



Episcopal
Community
Services

**Inclusion and Advocacy Department Policy
Weekly Update
Friday, December 2, 2022**

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Economics and Workforce

November Jobs Report

According to data released by the Labor Department on Friday morning, December 2, 263,000 jobs were added to the U.S. economy in November with an unemployment rate of 3.7%. The report was stronger than expected and is noteworthy because the Federal Reserve will be taking this data into account in weighing its decision to raise interest rates at the upcoming Federal Open Market Committee meeting (see related items below). You can read more about the November jobs report in this [CNBC article](#).

Federal Reserve Updates

FOMC November Minutes: The November meeting minutes of the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC), the policymaking arm of the Federal Reserve, were released on November 23. Analysts interpreted the minutes as indicating that future interest rate increases may finally be smaller than the historically large increases that have been implemented recently given the Fed's attempts to curb inflation. The formal minutes can be found [here](#). A related CNBC article can be found [here](#).

New Beige Book: A new edition of the [Beige Book](#) was released on Wednesday, November 30. The Beige Book contains qualitative information about economic conditions throughout the Federal Reserve districts across the U.S. and is issued prior to the next FOMC meeting, which is scheduled for December 13-14. The overall national summary on page 1 indicates that, "Inflation pushed low-to-moderate income consumers to substitute increasingly to lower-priced goods." The summary for the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia (Third District) reads as follows:

On balance, business activity in the Third District appears to be teetering on the edge of a decline but managed to hold fast since the prior Beige Book period. Inflation has driven consumers to lower-priced items and lower-priced stores. Rising interest rates have discouraged consumers from buying big-ticket items, including homes and autos. Employment continued to grow slightly, despite the onset of some layoffs. Wage growth and inflation continued to subside but remained at a moderate pace. Overall, firms noted less difficulty in hiring and fewer supply chain disruptions. On balance, expectations for economic growth over the next six months deteriorated for all firms; however, the index for nonmanufacturers remained positive, while the index for manufacturers remained negative. Expectations for all firms remained well below their nonrecessionary historical averages. On average, conditions and sentiment appeared more positive in the Greater Philadelphia region than in the outlying areas of the Third District.

Powell's Speech at Brookings: On Wednesday, November 30, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell delivered remarks at the Brookings Institution. Analysts paid close attention to these remarks since they were Powell's last public remarks before the quiet period leading up to the next FOMC meeting. Powell indicated that interest rate hikes may not be as drastic beginning in December, but also that, "We have a long way to go," to bring inflation down to what the Fed considers a satisfactory level. Powell closed his remarks by stating, "We will stay the course until the job is done." You can read a full transcript of Powell's remarks and link to a video recording by [clicking here](#).

New Chicago Fed President: On Thursday, December 1, an announcement was made that economist Austan Goolsbee will become the next president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, replacing Charles Evans, who is retiring. Goolsbee, currently on the faculty of the University of

Chicago's Booth School of Business, served as Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors from 2010-11 during the Obama Administration. You can read more [here](#).

Federal Government Faces Yet Another Funding Deadline

From previous Policy Updates, recall that, in September, Congress passed a temporary stopgap continuing resolution to fund the federal government until December 16. The deadline is quickly approaching for Congress to act again, either with a permanent funding bill or another temporary stopgap bill. If legislation is not passed, the federal government faces the possibility of a shutdown. You can read the current status in this [article from The Hill](#). The IA team is monitoring developments.

Debt Ceiling is Coming Back into Focus

Besides continued funding for the federal government as written above, CBS News reports that there have been calls among some Democrats for [action on the debt ceiling](#) before the Republicans take control of the House in January. A potentially disastrous standoff is feared. Briefly said, the [debt ceiling](#) is the total amount of money the U.S. government can borrow to meet its obligations. Recall the last action taken on the debt ceiling was estimated to allow the federal government to meet its obligations part way through calendar year 2023. This is another situation the IA team is monitoring.

COP27 Results in Establishment of Historic Loss and Damage Fund

Following up on the Policy Updates issued before the Thanksgiving holiday, it is important to note that COP27, the United Nations Climate Conference, resulted in the historic establishment of a Loss and Damage Fund to compensate poor countries for the inordinate burden of climate change they assume (i.e., climate reparations). There are many details to be worked out regarding contributions to the fund and how funding will be distributed. The IA team will continue to monitor developments. You can learn more about the Loss and Damage Fund in this [explainer from the United Nations](#).

Pete Buttigieg Talks Road Safety, Infrastructure with Tribal Leaders in Southwest

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg [recently met](#) with various tribal leaders in New Mexico and Arizona to discuss infrastructure investments. Topics discussed include road safety, public safety, and the historic underinvestments of America into Indian Country infrastructure. A stop at the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute was to view traffic safety presentations, such as a mobile police vehicle with blood alcohol testing capabilities, what color clothing should be worn while cycling, and proper buckling of a car seat. With about 60% of roads in tribal communities unpaved and American Indian pedestrian fatality rates [over three times](#) higher than white counterparts, Secretary Buttigieg [stated](#) that one of his goals is to make rural communities safer and more accessible. New Mexico is the [deadliest state](#) in the country for pedestrian fatalities.

White House Releases Fact Sheet on Impacts of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

The White House has released a [fact sheet](#) highlighting the impacts of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law implementation one year after it was signed into law. This funding law is the single largest investment into infrastructure and international competitiveness in nearly a century. Separate fact sheets are available for the 50 states, 5 US territories, DC, and Tribal communities. The fact sheet covers problem areas for each of these regions, with information on the funding and sample announced projects for sectors that vary by area, such as roads and bridges, internet, water

infrastructure, public transit, airports, clean energy, ports and waterways, electric vehicle charging, climate resilience, and legacy pollution cleanup efforts.

