardless of their ZIP code. Parents and caregivers should be able to choose the best educational environment to meet their children's learning needs. To build pathways to opportunity, we must fund students, not systems. We must enable teachers to overcome barriers to pursue their careers while also matching a student's education with the needs of Pennsylvania employers.*

## 1.7 MILLION STUDENTS

enrolled in 3,287 public schools (88.4% of all students)<sup>2</sup>.

## AVERAGE COST PER STUDENT

### PUBLIC SCHOOL

**\$19,900<sup>3</sup>**

\$4,000 higher than the national average.

### CHARTER SCHOOL

**\$15,751<sup>4</sup>**

### SPECIAL EDUCATION

**\$25,000-  
\$50,000<sup>5</sup>**

A 2022 Independent Fiscal Office report found **NO CORRELATION** between per-student expenditures and a student's proficiency on standardized tests<sup>6</sup>.

### Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC)

Pennsylvania's EITC program provides tax credits for corporate contributions to Scholarship Organizations, nonprofits that provide private school scholarships, or Educational Improvement Organizations, nonprofits that support innovative programs, such as Boys & Girls Clubs, libraries, pre-Ks, and more. Tax credits are worth up to 90% of a business' contribution, with a maximum tax credit of \$750,000 per company.

EITC donations fund opportunities for Pennsylvania children to attend better schools, pursue their interests, receive after-school care, and achieve their potential. Many students, who otherwise would be at the whim of their ZIP code, have broken free of their educational restraints and grabbed an EITC lifeline towards a hope-filled future.

### Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC)

Pennsylvania's OSTC program provides the scholarships necessary for students and families to escape underperforming schools. Business contributions are used by Opportunity Scholarship Organizations to provide tuition assistance, in the form of scholarships, to eligible students residing within the boundaries of one of 381 low-achieving schools, allowing them to attend another school that better meets their needs.

**STUDENTS IN EVERY COUNTY IN PA RECEIVE EITC/OSTC FUNDING.**

## 2021-2022:

SCHOLARSHIPS  
AWARDED

77,640

AVERAGE  
SCHOLARSHIP

EITC: \$2,583  
OSTC: \$1,853

SCHOLARSHIP  
APPLICATIONS

139,000

More than 63,000 student scholarship applications went unfunded due to arbitrary program caps<sup>7</sup>.

## 2023-2024:

TOTAL EITC AMOUNT

\$470 Million

TOTAL OSTC AMOUNT

\$85 Million

TOTAL EITC/OSTC  
TAX CREDITS

\$555 Million

### OBSTACLES

- **19<sup>th</sup> century education system for 21<sup>st</sup> century students.** Students are trapped in schools that are failing to meet their needs.
- **Misalignment between schools and workforce.** Educational opportunities are neither aligned with the needs of our industries nor the opportunities of our future.
- **Inaccessibility of EITC/OSTC programs.** Both families and businesses are unsure of how to access these resources.
- **Student mental health crisis.** This is both a growing concern and unplanned expense for educational institutions.
- **Barriers to entry and teacher shortage.** It is exceedingly difficult to begin a career as an educator, all while demand for teachers continues to rise.

### OPPORTUNITIES

- **Fund students, not systems.** Education is not one size fits all. State funding should benefit students while respecting taxpayers.
- **Expand access and acceptance of career and technical education.** Students should enter the workforce with in-demand skills, not deep in student loan debt with no real path before them.
- **Encourage public/private partnerships.** Education must cooperate with local businesses and industry. Employers should be brought into classrooms, exposing students to future career opportunities.
- **Empower parents and caregivers with school choice.** Parents know best. They should be able to choose the best educational environment to meet their children's learning needs.
- **Increase the cap on EITC/OSTC funding and improve access to resources.** By doing so, we encourage further utilization and allow our communities and families to decide where their children can receive a quality education.
- **Ease entry into teaching professions.** Years of experience, certifications, and non-teaching credentials should translate into faster onboarding of teaching professionals at all levels.

# OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

*Pennsylvania, with its rich industrial history and strategic geographic location, has the potential to be an economic powerhouse in industries such as technology, manufacturing, and trade. However, our state's growth is being stifled by excessive government interference and a burdensome tax structure. Businesses are struggling to stay competitive, and the workforce is shrinking as residents leave for states with better economic environments. We have the solutions to unlock Pennsylvania's potential. By reducing tax burdens, empowering the private sector, and implementing policies that encourage growth and innovation, we can foster family-sustaining jobs, retain talent, and forge a dynamic economy that allows Pennsylvania to dominate.*

## WHERE DOES PA'S ECONOMY RANK IN THE NATION?

- **9th** worst overall economy in the nation<sup>1</sup>.
- **34th** for state tax competitiveness<sup>2</sup>.
- **31st** for small business taxes<sup>3</sup>.
- **41st** for new business applications per capita<sup>4</sup>.
- **\$2.22** of venture capital investment per \$1,000 gross domestic product — the national rate is \$6.23<sup>1</sup>.
- **5th** worst state for business outmigration<sup>5</sup>.

### What Taxes Do Businesses Pay?

- **3.07%** Personal Income Tax
- **8.49%** Corporate Net Income Tax (one of the highest in the nation)
- **6%** Sales and Use Tax
- Unemployment Compensation Tax
- Property Tax
- Indirectly: fuel tax, utility tax, vehicle registration fees, excise tax, realty transfer tax, regulatory compliance, and business/mercantile taxes.

### Population and Workforce Challenges

- **In 2021, Pennsylvania lost 9,000 taxpayers and \$1.9 billion** in income due to outmigration to other states<sup>6</sup>.
- The ratio of working adults per senior dropped from **3.5 in 2015 to 2.78 today and will reach 2.5 by 2030**<sup>7</sup>.
- **290,000** homes and businesses lack access to high-speed internet<sup>8</sup>.
- Only **77 qualified Pennsylvanians** are available per **100 job openings**<sup>9</sup>.
- **In March 2024, 37%** of small business owners could not fill open positions<sup>10</sup>.
- **Only 6.42% of students in Pennsylvania are enrolled in CTE** at a time when AI displacement-immune trades are in high demand<sup>11</sup>.



## OBSTACLES

- **Significant population decline.** Fewer young families and skilled workers are contributing to a shrinking labor pool, creating challenges for Pennsylvania businesses.
- **Misalignment between Pennsylvania's education system and workforce.** Pennsylvania's schools are not fully aligned with the demands of the modern workforce. Barriers to certification and teacher shortages are hindering the development of a skilled labor force.
- **Poor emphasis on Career and Technical Education (CTE).** The increasing demand for skilled workers is not being met, placing important industries at a severe disadvantage.
- **Uncompetitive taxes and complex regulatory environment.** Business growth and investment, particularly for small businesses and startups, are discouraged. Inflation and labor shortages are further exacerbating these challenges.
- **Underinvestment in critical infrastructure.** Insufficient investment in transportation, a lack of high-speed internet and cellular access in rural areas, and a workforce housing shortage are stifling Pennsylvania's economic growth.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- **Attract and retain skilled workers.** We can develop our workforce if we make Pennsylvania an attractive place to live and work, particularly in underserved rural areas.
- **Strengthen the alignment between education and the needs of the job market.** We need to expand workforce training programs and simplify pathways for skilled professionals to prepare the next generation.
- **Create a pipeline from education to employment.** By fostering public-private partnerships between higher education, CTE schools, and local businesses, we can meet the in-demand needs of our modern workforce.
- **Foster a more business-friendly environment.** We can compete with other states by reducing tax burdens, simplifying compliance processes, and incentivizing investment and innovation to promote long-term economic growth.
  - **Accelerate the reduction of the Corporate Net Income Tax** to 4.99%, making Pennsylvania more competitive with other states and encouraging businesses to expand operations and create jobs.
  - **Uncap the Net Operating Loss deduction**, allowing businesses, particularly start-ups and cyclical industries, to deduct more of their losses, promoting long-term growth.
  - **Reduce the Personal Income Tax (PIT)** from 3.07% to 2.8%, providing relief to both individuals and small businesses.
  - **Repeal the accelerated sales tax requirement**, which would ease cash flow pressures on businesses.
  - **Simplify the tax compliance process**, making it easier for start-ups to succeed and thrive.
- **Invest in the state's physical and digital infrastructure.** We need to encourage business expansion and population retention by enhancing transportation networks and expanding broadband and cellular access.

