

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania TIPS FOR WRITING LEGISLATORS

Whether you've written once, a hundred times or not at all, a quick refresher on some guidelines for legislative contacts is usually helpful. Generally, only write your own legislator--unless you have a good reason to contact someone who is not elected from your district (e.g., a bill sponsor or a committee chair). Understand that most mail from outside the district is either tossed or forwarded on to your representative or senator.

Now that you are ready to write, keep the following in mind:

1. **Keep it simple.** While you may include a brief description of your story (why you are interested in a particular topic), only write about one issue or bill in a letter. Trying to address multiple issues loses impact (and your letter is difficult for legislative staff to file). Be sure to include the bill number and a short description or caption so that the official or staff person reading the letter can quickly identify your interest. If you don't know the bill number, find out.
2. **Keep it short.** Make every effort to be short and to the point. Include the information you need to, but one to two pages is usually about all the attention you can expect. If you need more space, write a short, to-the-point letter and attach a summary sheet with your arguments.
3. **Keep it friendly.** No threats, no badgering, no anger, no hostility. Don't forget that even if the official you are contacting has voted against you one hundred times in the past, you are guaranteed to make it one hundred and one if you adopt a confrontational style.
4. **Keep it readable.** Make your letter neat--whether typed or hand-written. Include the date, your name and address, and a phone number so that the official or staff can get back to you if needed. And while you are being concise, use a conversational style.
5. **Keep your facts straight.** Nothing ruins credibility quicker than to misinform an elected official--intentionally or otherwise.
6. **Keep it in perspective.** Your issues may be the most important legislative actions...to you. Keep in mind that the elected official may have 5,000 or 500,000 constituents back in the district, each with his or her own list. The nature of the legislative game is to attempt to keep all the varied, competing and often conflicting interests satisfied. Compromises are a way of life, and a small win today is better than a total loss.
7. **Keep in touch, but don't become a pen pal.** Develop your legislative relationships over time (preferably beginning during the campaign process). Occasional contact--even when you don't have a problem--just to let them know you are out there can help. But constant contact doesn't work well (unless you are a very big contributor).
8. **Keep it respectful.** Unless you are a personal friend, always use the official's titles properly.
9. **Don't forget to say "thanks."** Legislators and their staff are human, too. They appreciate and respond to praise. If they have done something you requested (e.g. sponsored or voted on a bill the way you wanted), be sure and follow up with a thank you note. You can also thank them

for their work on issues outside of your area (this lets them know you are a well-rounded constituent who is paying attention across the board).

Finally, think about how a letter is normally read. The eye usually scans the top of the page and then the bottom first. Thus, headers and post-scripts are effective tricks to emphasize your key message. Short sentences in short paragraphs are easier to read than long ones. Leave white space around your text-preserve margins and skip lines between paragraphs. Underlining and bolding will help attract attention, but don't overdo it.

Make a Difference and Ensure Your Voice is Heard!

Address Protocol

U.S. Senator:

The Honorable (full name)
United States Senator
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator (last name):

U.S. Representative:

The Honorable (full name)
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative (last name):

**NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania * 105 Braunlich Drive, McKnight Plaza, Suite
200 * Pittsburgh, PA 15237 * www.namiswpa.org * info@namiswpa.org *
412.366.3788 * 888.264.7972**

Checklist for a Powerful Letter

Ask yourself:

- Is your letter short and to the point? It should no more than a page.
- Does it make a compelling case for one issue?
- Does it let the reader know what outcome or action you expect?

