



Children's Justice & Advocacy Report

To promote community responsibility so every Pennsylvania child is protected from child abuse, including sexual abuse.

In the January 30, 2017 edition:

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Wolf Ready to Consolidate Aging, Drug & Alcohol Programs, Health and Human Services into Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Next week Governor Tom Wolf will unveil his 2017-2018 General Fund Budget request – his last budget before he is expected to ask the people for a second shot at being (staying) as Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Wolf faces significant budget hurdles and huge majorities of Republicans in the Pennsylvania House and Senate.

In other words his last two budget pitches complete with a call for broad based tax increases are likely a no go.

That has the Wolf Administration looking to squeeze every dime and rethink state government.

Monday he officially announced (confirming a poorly kept secret) that he will “streamline government and allow the commonwealth to deliver more effective services to seniors, individuals with intellectual and physical disabilities, and those suffering from a substance use disorder as well as promote the health and well-being of all Pennsylvanians” by merging the cabinet level departments of Aging, Drug and Alcohol Programs, Health and Human Services into a Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).¹

Wolf assured that merging these departments “will not result in any program cuts” instead the effort will “dramatically improve our ability to deliver services that will improve lives.”

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¹<https://www.governor.pa.gov/governor-wolf-announces-plan-to-create-department-of-health-and-human-services/>

PA Senate Judiciary Committee Expedites SOL Reform Bill

It may be a new legislative session, but the dynamics to secure reforms in the statute of limitations (SOL) for child sexual abuse have not changed much.

Monday, the [Pennsylvania Senate Judiciary Committee](#) unanimously supported Senate Bill 261, a bill authored by President Pro Tempore Joseph Scarnati, to:

- Eliminate the criminal SOL;
- Eliminate the civil SOL so that a civil suit can be brought, at any age, by a victim of childhood sexual abuse against
 1. The “individual who committed the act of childhood sexual abuse,
 2. An individual who “conspired with the individual who committed the act of childhood sexual abuse for the purpose of bringing about the abuse, or
 3. An individual who had “actual knowledge” of the sexual abuse and “failed to prevent any subsequent childhood sexual abuse by the same perpetrator against the same individual by reporting the abuse to law enforcement officials or a state or county child protective services agency” when the victim was under the age of 18
- Extend from the age of 30 to the age of 50 the time by which a victim of childhood sexual abuse can initiate a civil lawsuit against any other perpetrator or entity not captured by #1-3 listed above;

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Cross-Reporting of Abuse against Children and Animals

The Pennsylvania Senate Judiciary Committee is working quickly to advance [Senate Bill 176](#) introduced by Senator Guy Reschenthaler (R-Allegheny, Washington).

Last session Reschenthaler joined with Representative Joseph A. Petrarca (D-Armstrong, Westmoreland) to champion cross-reporting legislation that would:

1. Add animal control officers or humane society police officers to the list of mandated reporters enumerated in Pennsylvania’s Child Protective Services Law (CPSL); and
2. Require “social service employees” who have formed “a reasonable suspicion that an animal is the victim of cruelty” to “an agent of a society or association for the prevention of cruelty to animals.”

There is no criminal penalties associated with the requirement that a social service employee report suspected animal abuse.

Inviting co-sponsors of his legislation, Reschenthaler wrote, “Humane society police officers (also animal control officers) and social services employees often interact with the public in their homes. Occasionally, they encounter evidence of possible animal or

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