Advocates Warn Against Expansion of I-94 in Milwaukee

Against the wishes of the community, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) has chosen an eight-lane expansion plan for Interstate 94 in Milwaukee. The plan goes against calls from community activists and environmental advocates to keep the road at six lanes and instead focus on safety improvements and roadway maintenance instead. Elizabeth Ward, director of Sierra Club Wisconsin Chapter, claims that the proposal will increase water and climate pollution, health problems, and racial disparities. Local council members add that the plan will disrupt businesses and homeowners without traffic volume justification for the expansion, and that it represents spending priorities that do not align with what the community wants.

The highway expansion is at odds with other proposals for Milwaukee highways Interstate 794 and Wisconsin Highway 175. These proposals suggest tearing down these highways crisscrossing through the city and replacing them with boulevard roads. These proposals would result in the reconnection of neighborhoods that had been divided by the highway construction decades ago, an issue the IA team has been following. They would also result in more green space and building developments for the city.

Labor Updates

Railroad Strike: At the request of President Biden, Congress has passed legislation to avert a railroad strike. The House passed the legislation on Wednesday, November 30, while the Senate passed it on Thursday, December 1. The final vote in the Senate was 80 to 15. The legislation now goes to President Biden for signature. Without it, a strike with the potential to cripple the U.S. economy during the holiday season could have occurred beginning December 9. Progressives in the House attempted to address workers' demands around sick leave through a separate bill which passed in the House but failed in the Senate.

It is important to note that, unlike in most other labor situations, Congress has the authority to act to prevent a railroad strike through its Constitutional power to regulate interstate commerce as well as the Railway Labor Act (RLA) of 1926, as amended. You can read a helpful explainer by the Congressional Research Service for additional details on Congressional authority related to the railroads. According to CNN, President Biden, who has carefully crafted his reputation as a pro-labor president, told reporters:

I negotiated a contract no one else could negotiate – the only thing that was left out was whether or not there was a paid leave...You know, I've been trying to get paid leave, not just rail workers, but for everybody...Now, within this agreement, we're gonna avoid the rail strike, keep the rails running, keep things moving, and we're gonna go back and we're gonna get paid leave – not just for rail workers, but for all workers.

According to CNBC, union leaders have warned that there will be election consequences as a result of the failure to address the sick leave issue.

Starbucks Strike: Starbucks employees at more than 100 stores across the U.S. organized a one-day strike on November 17, known as Red Cup Day, the day the retailer hands out reusable holiday cups. You can read more here.

Amazon: A U.S. District Judge has ordered Amazon to read out a public notice that it will not retaliate for organizing activity at the Staten Island facility where workers successfully voted to unionize. The readout is scheduled for Thursday, December 1. The judge issued the order in response to the termination of Amazon employee Gerald Bryson in April 2020. In a related development, Amazon workers protested outside the New York Times' DealBook event where Amazon CEO Andy Jassy was speaking about recent layoffs.

PA Minor League Teams That Were Left Out of Unionization Efforts

Historically, the level of compensation for players in minor league sports has hovered somewhere around the poverty level, a stark contrast to the massive earnings major leaguers take home. After a summertime push by the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA) that added several thousand minor league players to its rankings, the union is set to negotiate its first-ever collective bargaining agreement with Major League Baseball (MLB), including over minor league pain points such as salaries, housing, and travel expenses. This comes against a background of factors in the union's favor, such as the above linked settlement over minimum wage and overtime pay violations, scrutiny over the MLB's monopolistic antitrust exemptions via a US senate inquiry, mounting support for a minor leagues union in state capitals and DC, and general public support for labor unions at the moment.

The MLBPA now covers players at all four affiliation levels (Triple-A, Double-A, High-A, and Low-A). In Pennsylvania, the teams represented include the Altoona Curve, Erie SeaWolves, Harrisburg Senators, Lehigh Valley IronPigs, Reading Fightin' Phils, and the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre RailRiders. Unrepresented teams and teams not part of the unionization drive include the State College Spikes, Williamsport Crosscutters, Lancaster Barnstormers, Washington Wild Things, York Revolution, and the Johnstown Mill Rats. These latter teams are either part of MLB partner leagues or unpaid collegiate summer leagues.

However, hundreds of players on dozens of teams not associated with the MLBPA will not be represented at the bargaining table and will likely not see improvements in their working conditions. One general victory for labor has been for the MLB to require major league teams that control minor league clubs to provide housing for their minor league players, as previously players found themselves bunking with teammates, sleeping in cars, or staying with host families. It is possible that these other teams may unionize in the future, but there are greater obstacles such as more transient players and a very different cash flow than affiliate teams. The Morning Call's report on unionization in minor league baseball can be read here.

Camden City and County Have Lowest Unemployment in History

The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD) has released unemployment numbers for Camden County and the City of Camden. According to the November 2 report, both the county and the city fell to their lowest unemployment rates on record in the month of September. Camden City's unemployment in September was 5.5%, while the County's was 3%. During July 2020, the height of the pandemic, the unemployment was 22% for the city and 16.2% for the county.