✓	<p>Introduce yourself (who you are and why you are writing) Aim for 2-4 sentences after salutation and reference line.</p>
	<p>Address your elected official properly. See Common Salutations for help.</p>
	<p>Add a reference line, if possible. This will help ensure that your letter is filed in a “bill file,” rather than the “round file,” or garbage. <i>Example: RE: Support for SB 1</i></p>
	<p>Let your reader know who you are. Tell your legislator that you are a constituent. Add another fact that helps them know more about you. For example, that you are a consumer, parent, a business owner, a school volunteer. Stick to one or two descriptive terms.</p>
	<p>State your purpose. Let your legislator know why you are writing. Identify the issue (add a bill number, if possible) and your position.</p>
✓	<p>Make your point(s) Aim for 4-5 sentences.</p>
	<p>Discuss your major points or concerns. You can make a single strong point or up to three points or concerns. Provide brief facts or examples of the impact of the issue or bill.</p>
	<p>Make it personal. Describe why this legislation matters to you personally. If you have a personal story that illustrates this, explain briefly.</p>
✓	<p>Wrap it up (your “ask,” thank you) Aim for 2-4 sentences, followed by closing.</p>
	<p>Make your “ask.” Restate your position on the bill. Describe what action or position you want your legislator to take. This should be specific and refer to the pending legislation, vote, or decision, if applicable. Otherwise, ask them to show leadership on this issue, make it a priority, etc.</p>
	<p>Thank your legislator. Thank your legislator for the opportunity to share your thoughts on this issue. If they’ve been supportive in the past, thank them. If not, offer to be a resource to them on mental health issues.</p>
	<p>Request a reply. Politely request a reply to your letter.</p>
	<p>Include a closing. The closing should be a respectful phrase. Add your signature if a mailed, rather than emailed, letter.</p>
	<p>Include your name and address. This is important as it establishes who you are and allows your legislator to respond. Adding your phone number can be helpful, but is optional.</p>

Checklist for Making a Phone Call

Making a 30 second phone call is an easy way to quickly make a difference with legislators. Increase the impact of calls with these tips.

✓	Making a Phone Call
	<p>Introduce yourself. Let the person who answers the phone know your name and that you are a constituent. Add you town or city, if you like. <i>Example: My name is Angelo Martin and I'm a constituent from Newberg.</i></p>
	<p>Ask to speak to your representative. Ask to speak to your legislator. <i>If he or she is not available, ask if the staff would be willing to relay your message.</i> Tip: Always treat the staff or volunteer who answers the phone with respect. They are often the legislator's valued confidant.</p>
	<p>Make your "ask." Explain the bill or issue you are calling about and the position you support. Include the bill number whenever possible. <i>Example: I'm calling to let Rep. Barker know that I would like his support for SB 39, which includes funding for critical community mental health services.</i></p>
	<p>Add a personal touch. If you like, add a brief comment on why this legislation matters to you personally. <i>Example: As a teacher who lives with bipolar disorder, I know how important mental health services are for people to experience recovery.</i></p>
	<p>Thank the listener. Thank the person who answered the phone for taking your call. Let them know that you appreciate the legislator's attention to mental health issues and hope you can count on their support (or opposition).</p>
	<p>Ask for a call back, if applicable. If you were not able to speak directly to your representative, politely ask for him or her to return your call. You may do this even though you've left your message. Make sure you give your phone number.</p>
	<p>Ask for results. If you like, ask if they would mind letting you know the result of the vote or hearing.</p>

Example:

"Hello, my name is Angelo Martin and I'm a constituent from Newberg. May I please speak to Representative Barker?"

"I'm calling to ask for Rep. Barker's support of SB 39, which includes funding for critical community mental health services. As a teacher who lives with bipolar disorder, I know how important mental health services are for people to experience recovery. I appreciate the Representative's attention to mental health issues and look forward to his support on SB 39, which would benefit his constituents. Please ask the Representative to return my call at his earliest convenience. I can be reached at (555) 279-5577."

Common Salutations

The following are common salutations that will help you properly address elected officials.

Official	Address	Salutation for Letter or Email
Governor	The Honorable (Full Name) Governor of (State) (Office Address)	Dear Governor (Last Name)
State Senator	The Honorable (Full Name) (Office Address)	Dear Senator (Last Name)
State Representative	The Honorable (Full Name) (Office Address)	Dear Representative (Last Name)
State Assemblyman	The Honorable (Full Name) (Office Address)	Dear Assemblyman or Assemblywoman (Last Name)
U.S. Senator	The Honorable (Full Name) United States Senate (Senate Office Building) Washington, D.C. (zip)	Dear Senator (Last Name)
U.S. Representative	The Honorable (Full Name) House of Representatives (House Office Building) Washington, D.C. (zip)	Dear Representative or Dear Congressman or Congresswoman

How to Contact Elected Officials

If people have to search for contact information, research shows they are not very likely to make that phone call or write that email. By providing contact information or easy links for friends or members, you'll help people get involved and make a difference.