# PROSPERITY THROUGH ENERGY

*To secure our nation, our environment, and our future, we must utilize Pennsylvania's abundance of natural resources. Pennsylvania energy is good for the economy, creating family-sustaining jobs and propelling manufacturers and developers to build here. Pennsylvania energy reduces our reliance on foreign adversaries, like China and Russia, who have no standards when it comes to protecting the environment. At a time when our electric grid is at capacity, Pennsylvania energy offers affordability and reliability. We must unleash our resources to bring prosperity to the Commonwealth.*

**2ND LARGEST NET SUPPLIER OF ENERGY**  
after Texas<sup>1</sup>. The East Coast relies on Pennsylvania!

**39% REDUCTION**  
in electricity-related emissions in Pennsylvania since 2005<sup>2</sup>.

**\$2,000-\$3,000**  
The average yearly home energy expenses for Pennsylvania families<sup>3</sup>.

**7.5 TRILLION CUBIC FEET**  
is the total amount of natural gas produced in Pennsylvania<sup>1</sup>.

**3RD IN THE NATION FOR COAL PRODUCTION**  
We are #2 in foreign market exports<sup>4</sup>.

**1,044%**  
increase in American Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) exports between 2016–2023<sup>5</sup>.

## **PJM Interconnection (PJM)**

PJM is the regional transmission organization that manages the flow of electricity for much of the East Coast, including all or parts of 13 states and Washington, D.C. PJM ensures that electricity is delivered reliably and efficiently across its network.

PJM coordinates the movement of power from electricity generators to local utility companies, which then deliver it to homes and businesses. It also operates energy markets where electricity is bought and sold, helping to balance supply and demand to keep the grid stable.

In short, PJM helps keep the lights on for millions of people by overseeing our electric grid and making sure electricity is available when and where it's needed.



## Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards (AEPS)

AEPS, stemming from Act 213 of 2004, sets specific targets for how much electricity sold in Pennsylvania must come from renewable and alternative energy sources.

These targets are divided into two tiers:

**Tier I:** This includes renewable energy sources like solar, wind, low-impact hydropower, geothermal, and biomass.

- At least 8% of the electricity must come from Tier I sources.
- Solar Carve-Out: 0.5% must come from solar energy.

**Tier II:** This includes other alternative sources like waste coal, large-scale hydropower, and demand-side management.

- 10% of electricity must come from Tier II sources.

## OBSTACLES

- **Unreliable energy suppliers.** 97% of the potential additions to the PJM grid are intermittent alternative energy suppliers, primarily solar and wind energy<sup>6</sup>.
- **No new construction of gas-powered generators in Pennsylvania.**
- **Deterring political and regulatory climate.** Unfavorable energy policy proposals, like RGGI, PRESS, and PACER, scare away potential investment in Pennsylvania.
- **High cost of utility bills.** The cost to heat and power a home is expensive, with prices increasing at least 2%–3% per year<sup>7</sup>.
- **Competition with other states.** No new baseload energy generation construction is occurring within the Commonwealth. Pennsylvania is losing out on significant investments.
- **Paying more and receiving less with alternative energy.** Alternative energy generation is costly and inefficient.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- **Heed PJM's warnings.** We cannot risk the future stability of our grid in pursuit of unachievable and reckless alternative energy mandates. We need baseload energy production.
- **Utilize Pennsylvania energy.** Offshoring our industry and energy will not achieve global environmental goals. Our baseload energy generation is clean and efficient.
- **End Biden's ban on American LNG exports.** We have the energy to power the world, and the demand from our allies is high.
- **Enact regulatory and permitting reforms.** Cutting red tape will spur energy investment and innovation, bringing more family-sustaining jobs to Pennsylvania.
- **Empower our trades workers.** Skilled workforce development programs prepare our labor pool for new energy projects.
- **Leverage our energy to bring more manufacturing to Pennsylvania.**

# EXCELLENCE IN GOVERNMENT

*Manufacturers, businesses, and trades are struggling to operate under Pennsylvania's onerous rules, regulations, and excessive permitting. The regulatory red tape is restrictive, confusing to navigate, and costly, making it hard for Pennsylvania to compete. This lack of efficiency in government is evident in the rampant abuse of social services. Social benefits serve as a ladder to independence for those in need and are a necessary support for Pennsylvanians without the resources to thrive on their own. But there are too many able-bodied adults without dependents with access to benefits, and too many disabled bodies without.*

*Compounding the people's frustration with bureaucracy is the lack of integrity in our election system. To restore trust in government, we must secure our elections.*

*Efficiency in permitting, licensing and administration of social services, and safe and secure elections should be paramount.*

## 166,219

The number of statutes in PA. That's 30,000 more statutes than the average state<sup>1</sup>.

## 18.5 WEEKS

The amount of time it would take to read the entire PA Code<sup>1</sup>.