In 2017, the City of Camden was cited by the Bureau of Labor Statistics as having the highest employment growth in the nation. While the pandemic nationally knocked all employment growth off-track, over the past year the entire county has seen businesses return to normal. City Mayor

Victor Carstarphen the city's rebound to investments and local employment efforts from the eds and meds, corporate partner, small business, and non-profit sectors. Christina M. Renna, president and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey, states that the county has seen many positive economic indicators, such as residential expansion and new commercial and industrial growth, which have created new access and opportunity for jobs in the region.

Pennsylvania Receives C Minus Grade for Infrastructure

The American Society of Civil Engineers recently released a report card for Pennsylvania's infrastructure condition. The report card is essentially a "wellness check" for the conditions of our roads and bridges. Overall, Pennsylvania's infrastructure received a C- grade. Pennsylvania fared the best in its aviation and hazardous waste networks, which received a B- grade. Its lowest-performing system is its aging wastewater infrastructure (D-). At unveiling events around the state, society engineers highlighted the benefits that the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law signed into law last year is bringing, but overall equated it to a down payment on long-overdue repairs and improvements that will benefit communities. Water infrastructure is the largest area of improvement needed, with the organization recommending upgrades and financial investments needed to stop contaminants and water leaks in state water systems. Roads, long a sore spot with residents, also came under attack, with generally terrible maintenance, poor design leading to traffic clogging, and a lack of transit and biking alternatives.

To date, Pennsylvania has received \$7.9 billion in funding from this law, with over 150 projects so far identified as funding opportunities. Said Governor Wolf in his press release statement, "This investment is really an investment in people. It's an investment in safe travels to work, family, and friends; an investment in a secure supply chain, the food we eat, the water we drink, and the air we breathe."

Center City Business District Traffic is Looking Up

After the pandemic took a toll on Center City shopping and office life, one report is showing that activity in Philadelphia's central district is back on the rise. According to the study, foot traffic has increased more than 100% since 2021 and has reached 77% of what it was in October 2019. Following the return of hybrid employees at companies like Comcast, more people are patronizing Center City establishments. Retail occupancy has risen in the last year including among "digitally native brands" that began online. To learn more about the renaissance in Center City, click here.

Bill to Change Residency Requirements for City Employment

Before resigning her seat to run for mayor (see related item below), Councilmember Helen Gym introduced legislation to update the residency requirement for applicants for City jobs. Facing vacancies in many departments, such as the Police, Fire, and Library, the legislation would change the residency requirements from needing to have resided in Philadelphia for at least a year prior to employment (the current status) to requiring new hires to move into the city within six months of hiring. There are currently over 4,000 vacancies in City employment. You can read more in this Inquirer article.

Voting and Elections

House Panel Debates Whether a Delegate from the Cherokee Nation Should Be Seated

A House committee recently debated on a proposal to seat a delegate from the Cherokee Nation in Congress. Doing so would uphold a 200-year-old treaty that has yet to be fulfilled. The hearing was part of a push to allow Kim Teehee, a longtime Cherokee Nation official, to be seated as a nonvoting delegate in the House of Representatives, the first delegate from a tribal nation to serve there. The Treaty of New Echota forced the Cherokee Nation to relinquish its lands in the South and forced 16,000 members westward on the Trail of Tears to what is now Oklahoma. A quarter of those forced to leave died along the way. However, the treaty also promised that the Cherokee Nation would be entitled to a delegate in the House of Representatives; Congress has never done so. The meetings come against a background of increased mobilization of Indigenous voters and funds from the Infrastructure Bill set aside specifically for tribal healthcare, broadband internet, housing, and transportation.

If seated, Teehee will join Amata Radewagen, Eleanor Norton, Michael Nicholas, Gregorio Sablan, Jenniffer Gonzalez, and Stacey Plaskett as delegates in the House of Representatives who are able to serve in committees and participate in debates but are unable to vote on bills presented on the House floor. These delegates represent American Samoa, Washington, D.C., Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, respectively, which constitute the five United States territories and the federal district. None of these areas possess representation in the Senate and, except for D.C., are unable to vote for the President of the United States, the leader of the country that otherwise controls them, despite all residents of the territories and federal district being U.S. citizens from birth (except for American Samoa, whose residents are considered “non-citizen nationals”).

The Election Season Dust Settles and the Lame Duck Congress Begins

Now that most of the dust has settled from a consequential midterm election cycle, pundits have begun analyzing the new representatives for the upcoming Congress. Congressional analysts have paid particular attention to the incoming class of freshmen Republicans, whose party will hold a slight majority in the next Congress. The new members range from moderates to far-right, Trump-ordained, legislators. To learn more about the impending dynamics in the next Congress, [click here](#).

Kari Lake to File Election Lawsuit in Arizona

Defeated Arizona gubernatorial candidate, Kari Lake, has filed a lawsuit against Maricopa County, Arizona in an effort to overturn her election loss. Lake lost the election by less than one percentage point (by approximately 17,000 votes) and has yet to concede, nearly a month after Election Day. Top Arizona officials, including the current governor, chief justice of the state supreme court, secretary of state, and attorney general are scheduled to certify the results on December 5. After that time, Lake is expected to officially file her suit. To learn more about the impending lawsuit, [click here](#).

The Democrats in the PA House Will Lose Their Majority Temporarily

Though Democrats have regained the Pennsylvania House of Representatives chamber following the midterm elections, they are expected to lose their majority temporarily while a special election

is held for the seat of a recently deceased lawmaker. Republicans will hold a 101-99 majority due to two other vacancies from former Democratic representatives who ran for higher office in Pennsylvania including the incoming Lieutenant Governor-elect, Austin Davis. To learn more, [click here](#).