The following are several options for gaining contact information that you can insert into your newsletters, email alerts, and other communications.

✓	NAMI National Web site
	<p>Take advantage of NAMI National's Legislative Action Center software. Let your friends or members know that they can take the following steps to get great information. You can even include a link to the Web site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to www.nami.org • Select the Take Action tab at top • Click on Legislative Action Center • Enter your zip code to get links to phone numbers, addresses, and email addresses for your state and federal officials.
✓	Web Search
	<p>Search the Web for your state's legislature or general assembly. When there, find out how to get to contact pages or a Find Your Legislator page. Include links to key contact pages in your communications. Include a legislative info phone number, if possible.</p>
✓	Committee Lists
	<p>Many lobbyists or organizations develop their own Excel spreadsheets or Word docs with lists of legislators, committees, and contact info. If you have a good relationship with one, ask if they are willing to share with your organization. Cut and paste specific contact info for Committee members into emails or newsletters. Or, ask a volunteer to develop contact lists for key committees.</p>
✓	Purchase Software
	<p>A helpful option is purchasing software (e.g. CapWiz) that will provide your members easy email access to their elected officials. Advocacy software has the advantage of allowing you greater ease of sending alerts and sample messages and the ability to track how many get opened and how many send a message to their legislator.</p> <p><i>Tip: If you use advocacy software, encourage your members to personalize their message!</i></p>

NAMI Smarts and Hearts Advocacy Training
NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania

SAMPLE CONGRATULATIONS LETTER
NEWLY ELECTED MEMBER OF PA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

November 20, 2010

The Honorable [full name]
House Box [insert PO Box #]
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2020

Dear Representative-Elect [last name]:

On behalf of our membership of over 2,000 citizens of the Commonwealth predominantly residing within western Pennsylvania, I am writing to convey congratulations on your election to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania, given our mission of providing support, education and advocacy efforts for individuals of all ages living with mental illnesses and their families, welcomes the opportunity to become a voice on issues related to mental health and a resource for you and your staff.

As you may know, one in five adults in this country will experience some sort of mental illness within their lifetime as indicated in the Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health. More alarming however is that only one third of these individuals will receive treatment for the illness, treatment that is increasingly effective. It is our hope to work together towards eliminating the barriers to treatment allowing for an increasing number of Pennsylvanians to more fully enjoy a productive life in the communities of their choice.

I am enclosing a NAMI Policymaker's Fact Sheet on the Mental Health System. I hope you find it to be a useful reference. Please do not hesitate to contact me, as we remain available to provide input on all matters related to mental health. Again, congratulations on your election to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives representing the [insert district #] district.

Sincerely,

[Insert your full name and /or organization name, address and contact info.]

Example: Leaving a Fact Sheet

When leaving a meeting with a public official, it can be very effective to leave a fact sheet behind. A fact sheet sends a message that you are well-prepared and a resource for data or research on your issue. This is very helpful to officials and their staff.

NAMI National has many fact sheets available on different topics—or you can create your own.

Here is an example of how an advocate might thank an elected official for meeting and provide a fact sheet that backs up one's message:

Mary: “Thank you so much, Senator Kimball, for taking the time to listen to my family’s story. But this is not just about us, it’s about all Florida citizens with mental illnesses and the right policy for our state.

Studies have shown that restricting access to medications leads to bad outcomes, more hospitalizations and does not save any money. **This fact sheet discusses some of those studies and has the citations for them.**

My contact information is at the bottom. Please let me know if I can help in any way. We would like to be a resource for you on this and other issues involving mental illness. NAMI is totally opposed to Senate bill 56 because it will hurt people with mental illness and we strongly urge you to vote against it. Thank you again.”

Angela: “I was touched by your story, Ms. Giliberti, and I appreciate having this fact sheet. This is excellent information. I want to make sure people are getting the medications they need, but this is a complicated issue. It’s helpful to have the facts and to hear how these issues affect families like yours.”

Finding Facts

Real people and real stories motivate officials. However, adding facts can help by providing data officials need to justify doing the right thing.

A wealth of facts and information are available on the NAMI Web site at www.nami.org (use the search function or go to Inform Us, then About Public Policy). If you can't find what you need, email Angela Kimball at angelak@nami.org.