## 12TH MOST REGULATED STATE<sup>1</sup>

### Pennsylvania Welfare Programs

The utilization of welfare programs is increasing with each year, but these increases do not align with changes to our population or workforce.

- **1 million+** able-bodied adults enrolled in Medicaid<sup>2</sup>.
- **14,000** PA residents on Medicaid waiting list<sup>3</sup>.
- **\$43.8 billion** spent in the PA Medicaid Program, a \$33.4 billion increase since 2000<sup>4</sup>.
- **\$3.5 billion** spent in PA's Food Stamp Program, a \$2.9 billion increase since 2000<sup>5</sup>.

### Voter Identification in Pennsylvania

A voter ID requirement is a commonsense aspect of election integrity and is supported by most voters.

- **36** states request some form of ID to vote<sup>6</sup>.
- **81%** of Americans support requiring voters to show photo ID to vote<sup>7</sup>.

## OBSTACLES

- **Uncompetitive permitting and licensing.** A single permit can stop a project in its tracks. Knowing which permits are necessary and where to request them varies dramatically. The cost to comply is so expensive that projects are unprofitable without subsidies and tax breaks. Navigating the licensing requirements to enter the workforce in Pennsylvania is just as convoluted.
- **Over-regulation.** Pennsylvania has over 160,000 regulations, and a disproportionate number of these regulations are useless. Consumers bear the cost of overregulation.
- **Lack of trust in election integrity.**
- **Social benefits fraud, abuse, and waste.** We have a workforce shortage problem. At the same time, we have too many people accessing our welfare programs.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- **Expedite permitting process with “deemed approved.”** When permit applications are not reviewed within the legal time limit, they should be automatically “deemed approved” and issued to the applicant.
- **Increase legislative oversight of regulations.**
- **Ease the licensing process.** We need to enable people to pursue their chosen career path in Pennsylvania without barriers to enter the workforce.
- **Increase agency accountability.** We must review outdated laws, modernize where needed, and streamline processes. We need to reform the regulatory review process, making it open, fair, and composed of varied interests to produce coherent regulations.
- **Pass voter ID legislation to restore election integrity.** We need to make elections harder to cheat but easier to vote.
- **Preserve benefit integrity.** We need to safeguard against fraud, abuse, and waste, and give people a hand up, not a handout!
  - For Medicaid enrollment, do not permit “self-attestation” of income.
  - Monitor where food stamps are spent. Specifically, monitor out-of-state use.
  - Cross-check and verify records. Specifically, assess for deaths, incarceration, change of residency, and home occupancy.
  - Ensure accountability in unemployment insurance while encouraging re-employment.



# VOICES ON THE ISSUES

The 2023–2024 House Republican Policy Committee extends our sincere gratitude to each of the testifiers who took the time to share their expertise and insight during our hearings. Their contributions have proven invaluable in helping us better understand the complexities of the challenges facing real Pennsylvanians. The depth of knowledge and diverse perspectives were critical in our mission of crafting informed policies that serve the best interests of our communities and the Commonwealth.

Nicholas Adolphsen  
Sam Adolphsen  
Atah Akakpo-Martin  
Yemi Akinkugbe  
Ruth Alicea  
Carrie Amann, MPA  
Rev. Aaron J. Anderson  
Jelden Arcilla, MBA  
Robert Bair  
John Bane  
Mike Barba  
Gay Barbour  
Jim Barker  
Michael Barley  
Henrietta Bellman  
Tom Bender  
Nathan Benefield  
Stephen Bennett  
Chris Berleth  
Dr. Andrew Bitz  
Richard Black  
Matt Blackburn  
Dr. Mark Blanchard  
The Hon. Dr. Debra L. Bogen  
Zakiyyah Boone  
Scott Boyd  
Nick Boyle  
Andrew Brady  
Kemah Brewington  
Dr. Eric Briggs  
Kenny Broadbent  
Nicolette Brown  
Christi Buker, CAE  
Dr. Quintin Bullock  
Chief Tito Burgos  
David Burton  
Michael Butler  
David Callahan  
The Hon. Daniel C. Camp, III  
The Hon. Chris Canavan  
Norm Candelore  
Heather Caricari  
Deputy Chief Brian Carl  
The Hon. Mike Carreon  
Brandon Carson  
Heather Castellino