Councilmember Helen Gym Resigns to Run for Mayor

In an expected move, at-large Councilmember Helen Gym has resigned her seat to pursue a run for mayor of Philadelphia. Gym, a former educator, has been a popular Councilmember for the last six years and vocally called for changes in education and gun control in a distinct and informal style in-person and on social media. An activist-minded politician, Gym is favored by many left-leaning organizations who have recently gained a foothold in the city's Democratic infrastructure. To learn more about Gym's candidacy, [click here](#).

Judge Jimmy DeLeon Announces Run for Mayor

Former judge James "Jimmy" DeLeon has announced his candidacy in the Philadelphia mayor's race. Judge DeLeon served on the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas after working as an attorney for the Philadelphia Housing Authority and engaging in private practice. DeLeon has pushed for a law-and-order agenda, calling for more police on the streets and the creation of a Local Incident Management System in the face of rising gun violence in Philadelphia. To learn more about Judge DeLeon's background and platform, [click here](#).

T. Milton Street Dead at 83

Longtime Philadelphia activist and politician Thomas Milton Street, Sr. has died at the age of 83. Street began his career as an activist and later was elected to both the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and Senate. As a young activist, Street famously verbally sparred with then Philadelphia Mayor Frank Rizzo. A part of the Street political family, Milton Street's brother John served as a two-term mayor of Philadelphia. A bipartisan figure at times, Street changed his party affiliation from Democrat to Republican in an effort to gain more power. To learn more about his colorful political career in Philadelphia, [click here](#).

Education

Biden to Extend Student Loan Pause in Face of Lawsuits

In the midst of continued legal challenges to the President's plan to eliminate student loan debt for millions of American borrowers, the Biden Administration has extended the student loan repayment pause through June 30, 2023 or the end of litigation. If the legal challenges are settled before June 30, 2023, borrowers will still receive a grace period of 60 days to repay. The Administration had begun notifying borrowers that their applications for forgiveness were accepted pending the legal challenges. However, the Administration has since stopped sending out such notifications.

On November 30, a federal appeals court rejected the administration's petition to lift a federal court judge's decision to shut down the program while litigation continues. On December 1, the Supreme Court announced that it will hear arguments on the merits of the administration's student debt relief plan in February. The High Court has left the federal court's order blocking the plan in place. You can read a recap of the current status from CNBC by [clicking here](#).

City Council Resolution for Hearings on New PA Graduation Requirements

Councilmember Isaiah Thomas introduced [a resolution](#) at a recent City Council meeting to hold hearings on Act 158, the statewide requirement regarding graduation for high school students. According to Research for Action, a non-profit research organization, 70% of Black students and 75% of Hispanic students would not meet the requirements for graduation set out by Act 158. In addition, the Philadelphia Education Research Consortium, another non-profit, estimates that over 55% of students will need significant support in meeting the Act 158 requirements. The policy allows for "alternative pathways," but does not give guidelines for students to follow.

Housing

PA Whole-Home Repairs Program Begins to Roll Out

The Commonwealth's new Whole-Home Repairs Program, funded by COVID relief dollars, is beginning to roll out. [According to the Inquirer](#), counties and county-designated organizations can begin applying for funding on December 12. The program is being administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). [Click here](#) to be taken to the official DCED program website.

Lancaster and Harrisburg Among 10 Metros Where Homebuyers May Be Priced Out

The Inquirer recently did [a report](#) on [data](#) from the National Association of Homebuilders (NAHB) to determine which metropolitan areas have the largest number of households that would be impacted by a \$1,000 increase in price for a new single-family home. The number of priced-out households incorporates whether a household qualifies for a mortgage, which is determined by whether the monthly payment equals 28% or less of monthly gross household income. The NAHB also calculates households being able to afford a 10% down payment. Two metropolitan areas in Pennsylvania made their top 10 list: Harrisburg and Lancaster, both in the south-central portion of the state. Both metro areas are composed of a large majority of single-family homes, which tend to be more expensive than multi-family units.

About 69% of all households in the U.S. cannot afford a median-priced new home, according to the NAHB. Reasons that households might be priced out of the market include competition from other home buyers, construction costs, increased mortgage rates, and local regulations, all of which contribute to the overall price of a home. These factors also tend to make the construction of smaller starter homes untenable, leading to fewer being built.

Lack of Affordable Housing in Lehigh Valley a “Human Rights Issue”

A recent summit hosted by the [Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley](#) centered on how the lack of affordable housing in the region has hit crisis levels and the implications for health. Anna Smith, interim director of Community Action Development Bethlehem, stated that the quality, availability, and stability of housing can affect every aspect of health, whether physical health from hazards such as lead paint or radon gas as well as mental health due to anxiety and stress from facing evictions, constant moving causing feelings of isolation, or disruption of education for children. In Northampton County, about 1 in 4 households are cost-burdened, meaning they pay over 30% of their income on housing costs; in Lehigh County, that figure is 34%. Rents have increased 35% over the past three years, disproportionately affecting Black and Latino residents. Lack of affordable housing has also caused a large increase in homelessness, with a 50% increase in homelessness among families with children and a 93% increase with veterans. You can read the Morning Call's article on the summit by [clicking here](#).