Searching the Web sites of other organizations and agencies can also be very helpful. Here is a sampling of some of our favorite Web sites or publications:

Children's Mental Health:

National Center for Children in Poverty (children's mental health)

<http://www.nccp.org/>

(Select Publications—by topic and by fact sheets)

National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice (juvenile justice)

Blueprint for Change: A Comprehensive Model for the Identification and Treatment of Youth with Mental Health Needs in Contact with the Juvenile Justice System

<http://www.ncmhjj.com/Blueprint/default.shtml>

National Conference of State Legislatures (transition age youth)

"A Difficult Passage: Helping Youth with Mental Health Needs Transition into Adulthood"

<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/health/forum/youthmentalneeds.htm>

Criminal Justice:

Criminal Justice/Mental Health Consensus Project

<http://consensusproject.org/>

Reentry Policy Council (criminal justice issues)

<http://reentrypolicy.org/>

Economic and Health Impacts:

National Business Group on Health

"An Employer's Guide to Behavioral Health Services"

http://www.businessgrouphealth.org/pdfs/fullreport_behavioralHealthservices.pdf

The Milken Institute (economic data on lost productivity)

An Unhealthy America: The Economic Burden of Chronic Disease

www.milkeninstitute.org

(use search function or look for link to the above title)

The Milken Institute

Chronic Disease Impact (economic data on lost productivity)

www.chronicdiseaseimpact.com

(select Stats by Disease tab, then click Emotional Disorders)

The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health
Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America
www.mentalhealthcommission.gov/reports/reports.htm

Evidence-Based Practices:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Evidence-Based Practices site (adult)
<http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/communitysupport/toolkits/about.asp>

Housing:

Corporation for Supportive Housing
www.csh.org

Technical Assistance Collaborative
"Priced Out in 2006" (housing)
<http://www.tacinc.org/Pubs/PricedOut.htm>

Medicaid and the Uninsured:

Cover the Uninsured
<http://covertheuninsured.org/>

Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured
www.kff.org

(This web site, and its sister State Health Facts site, can take some time to navigate)

Kaiser State Health Facts
www.statehealthfacts.org

Research and Statistics:

National Institute of Mental Health Science News
www.nimh.nih.gov/science-news/index.shtml

National Institute of Mental Health
"The Numbers Count: Mental Disorders in America"
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/the-numbers-count-mental-disorders-in-america.shtml>

Suicide:

Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC).
www.sprc.org

Example: Thank You Note

- Salutation** { Dear Representative Carpenter:
- Thank you** { Thank you for listening to my testimony on May 30th about my son, Alex, and his challenges before the right medications helped him experience recovery.
- Supporting Fact** { When medications are not covered, research has shown more than one in five reported an increase in suicidal thoughts or behaviors. Having held by son in my arms after a suicidal gesture, I can tell you that this is one of the most frightening things a parent can endure.
- Request** { It is critical that people living with serious mental illness have access to any drug that may help them manage their condition. As a parent and your constituent, I urge you to oppose SB 23, which would restrict access to mental health medications.
- Thank you** { Thank you for your attention. Please let me know if you need further information or if I can be of further help.
- Closing** { Sincerely,
- Signature** {
- Name and Contact Info** { Angela Kimball
2793 SW Green St.
Portland, OR 97201
(503) 555-7755

Checklist for a Thank You Note

Ask yourself:

- Does your note remind the reader of who you are?
- Do you summarize your key message (and include a fact)?
- Do you politely restate your request for action?
- Do you give your contact information?

✓	Salutation
	The salutation should include the proper title of an official. See Common Salutations for help.
✓	Thank you
	Thank the official for the opportunity to testify. This should include a few brief details that will help remind them of who you are, what you said, and on what date.
✓	Supporting fact (optional)
	If you like, add a fact that will help support your position. Make sure you file or save a copy of the source of the fact in case the official asks for it.
✓	Request
	Politely restate your “ask” or request for action or position that you made in your testimony. Be specific. Refer to any relevant legislation or rule by bill number or name or number of rule.
✓	Thank you
	Repeat a short thank you for the official’s attention to your issue. If they have been supportive, thank them for their support or action. If you like, offer to provide further information or to be a resource.
✓	Closing
	The closing should be a respectful phrase.
✓	Signature (if mailed note)
✓	Name and Contact Info
	End with your name and address. This is important as it establishes who you are and whether you are a constituent. Adding your phone number can be helpful, but is optional.