ChatGPT  
Rick Cimaskasy  
Dean Clancy  
Debra Clark-Loner  
Nick Cohen  
Anteia Consorto  
Joy Converse  
Kurt Couchman  
Dr. Mark Coville  
Jeremy Crandall  
Steve Craven  
Coleen Crisci  
Tom Crooks  
Darren Croxall  
Jeff Darwak  
Deb Davis  
Chris Deacon  
Eddie DeCaria  
Jim DeLisio  
Donald DeReamus  
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John R. Dickson, IV  
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Todd L. Eachus  
Chief John Egan  
Chris Eiserman  
Danielle Eisner  
Suzanne Estrella  
Gabriel Fabian  
Floyd Faria  
William Fink  
Brent Fisher  
Ken Fisher  
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Dr. Julie Fogt  
Thomas P. Foley  
Michael Ford  
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Andrew French  
Gerald Fretz

Dave Frew  
DJ Frye  
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Emily Greene  
Dr. Daniel Greenstein  
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Ryan Haney  
The Hon. Fred Harran  
Jill Hartman  
Eric Hausler  
Patrick Haver  
Brian Hayden  
The Hon. Kent Heffner  
Dr. Sara Heintzelman  
Ryan Heishman  
Scott Henry  
Stacy Hepingar  
Laurie Hepler  
Dr. Michael Herrera  
Wayne Herrod  
Bob Hickey  
Kassie Hilgert  
Michael Hillebrand  
Dr. Robin Hojnoski  
Judy Holden  
Andrew Holman  
Cmdr. Stephen Holmes  
Melissa Howard Heptner



Joann Hudak, Ed.D.  
George Hundt, Jr.  
Bryan Iams  
Kurt Imhof  
The Hon. Richard M. Johnson, D-ABMDI  
Beth Jones, M.Ed.  
Lawrence F. Jones, Jr., M.Ed.  
Judy Jordan  
Michael Joyce  
Jim Jusko, JD  
Gregg Kalemba  
Noah Karn  
Brian Kennedy  
David Kennedy  
Bradley Kiesendahl  
John Kiesendahl  
J.T. Klein  
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Ray Lenz  
Neal Leshner  
Filippo Lombardo  
Nicholas Luccarella  
Martin Lueken, Ph.D.  
Dr. Michael Lynch  
Matt Mackowiak  
John Macri  
John Maketa  
Madeline Malisa  
Tracy Mantzell  
Anthony Marchese  
Gayle Marinelli  
Carl A. Marrara  
Chad Marsilio  
Christopher Masciantonio  
Suzanna Mastartis  
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The Hon. David McClain  
Thomas McCullough  
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Director William McVey  
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Lori Milach  
Jessica Miraglia, Esq.  
Shannon Mitchell  
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Korrin Moon  
The Hon. Cheryl Moon-Sirianni  
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Crystal Morales  
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Cherie Moyer  
Rudolph P. Muller, Jr.

Jessica Naderman  
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Angelo Papa, Esq.  
Rachel Papuga  
Chief Douglas Pascoe  
Chris Pawlowski  
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Danielle Petroski  
Chief Matthew Phelan  
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Richard Reisinger, PE  
John Rhatigan  
Jake Rickert  
Aaron Riggleman  
Dwight Rittenhouse  
Todd Rittenhouse  
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Dr. Pete Rozelle  
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Stacie Rumenap  
Richard W. Runyen, PE  
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David Samella  
Dr. Andrew J. Sanko  
Amy Scheuring  
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The Hon. Jennifer Schorn  
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Howison Schroeder  
Howard Schwartz  
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Heather Sharar  
Mark Shelleby  
Jim Shields  
Amanda Shurr  
Joshua Simmons  
Myles Slade-Bowers  
Raymond Slifer  
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Cassie Smith  
Lindsay Smith  
Nicarol Soto  
George Stark  
Shawn Steffee  
Elizabeth Stelle

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Kevin Sunday  
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David Taylor  
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Glen Thomas  
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Justin Townley  
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Eden Turnow  
Vincent P. Tutino  
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Jeff Wakeen  
Tracey Wakeen  
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Michael Walton  
Chris Watts  
Chad Weaver  
Wendell Weaver  
Jim Welty  
Eric R. Wenger, CPA  
Michael A. Whisman, CPA  
Rod Williamson  
Andy Williford  
The Hon. Rod E. Wilt  
Mary Beth Wood  
Blair Woodring  
Chelsey Youman  
Larry Zana  
Carla Zapotek  
The Hon. Nicole Zicarelli



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## **PROSPERITY THROUGH ENERGY**

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