South Bethlehem Building Rehabilitation

The South Side neighborhood of Bethlehem, the [“cultural and economic heart of the city,”](#) recently received groundbreaking for another part of its continued economic renaissance efforts. Renovation work [has begun](#) on the long-vacant Goodman Building, a deteriorating former furniture store on Third Street. Once completed, the building will have first-floor retail space and 12 units of residential space. Funding comes in part from the state and the city, as well as the ECS Inclusion and Advocacy Department Policy Updates

Bethlehem Economic Development Corporation. It is located in a neighborhood close to Lehigh University, the SteelStacks arts and community venue, and the Wind Creek Casino. The redevelopment of the Goodman Building comes alongside several similar projects in the neighborhood, including an eight-story mixed-use tower, a separate five-story building on Third Street, an eight-story development on the side of the former Boys and Girls Club, a seven-story building on Fourth Street, and a mixed-use apartment complex in the former Holy Infancy School, also along Fourth Street.

Study of Property Maintenance Codes in PA's Rural Communities

While the IA team is usually monitoring housing trends in urban areas, it is also important to look at Pennsylvania's rural areas as well. A recent study from the Center for Rural Pennsylvania finds that a widespread lack of property maintenance codes in rural communities has worsened housing quality and stalled investments, contributing to the rural poverty cycle. Of the state's 1,592 municipalities, 89% of them have not adopted a property maintenance code, even though 1,201 follow the Uniform Construction Code construction standards. Of the rural municipalities with property maintenance codes, 112 have adopted the International Property Maintenance Code, 10 have adopted guidelines from the Building Officials and Code Administrators International, and 53 have enacted independent local ordinances. A higher amount of poorly-maintained housing makes it harder to attract new businesses, and it can be a barrier to community investment, says Claire Jantz, a geography professor at Shippensburg University and one of the study's authors. Meanwhile, enforced property maintenance codes provide a standard that can improve local living conditions and provide investment opportunities by ensuring that properties are safe and have maintained "a certain level of appearance." In addition, many of the poorly-maintained houses are not owner-occupied, meaning they are either being rented out or are sitting vacant.

Health

Dr. Fauci Gives Final News Conference Before Leaving Federal Government

On November 22, Dr. Anthony Fauci gave his final news conference before leaving the federal government. As written in previous Policy Updates, Fauci announced his retirement from the federal government and will be leaving at the end of 2022. Fauci has indicated that he is not fully retiring, but rather leaving the federal government. You can read about his final news conference and view a video clip of his remarks by [clicking here](#).

Red States are Blocking Trans Health Care

In some Republican-led states, transgender individuals and particularly minors who are seeking gender-affirming care, are having increased trouble with getting adequate medical assistance with their transitions. As a result, many of the families have moved, seeking locations that have fewer restrictions for gender-affirming medical care for minors. In an effort to provide their children with the proper medical resources and protect their mental health, families have made drastic life changes to accommodate in the face of such discrimination. To learn the stories of these families, [click here](#).

Minnesota Town Considering Anti-Abortion Ordinance AG Calls Unconstitutional

The town of Prinsburg, Minnesota is considering a local ordinance that would allow residents to file civil lawsuits against abortion providers for providing an abortion in the community, as well as the recipients of their services. Since the news was made public, the town has received a letter from Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, informing them that “no city in Minnesota has the power to restrict the right to abortion or enact conflicting regulations on health care providers.” State Rep. Tim Miller, who brought the ordinance proposal to Prinsburg City Council, is confident that the community residents will support the legislation, but he intends to hold a town hall for public discussion before it passes. Prinsburg will not be responsible for defending the ordinance in court if it passes, as it is being supported by the Thomas Moore Society, who have passed similar local ordinances in various Texas cities such as Lubbock. While no abortion providers exist in Prinsburg (the closest providers are located in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region), per Miller abortions can still be performed either by medication mailed to residents or via a mobile clinic.

New York City to Begin Civilly Committing Individuals with Mental Illness

In a controversial move, New York City Mayor Eric Adams (D) has announced a plan to forcibly remove people with mental illness who are experiencing homelessness from the city’s streets in an effort to curb crime and violent actions. Under Adams’s plan, individuals would be forcibly hospitalized by police and receive treatment that would allow them to eventually return to society. Many have criticized the policy, expressing concerns about the treatment of individuals. According to one source, an estimated 3,400 people are experiencing homelessness in New York City and living on the streets and subways of the five boroughs. Other experts have argued that the number is significantly larger. To learn more about the mayor’s plan, [click here](#).

Social Security Aid for Disabled PA Residents Crashed Over the Pandemic

Pennsylvania saw the steepest drop of Social Security aid for disabled residents of any state, according to [a new report](#) by Community Legal Services of Philadelphia. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments fell 26% between 2019 and 2020, an issue exacerbated by a decade of

underfunding of the Social Security Administration having to shutter several offices. A roundtable from last June found that other structural problems with the disability system included federal workers wrongly telling immigrants that their immigration status disqualified them from receiving payments, as well as a general lack of accessibility for non-English speakers. People returning from incarceration, who disproportionately suffer from mental illness, also had trouble accessing benefits; under federal law, persons who had previously received SSI benefits would be dropped from the program if they had been incarcerated for over a year. The report recommends creating a team specifically dealing with returning citizens, calls for people who had previously received SSI benefits before imprisonment to have them reinstated, and have the federal government generally improve access to its disability assistance program. You can read a related article from Pennsylvania Capital-Star by [clicking here](#).

Anti-Violence and Policing

Sandy Hook Update: Alex Jones Declares Personal Bankruptcy

On Friday, December 2, media personality Alex Jones declared personal Chapter 11 bankruptcy in Texas. Jones' latest legal move follows damage awards of nearly \$1.5 billion that he is deemed responsible for paying related to misinformation he spread about the Sandy Hook school shooting. Jones' company, Free Speech Systems, the parent company of his Infowars program, previously filed for bankruptcy in July. According to the New York Times, Jones listed the Sandy Hook relatives as his creditors, including Robert Parker, whose daughter, Emilie, was killed in the school shooting. Parker was awarded \$120 million in damages. Chris Mattei, a lawyer for the families in the damages case in Connecticut, stated, "The bankruptcy system does not protect anyone who engages in intentional and egregious attacks on others, as Mr. Jones did...The American judicial system will hold Alex Jones accountable, and we will never stop working to enforce the jury's verdict."