Thank You Note Practice Sheet

Ask yourself:

- Do you start with a proper salutation?
- Does your note remind the reader of who you are?
- Do you thank the official for the opportunity to testify or meet?
- Do you summarize your key message (and include a fact)?
- Do you politely restate your request for action?
- Do you have a closing and give your complete contact information?

What's your key fact?

Write a fact below that you will include in your thank you.

Write your thank you below.

Refer to your Checklist for an Effective Thank You Note

Checklist for Strategic Follow-Up

Get more mileage out of a hearing or meeting by using it as a type of feedback loop: an opportunity to learn more, nurture relationships, and inform your next steps. Try out one or more of the strategies under each section.

1.	Get impressions
	Watch people. You can learn a lot by watching body language and observing who approaches legislators after a hearing and who are talking in groups.
	Ask questions of staff. Politely approach a committee staffer and inquire as to next steps in the process (if you don't know). If your issue was not resolved at this point of the process, ask them what they think is needed to help support your position or who would be most helpful in delivering your message. If the committee staffer is not available, you can question a legislative assistant for one of the committee members (preferably a member who is friendly to your issue). Don't be afraid to ask what went well in the hearing and what could have gone better. Ask for advice.
	Debrief with attendees. Get together with fellow attendees or allies somewhere you can sit and quietly debrief what happened. The collective observations of individuals are often critical. Write down your key thoughts and brainstorm next steps.
2.	Thank officials
	Send a thank you. Legislators pay attention to people who send a thank you. See NAMI's Checklist for an Effective Thank You Note for more information.
	Make appointments. a. If a legislator was helpful, stop by their office to thank them. If your issue has more steps to go, ask if you could have just a couple minutes of their time to ask advice on next steps. b. Make an appointment with any legislator who had questions or concerns that you feel you could readily answer. Or, drop off a fact sheet and let their staff know you'd like to serve as a resource on mental health issues.
3.	Be prepared
	Issue an update or alert. Let your members know what happened at the hearing or meeting through a brief email update. If there was a vote, let them know which legislators to thank for their support. If there is an upcoming vote, let them know what they can do to help. Keep your updates focused on positive action. Never criticize individuals. For help with updates, see NAMI's Advocacy Toolkit on Action Alerts.
	Plan for the next hearing. If applicable, meet in a group and take the time to visualize how you would like the next hearing to go. Then, discuss who would make the most impact in oral testimony and what perspective or points would be most helpful. Plan for written testimony. Use NAMI's Responding to Opposition worksheet for ideas.
	Develop a fact sheet. Develop a quick one-pager that lets legislators know what action you want. Add facts that back your position or that respond to concerns. Enlist volunteers (or the legislative mail deliver) to distribute to legislators. Send a copy via email to your members. For help, see NAMI's Advocacy Toolkit on Legislative Leave-Behinds.

Seven Steps to Telling Your Story

1. **Introduce yourself.** Describe who you are and why you are speaking or writing. Knowing your name and where you live helps legislators remember you and feel connected.
I'm (name) and I'm from (county or city).

2. **Let your legislator or committee members know what you are advocating for.** If possible, name a specific bill.
I'm (writing or here today) to ask for your support of mental health care.

3. **Let your legislator or committee members know that you are affected by mental illness.** This gives a "real face" to mental illness and recovery.
I (live with or am a parent of a child or have a relative/friend with or work with people who live with) mental illness.

4. **Tell your story.** To tell your story effectively, answer the following questions in few sentences:
 - **What happened?**
 - **What helped?**
 - **How are you different today?**

What happened before you got the help you needed? Complete one of the following sentences or write your own.

- a. **Before I/my (child's, partner's, parent's, client's, etc.) recovery, I/we went through some (challenging, difficult, dark) times. I/we ... (felt hopeless, was in and out of hospitals, didn't have a place to live, was in jail, etc.)**
- b. **Before I/we got the help I/we needed, I/we... (see above for examples)**

What helped? Complete one of the following sentences or write your own.

