

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 491 Session of  
2009

INTRODUCED BY K. SMITH, BELFANTI, BRENNAN, CARROLL, FAIRCHILD,  
GRUCELA, KORTZ, KOTIK, MILLER, MUNDY, MURT, READSHAW,  
SIPTROTH, SOLOBAY, THOMAS AND YOUNGBLOOD, FEBRUARY 18, 2009

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS, FEBRUARY 18,  
2009

AN ACT

1 Requiring State agencies to conduct public hearings in certain  
2 geographic areas of this Commonwealth prior to implementing  
3 pilot programs.

4 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
5 hereby enacts as follows:

6 Section 1. Short title.

7 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Give  
8 Pennsylvanians a Voice Act.

9 Section 2. Legislative intent.

10 The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

11 (1) The Commonwealth administers various programs  
12 intended to enhance the well-being of its citizens and  
13 promote economic development.

14 (2) Many of these programs are funded through Federal  
15 and State appropriations, and the ongoing challenge of  
16 maintaining and improving efficiency in these programs is an  
17 ongoing process.

1           (3) The continual erosion of Federal resources across  
2 all program areas increases pressure on State officials, as  
3 well as the General Assembly, to continue to provide much  
4 needed benefits and services.

5           (4) Reductions and eliminations in Federal funding  
6 necessitate changes in the administration of programs and  
7 services.

8           (5) These changes often result in significantly reduced  
9 benefits as well as revisions in how they are administered,  
10 sometimes causing additional administrative burdens on small  
11 vendors.

12           (6) Before implementing significant administrative  
13 changes, State agencies should provide that portion of the  
14 public to be impacted by the changes with an opportunity to  
15 comment on the potential consequences of the changes.

16 Section 3. Definitions.

17       The following words and phrases when used in this act shall  
18 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the  
19 context clearly indicates otherwise:

20       "Executive agency." A department overseeing a specific  
21 industry or program area under the jurisdiction of the Governor  
22 as defined in Article II of the act of April 9, 1929 (P.L.177,  
23 No.175), known as The Administrative Code of 1929.

24       "North Central." That geographic area of this Commonwealth  
25 that encompasses Bradford, Centre, Clinton, Columbia, Lycoming,  
26 Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Sullivan, Tioga and  
27 Union Counties.

28       "Northeast." That geographic area of this Commonwealth that  
29 encompasses Carbon, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe,  
30 Northampton, Pike, Susquehanna, Wayne and Wyoming Counties.

1 "Northwest." That geographic area of this Commonwealth that  
2 encompasses Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Crawford, Elk, Erie,  
3 Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Venango and Warren  
4 Counties.

5 "South Central." That geographic area of this Commonwealth  
6 that encompasses Adams, Berks, Blair, Bedford, Cumberland,  
7 Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lancaster,  
8 Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry, Schuylkill and York Counties.

9 "Southeast." That geographic area of this Commonwealth that  
10 encompasses Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and  
11 Philadelphia Counties.

12 "Southwest." That geographic area of this Commonwealth that  
13 encompasses Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Cambria,  
14 Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington and Westmoreland  
15 Counties.

16 Section 4. Public hearings required.

17 (a) General rule.--Whenever an executive agency proposes to  
18 make a significant change in the administration of or benefits  
19 available through a program funded in whole or in part with  
20 revenues from the Commonwealth and makes a determination to  
21 implement a pilot program to review the impact of the changes,  
22 the executive agency shall conduct at least one public hearing  
23 in the geographic area of this Commonwealth that will be  
24 affected by the proposed changes.

25 (b) Statewide pilot programs.--If the proposed changes will  
26 be implemented in a pilot program conducted on a Statewide  
27 basis, at least one public hearing shall be held in each of the  
28 following geographic areas: the Northeast, North Central,  
29 Northwest, Southeast, South Central and Southwest.

30 Section 5. Effective date.

1        This act shall take effect immediately.