Colorado Springs Continues to Grieve Club Q Mass Shooting

The city of Colorado Springs, Colorado is still grieving after a pre-Thanksgiving mass shooting at Club Q, a nightclub that caters to the LGBTQ+ community. On November 22, a gunman, armed with an AR-15 style rifle and handgun entered the club and shot and killed five people. 19 others were injured in the shooting. Thanks to heroic patrons at the club, more lives were saved after clubgoers tackled the shooter to the ground. The alleged gunman is likely to be charged with hate crimes and murder on the state level. Though authorities have not conclusively announced whether the shooting was an LGBTQ+ hate crime, they strongly suspect that the shooter's murderous outburst had a homophobic motive. To learn more about the tragedy, [click here](#).

Buffalo Gunman Pleads Guilty to All Charges

The 19-year-old gunman who brutally murdered 10 people at a Buffalo supermarket in a racist attack pleaded guilty to 15 of 25 counts including murder and domestic terrorism motivated by hate. The domestic terrorism charge specifically carries the penalty of life imprisonment without parole. By pleading guilty to the 15 most serious charges, the gunman's remaining 10 counts were automatically dismissed. The gunman is still expected to face federal hate crimes and weapons violations and could face the death penalty on some of the charges. Since 2021, the Justice Department has established a moratorium on federal executions. To learn more, [click here](#).

6 Killed at Walmart in Chesapeake, Virginia

The night before Thanksgiving, a Walmart supervisor shot at his co-workers, killing 6 co-workers before killing himself. The gunman was a twelve-year veteran employee at Walmart and killed his co-workers while in the break room of the store before the beginning of the overnight shift. The gunman reportedly exhibited threatening behavior and paranoia in the past. To learn more about this tragedy, [click here](#).

Biden Calls for Renewed Assault Weapons Ban

In the wake of multiple mass shootings in the last few weeks and constant gun violence across the nation, President Biden has called on Congress to reinstate the federal assault weapons ban. Biden is hopeful to pass the measure during the current lame duck Congressional session that continues until January. The House narrowly passed a similar measure earlier this year, but the bill was

assumed dead on arrival upon reaching the Senate. Republicans have consistently blocked similar legislation for the last thirty years. To learn more about the administration's strategy to remove assault weapons from communities, [click here](#).

4 Students Shot Near Overbrook High School

On November 23, 4 Overbrook High School students were shot nearby their school at 60th and Oxford Streets. The four students, two 15-year-old girls and two 16-year-old boys were shot on the corner when an SUV began firing at the crowd. The two female students are sisters. Authorities are continuing to search for a motive behind the shooting. Gratefully, all four students have survived their injuries. To learn more about the near-deadly incident, [click here](#).

Philadelphia to Recruit Civilian Police Officers for Traffic Offenses

To combat the rising tide of violent crime in Philadelphia, an arbitrator has ruled that the Philadelphia Police Department can appoint civilians to serve as unarmed traffic officers to allow sworn officers to fight violent crime and gun violence. The settlement also includes \$1,700 retention bonuses to officers and \$2,000 bonuses for new officers. Police Commissioner Outlaw has championed the initiative as part of "civilianization" efforts by the department. To learn more, [click here](#).

PPA Officer Shot While on Duty

A Philadelphia Parking Authority officer was shot twice while on duty while working in Frankford. The official was shot twice from a car while checking cars around 4 p.m. authorities have yet to determine a motive for why he was shot. The official is still recovering from his wounds. To learn more, [click here](#).

SEPTA to Introduce AI Gun Detection System

After a particularly violent year in Philadelphia and on SEPTA transit, the transit authority is introducing an artificial intelligence (AI) software to detect when passengers are carrying firearms while on the train. In partnership with Conshohocken-based firm ZeroEyes, SEPTA will install 300 gun detection cameras on the Broad Street and Market-Frankford subway lines. The cameras detect firearms faster than the human eye and can notify and dispatch law enforcement to the scene of the crime faster. SEPTA will implement the pilot program beginning in January for a six-month trial. To learn more, [click here](#).

Former PPD Officer Eric Ruch Sentenced After Police Killing

Former Philadelphia Police officer Eric Ruch was convicted of voluntary manslaughter for shooting and killing an unarmed man, the first officer to be convicted of such a crime in nearly 50 years. A Common Pleas Court judge sentenced Ruch to 11.5-23 months in jail. Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner has moved to toughen Ruch's sentence, noting that under state sentencing guidelines, the former officer should face a minimum sentence of 3.5 years. Because of his lighter sentence, Ruch will not be required to serve his time in the state prison system but instead in the less harsh Philadelphia prison system. Despite Krasner's efforts, many speculate that he is unlikely to change the judge's ruling. To read more about the case, [click here](#).

Proposal Bill to Crack Down on Catalytic Converter Thefts

Legislation has been introduced in Philadelphia City Council in an attempt to lower the number of catalytic converter thefts from vehicles in the City. Property crimes have been rising with violent crimes in Philadelphia, and this bill will attempt to help rectify that by requiring anyone buying or

selling a catalytic converter (or similar car part that uses precious metals) to have and keep records on hand indicating the make and model of the vehicle it was taken from, as well as the seller's name and contact information. If the auto parts seller does not retain these records and is found to be selling these auto parts, they will face fines and imprisonment for up to five years.