- a. **The/My (program name or therapist, doctor, ACT team, case manager, peer support specialist, etc.--name one or two)) has/have made a big difference in my life.**
- b. **The support I get from my (name of program or professional/staff) has helped me manage my (main diagnosis or "mental health condition").**

How are you different today? What is going right in your life? Complete one of the following sentences or write your own.

- a. **Today, I am... (for example, a peer support specialist; working part time; living on my own; doing much better; hopeful, staying out of jail/hospital, etc.).**
- b. **Today, I'm proud of the fact that ... (for example, I'm living in a group home and not the state hospital; starting to work; doing well; feeling like my life has meaning; I am telling my story; my daughter is experiencing recovery, etc.).**

5. **Make your point.** Help others by giving a brief, positive message about mental health services and recovery. Complete one of the following sentences or write your own.
 - a. **Mental health services are an investment in recovery. I'm living proof.**
 - b. **Mental illness is common and recovery is possible.**
 - c. **Many people have mental illnesses like mine. With mental health services, people can experience recovery.**
6. **Make your "ask."** Let your legislator or committee members know the action or position you would like them to take. Complete one of the following sentences or write your own.
 - a. **Give people the hope of recovery by preserving mental health services.**
 - b. **Please reject cuts to mental health services.**
 - c. **A vote for mental health care is a vote for recovery.**
7. **Say thank you.** Always thank your legislator or committee members for their time. (Optional) Let them know that you would like to serve as a resource on mental health issues.

Action Alert Design Form

Create your headings

Begin with an attention-getting subject line. Follow with a bold headline that summarizes the action you want taken.

Email subject line:

Headline (use a bold, colored font):

Inspire action

In the spaces below, note the key components of your message.

Explain the issue (what is happening, what it will do, who is involved, why action is urgent):

Create an assertive subheading for your call to action:

Give a sample message:

Provide contact info:

Give talking points or links to info (start with a subheading and use bullets or numbered lists):

Create a helpful close:

NAMI Smarts and Hearts Advocacy Training Pennsylvania Budget Process

The General Fund budget year in Pennsylvania is July 1 to June 30. While there is no constitutional requirement that a budget be in place no later than June 30 of any given year, it is the end of the fiscal year. The budget process is an ongoing cycle with four major stages:

Preparation - Budget development and submission to the General Assembly

Approval - Budget review and enactment by the General Assembly and signing by the Governor

Execution - Re-budget approval and agency budget implementation, and

Audit - Financial audit and program performance monitoring and evaluation.

Another way to look at the budget process:

July, August, September

- Agencies submit re-budget of new General Fund Budget for review
- Issuance of budget instructions & program policy guidelines for following fiscal year

October

- Agencies submit budget requests

November, December, January

- Budget Office and Governor's Review

February

- Governor submits budget to the legislature

February, March, April, May, June

- Legislative Review, Budget Negotiations and Enactment of the Budget

Glossary of Budget Terms

Aid Ratio: A term used to convey the relative wealth of each school district in Pennsylvania. It is part of the formula used to determine how funding is distributed among the school districts.

Appropriation: Legislation requiring the Governor's approval authorizing an agency, department, board, commission or institution to spend a specified amount of money for a stated purpose or purposes during a particular period of time, usually one fiscal year.

Augmentation: Money credited to a specific appropriation of state revenue. It usually can be spent for the purpose of the appropriation to which it is credited. Except as restricted by the

appropriation it augments, there is no limit on how the money (usually collected from institutional billings or fees) is spent. If the source is federal, then a specific appropriation is necessary.

Average Daily Membership (ADM): Average Daily Membership (ADM) is the average number of students enrolled in a school district per school day.

Balanced Budget: A budget in which estimated expenditures equal the actual and estimated revenues and surplus. The Pennsylvania Constitution requires the Governor to submit a balanced budget and prohibits the General Assembly from appropriating money in excess of actual and estimated revenues and surplus.

Budget: A statement of the state's program plan, the resources necessary to support that plan, a description of how and for what purposes the resources are to be used, and a projection of the effects of the programs on people and the environment.

Capital Authorization: The debt authorization and/or appropriations authorized in the Capital Budget to fund any permitted capital program.

