

PA Environment Digest

An Update On Environmental Issues In PA

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State Budget Deadline Less Than 20 Voting Days Away

The House has 19 voting days and the Senate 17 scheduled between now and the July 1 deadline to have a state budget and we have already seen lots of discussion in the media between Senate and House Republicans and the Governor on spending levels.

With a bipartisan vote on their budget last week, Senate Republicans staked out the higher ground on rolling back a little more than \$500 million in spending cuts Gov. Corbett had suggested, including \$19 million for the Keystone Fund.

Both Gov. Corbett and House Majority Leader Mike Turzai (R-Allegheny) have called the Senate \$27.6 billion General Fund budget number the ceiling and Gov. Corbett's proposed \$27.1 billion budget from February the floor on spending.

Gov. Corbett this week was sticking to his no-tax, austerity message in appearances in Philadelphia and Allentown, but hinted he would consider higher spending than his own budget proposed.

In Philadelphia he asked a Chamber of Commerce crowd to raise their hands if they thought the economy was turning around and none did, making his point obviously that he continues to feel state revenues will be shaky.

Even with current state revenues not as bad as projected, Gov. Corbett again raised the issue of how the state was going to deal with state worker and school employee unfunded pension liabilities. Legislators are also pushing the Administration to do something serious on highway and transit funding.

House Republicans have said they want to get the state budget done by June 15, but so far they are behind where they were last year in moving budget bills. In 2011 the House passed its version of the budget by May 9. This year the Senate took the early honors.

With more than \$500 million separating the floor and ceiling of negotiations, there's lots more to talk about.

2002 Environmental High Water Mark

Funding for environmental programs in the last 10 years through each of the 8 years of the Rendell and the now two year old Corbett Administrations has been [cut by over \\$1.8 billion](#) from the high water mark achieved during the Ridge-Schweiker Administrations.

DEP's authorized complement is now 2,759, down from 2,770 last year and 3,211 in FY 2002-03, and DCNR's is now 1,375, down from 1,389 last year and 1,391 in FY 2002-03.