New Coalition against Gun Violence Formed in Philadelphia

A new, broad-based coalition against gun violence has been formed in Philadelphia under the leadership of the Philadelphia Foundation and William Penn Foundation. The group is called the Civic Coalition to Save Lives. You can read a related article from WHY? by [clicking here](#).

Judicial and Legal Updates

SCOTUS Updates

Supreme Court Calendar for this Week

In the week beginning November 28, the Court heard arguments from November 28 to November 30 and plans to conference on December 2. For the week beginning December 5, the Court is set to hear arguments in the potentially landmark cases of *303 Creative LLC v. Elenis*, which centers around LGBTQ+ discrimination, and *Moore v. Harper*, which will ultimately determine how elections are conducted in the United States and the role of state legislatures in their administration. To view the full Court calendar, [click here](#).

Court Green Lights House Committee to Access Trump Tax Returns

The Supreme Court has rejected the former president's request to block a House Committee from obtaining his tax returns as part of their investigation. The one sentence order did not give explanation for the Justices' decision. The Biden administration originally had asked the High Court not to intervene at all. To learn more, [click here](#).

Cecilia Marshall, Wife of Former Justice Thurgood Marshall, Dead at 94

Cecilia "Cissy" Marshall, the widow of Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, has died at the age of 94. Mrs. Marshall, a native Hawaiian, was first introduced to her husband while working for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an organization she was referred to because of her darker complexion. Initially the couple expressed concerns about their interracial marriage among the ranks of the NAACP. After marrying Justice Marshall, she continued as a civil rights activist and a board member of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the Supreme Court Historical Society. To learn more about her life and legacy, [click here](#).

Lindsey Graham Testifies in Georgia

After his petition to block his testimony was rejected by the Supreme Court, Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) testified before a Georgia grand jury as part of Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis's investigation of election meddling by Trump campaign officials and Republicans lawmakers. Graham testified for two hours and cooperated with the grand jury's questions. To learn more, [click here](#).

January 6th Committee Hearings

Stewart Rhodes Convicted of Seditious Conspiracy

Stewart Rhodes, leader of the far-right militia known as the Oath Keepers, was [convicted of seditious conspiracy](#) for his role in the planning of the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol. The charge could land Rhodes in federal prison for 25 years. Learn how Rhodes transitioned from a Yale Law student with right wing views to violently storming the Capitol some twenty years later. To read more, [click here](#).

Kellyanne Conway Testifies before January 6th Committee

Former Trump White House advisor Kellyanne Conway testified before the House Select Committee investigating the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol. The Committee is wrapping up its work before Republicans retake control of the U.S. House of Representatives in January. In January, the investigation is likely to transfer fully to the Justice Department. Conway left the ECS Inclusion and Advocacy Department Policy Updates

Trump administration in the summer of 2020 but continued contact with administration officials. Conway reportedly urged the former president to call off the rioters on January 6th and worked behind the scenes to convince him to end the violence. To learn more about her testimony, [click here](#).

Pennsylvania Judicial and Legal Updates

Pennsylvania Senate Accepts Krasner Impeachment Articles

On November 30, the Pennsylvania Senate formally accepted articles of impeachment from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for Philadelphia District Attorney, Larry Krasner. The vote sets the stage for a trial in the Pennsylvania Senate next month. Krasner has been charged with seven articles related to his progressive prosecutorial policies. Many Democrats have alleged that the impeachment efforts have been politically motivated. The trial will begin on January 18. To learn more, [click here](#).

Inclusion

Buses of Migrants from Texas Arrive in Philadelphia

Philadelphia officials and immigrant-assistance groups have been welcoming several buses of migrants from Texas to the city over the past month or so. Texas Governor Greg Abbott's administration has been sending buses of migrants seeking asylum from Central and Southern America to Northern cities (such as Washington, D.C., New York City, and Chicago) in what it claims is an attempt to relieve pressure at the border. Critics say that the buses are a cheap political stunt taking advantage of migrant families. Philadelphia officials say that Texas authorities have not attempted to coordinate with them.

The first bus of 28 people arrived on Wednesday, November 16 with little warning. It was greeted by city officials and immigrant leaders, who provided winter clothing, food, hot chocolate, and medical screenings. One arriving child was taken to CHOP for a fever. Afterwards, they were taken to a shelter on Luzerne Street. A few migrants remained in Philadelphia, but most departed for other states to reach family members. All migrants had been screened by Customs and Border Patrol.

A second bus arrived on November 21 with 46 passengers. Two more buses arrived on the 25th, the day after Thanksgiving, with 81 more passengers. Immigrants interviewed by the Inquirer have said that their journeys began with an offer of a free bus trip to Chicago, New York City, or Philadelphia from the border facility in Del Rio, Texas.

The migrants are seeking asylum, an immigration protection that can be afforded to people escaping persecution or violence in their home country. Asylum is a legal process to remain in the United States, and if granted bestows the right to pursue citizenship. Texas has placed 300 busloads (over 13,000 people) on unannounced trips since April, sometimes five in a day. As of this writing, Philadelphia has greeted over 150 legal migrants. As of the fiscal year that ended September 30, over two million illegal border crossings had been prevented, reflecting the deteriorating economic and political conditions of some Latin American countries. Arizona and Florida have also sent migrants to Northern cities.

