

From the Desk of Tom Shaheen, Vice President for Policy

You've probably heard by now that the Pennsylvania General Assembly has finally approved the state budget, albeit past its June 30th deadline (for the fifth straight year). The final agreement includes significant education funding, omits several controversial policy proposals, and raises broader debates about the Commonwealth's long-term fiscal outlook.

Here are three notable takeaways from this year's budget agreement:

1. Public education spending continues to climb, but no additional investment in EITC and educational options.

The budget added \$678 million to public school education funding. Total funding now sits at roughly **\$11.85 billion**. That amount has risen by an astounding 35% since Governor Shapiro took office, despite declining enrollment and questionable accountability.

At the same time, this budget rejected the House Democrats' push to cut the successful Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) programs, while keeping them level-funded. It's worth noting that Governor Josh Shapiro has yet to choose if Pennsylvania will opt into the new **federal tax credit scholarship program**, potentially missing an opportunity to expand educational options for families.

2. Major controversial policy proposals were left out—but political games continue.

Thankfully, the final budget did not include Gov. Shapiro's push for recreational use of marijuana. I agree with how PA Family's Judge Cheryl Allen [recently put it](#): **"Real leadership does not legitimize harmful industries in pursuit of government revenue generated by addiction."**

Additional policy concerns surrounding issues like minimum wage hikes and "skill" games regulations were left out as well.

During some of the peak times of budget negotiations, House Democrats continued playing "Committee Roulette" with their procedural maneuvers to intentionally avoid action on legislation designed to protect fairness and safety in girls' sports. The House Judiciary Committee recently re-referred (again) the Save Women's Sports Act, Senate Bill 9; the sixth time this bill has been re-referred to a different committee since a bipartisan vote in the PA House! (AND the third time it's been sent to the Health committee!)

This political game proves House Democrat leaders (and every House Democrat who has voted in committee to re-refer the bill) are choosing to stand in the way of this bipartisan bill from advancing. As State Rep. Rob Kauffman (R-Franklin) put it, "At this point, it feels a lot like the movie Groundhog Day. We keep reliving the same moment over and over again...We owe a duty to every female athlete in this Commonwealth to enact this legislation. And that starts with a vote today on the merits of the bill rather than re-referral."

3. The overall spending trajectory remains a concern.

While the state budget reflects a level of compromise, Pennsylvania is still **spending more than it brings in**, relying on reserves and one-time resources rather than long-term fiscal balance. Governor Shapiro's push for significantly higher spending likely made this budget a negotiated middle ground, but the Commonwealth still faces the challenge of aligning future spending with sustainable revenues.

While the budget battle is complete, more policy debate will continue this fall as we complete the current two-year legislative session. PA Family will do our best to keep you informed on the

latest important issues that would impact your family.

Thank you for your continued support and for taking action to help Pennsylvania's future generations.

Sincerely,



Tom Shaheen

Vice President for Policy
Pennsylvania Family Institute

P.S. Speaking of the next generation, please pray for us as next week our staff welcomes the largest incoming City on the Hill class ever! 90 high-school students from across the Commonwealth and neighboring states will soon gather for our 26th annual Biblical worldview and leadership conference. Thank you for your prayers! [Click here to RSVP for our free public event featuring Daniel Di Martino!](#)

P.P.S. Make sure the Pennsylvania March for Life is on your calendar: Monday, September 21, 2026. For more details, [click here](#).

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Pennsylvania Family Institute

23 N Front St | Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17101
(717) 545-0600 | mail@pafamily.org