Capital Budget: The capital budget is that portion of the state budget that deals with projects for the construction, renovation, improvement, acquisition and original furniture and equipment of any building, structure, facility, land or land rights. Projects must have an estimated useful life in excess of five years and an estimated cost in excess of \$100,000. Most of the capital budget projects in the past have been paid from money raised by the sale of bonds.

Debt Service: Cash required in a given period for payments of interest and principal on outstanding debt.

Deficit: A fiscal condition which may occur at the end of a fiscal year, whereby expenditures for a fiscal year exceed the actual cash intake of revenues during the same period plus the prior year surplus. The deficit payment must be made from the next year's revenues.

Fiscal Year: A twelve month period beginning July 1 and ending June 30 of the following calendar year which is used as the State's accounting and appropriation period. Note, the federal fiscal year begins October 1 and ends September 30 of the following calendar year.

General Appropriation Bill: A single piece of legislation containing numerous individual appropriations. The General Appropriation Bill contains only appropriations for the executive, legislative and judicial departments of the Commonwealth, for the public debt and for public schools. All other appropriations are made by separate bills, each concerning one subject.

General Fund: That fund into which the general (non-earmarked) revenues of the State are deposited and from which money is appropriated to pay the general expenses of the state.

Item Veto: The Pennsylvania Constitution empowers the Governor to disapprove part or all of any item or items of any bill making appropriations of money. The part or parts of the bill

approved become law and the item or items disapproved become void. This power is known as the item veto.

Lapse: That portion of an appropriation not spent by the end of the fiscal year and then becomes part of the un-appropriated surplus.

Level Funding: A term used to describe the situation in which a program is funded at the same level as in the previous year; no increases, no decreases.

Mandated Expenditures: These are expenditures that are authorized and required by legislation other than appropriation acts or required by the Constitution. Such expenditures include payment of public debt.

Medical Assistance: Medical Assistance (MA) is Pennsylvania's comprehensive health care program that provides federally-entitled Medicaid benefits to eligible individuals. It also includes General Assistance, the state-funded health care program for low-income individuals that do not qualify for federal Medicaid, but who meet income standards and other criteria established by Pennsylvania.

Medicaid entitlement includes households that receive federal TANF cash assistance – typically low-income women and children; however, two-parent households and households in which another relative is caring for the children may also be eligible. It also includes individuals who receive federal SSI cash assistance – namely low-income individuals who are aged, blind, or disabled.

General Assistance recipients are typically adults without children who have a permanent or temporary disability that precludes employment.

Non-preferred Appropriation: An appropriation to any charitable or educational institution not under the absolute control of the Commonwealth, which requires the affirmative vote of two-thirds of all members elected to each chamber of the legislature (includes colleges, universities and hospitals).

Official Revenue Estimate: The official estimate of revenues for the fiscal year defined by the Governor at the time he signs the General Appropriation Act. It is this revenue estimate that is used to determine whether the appropriations are in balance with revenues.

Operating Budget: That portion of the state budget that deals with the general day to day activities and expenses of state government, paid for out of revenues from taxes, fees for licenses, and permits.

Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA): The General Assembly approves funding used by PHEAA to provide financial assistance grants to undergraduate students attending institutions of higher learning. Other services include loan forgiveness, work study and low cost educational loans.

Preferred Appropriation: These are the ordinary expenses of state government that require the approval of a majority of each chamber of the General Assembly.

Revenue: Money from taxes, fees, fines, federal grants, bond sales and other sources deposited in the state treasury and available as a source of funds for state government.

Special Fund: A fund in which revenue raised from special sources named by law is deposited (earmarked revenue). Such revenue can be spent only for purposes prescribed by law for which the revenue was collected. Examples are: Motor License Fund, Game Fund, Boat Fund, Lottery Fund, and the Tobacco Settlement Fund.

State System of Higher Education (SSHE): The system is comprised of 14 state universities. While each institution has a council of trustees, the system as a whole has a governing board. General funds are provided for the system each fiscal year.

Surplus: A fiscal condition that may occur at the end of a fiscal year, whereby expenditures are less than the actual intake of revenues during the same period. The surplus funds become available for appropriations for the following year.

* Adapted from the website of the PA House Appropriations Committee