Congress Passes Legislation to Protect Same-Sex and Interracial Marriage

On November 30, the U.S. Senate passed a bill to recognize same-sex and interracial marriages in a vote of 61 to 36. Twelve Republicans joined the majority of Democrats bloc to usher in the legislation. Retiring Senators Ben Sasse (R-NE) and Pat Toomey (R-PA) did not vote on the bill and Sen. Raphael Warnock (D-GA) did not vote because he is currently campaigning for his seat in a hotly contested runoff election. The bill, known as The Respect for Marriage Act, repeals the 1990s era Defense of Marriage Act, which denies federal benefits to same-sex couples. The bill was unexpectedly supported by some religious organizations, including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, which is notably conservative. Among the bill's opponents was LDS Senator Mike Lee (R-UT) who voted against the bill in protest of Democratic concern that the Supreme Court would nullify marriage equality much like it did abortion rights. Following a final vote in the House, President Biden is expected to sign the bill into law in the coming weeks. To learn more about the legislation, [click here](#).

Hakeem Jeffries to Serve as House Minority Leader for the Next Congress

Following a pre-Thanksgiving retirement announcement by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), many have speculated who will succeed her as leader of the Democratic Party in the House of Representatives. In a November 30 vote, the Democratic Caucus voted Rep. Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY) serve as its next leader by acclamation. Jeffries will assume the role of Minority Leader at the start of the next Congress in January. Jeffries is the first African American to hold the role for either party. The change ushers in a change of generational leadership for the Democratic Party as well. For the first time in its history, the top-three Democrats will not include white men.

Democrats elected Rep. Katherine Clark (D-MA) as minority whip, and Rep. Pete Aguilar (D-CA) as the Democratic Caucus Chairman. All three electees are in their 40s and 50s, replacing a trio of octogenarian legislators that included Speaker Pelosi, Rep. Jim Clyburn (D-SC), and Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD). To learn more about the Caucus changes and the career of Leader-elect Jeffries, [click here](#).

Nation's Top-4 Cities Led by Black Mayors

For the first time, the mayors of the nation's four largest cities will be African American simultaneously. The mayors include Eric Adams of New York City, Karen Bass of Los Angeles, Lori Lightfoot of Chicago and Sylvester Turner of Houston. The leadership demographic shift contrasts with a significant population demographic shift in American cities. To learn more about the challenges that these mayors face in governing our nation's largest urban areas, [click here](#).

Trump Hosts Prominent Antisemites for Dinner at Mar-a-Lago

Former President Donald Trump is under fire again for hosting rapper Kanye West and prominent antisemite and white supremacist Nick Fuentes for dinner at his Florida Mar-a-Lago estate. Trump invited West, who has recently been criticized for racially inflammatory and antisemitic statements and behavior. Allegedly, West brought Fuentes, who was present at the 2017 Charlottesville white supremacist riot that left three dead, to join the former president for dinner without his prior knowledge. After nearly a week of silence, Republican leaders in Congress condemned the former president's behavior, with particularly strong statements from [Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell \(R-KY\)](#) while [conservative American Jewish organizations](#) were quick to condemn and distance themselves from Trump. To learn more about the continuing controversy, [click here](#).

MOVE Burial Controversy Continues

The controversy surrounding the 1985 MOVE bombing continues in Philadelphia. Most recently, the families of the five child victims of the 1985 bombing have criticized the city's original decision to place their remains in an unmarked grave in Collingdale's Eden Cemetery. In the last few years, following a scandal regarding the city's mishandling of the other bombing victims' remains, a simple nameplate was placed on top of the graves. The families have called on the cemetery and the city to build a more permanent grave marker. In addition, many relatives are skeptical that their deceased love ones' remains are in the correct graves. The families have called for an investigation. To learn more, [click here](#).

The Inquirer's "A More Perfect Union" Series Chronicles PAFA and the Insurance Industry

As part of its "A More Perfect Union" series, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* has released two more articles. One focuses on the history of the [Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts](#) and the racial dynamics of art in Philadelphia. In another article, the series chronicles the racial disparities in the insurance industry and Philadelphia's role in the birth of the American insurance sector. The "A

More Perfect Union” series seeks to show how race and racism has affected various aspects of life in Philadelphia since the city’s founding. To read the article on the insurance industry, [click here](#).

Faith-Based Updates

American Catholic Bishops Assemble Team to Fight Abortion Debate

Following many close elections this fall, a team of Roman Catholic bishops dedicated to anti-abortion causes has reassembled a new team to advocate for their pro-life positions. The conservative leaning United States Conference on Catholic Bishops and its Committee on Pro-Life Activities is actively lobbying to limit abortion care, and some of its members have taken controversial medical positions such as religious exemptions for military servicepeople who do not want to get vaccinated. The new president of the Conference is Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, leader of the Archdiocese for the Military Services. To learn more about Archbishop Broglio and the Catholic Church's advocacy efforts, [click here](#).

Weekly Resource

Commemorating Sandy Hook's 10th Anniversary

The IA team continues to follow developments surrounding the 2012 Sandy Hook school shooting, developments which continue to play out ten years later. This tragic school shooting at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, claimed the lives of 20 elementary school students and six adults. Former President Obama has referred to the day of the shooting – December 14, 2012 - as “one of the darkest days” of his presidency. A link to a CeaseFirePA event in Philadelphia can be found [here](#). There are many other events in Philadelphia and the surrounding region. The IA team encourages you to reflect on the lives of the Sandy Hook victims and all victims of gun violence and take action. This information has also been posted to ECS Workspace.

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Last week's Policy Updates have been archived.
