
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 159 Session of
2013

INTRODUCED BY YUDICHAK, GREENLEAF, WASHINGTON, BREWSTER, BROWNE,
SMITH, ERICKSON, FONTANA, SOLOBAY AND COSTA, JANUARY 15, 2013

REFERRED TO COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC AND RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT,
JANUARY 15, 2013

AN ACT

1 Establishing the Regional Efficiency Aid Program; providing for
2 powers and duties of the Department of Community and Economic
3 Development and the Department of Revenue; and establishing
4 the Regional Efficiency Aid Program Fund.

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

7 Section 1. Short title.

8 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Regional
9 Efficiency Aid Program Act.

10 Section 2. Declaration of policy.

11 The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

12 (1) One of the most effective ways to reduce property
13 taxes is through the regionalization, consolidation or
14 sharing of services by political subdivisions.

15 (2) Because of institutional and financial limitations
16 on political subdivisions, regionalized, consolidated and
17 shared alternatives have not been widely adopted, resulting
18 in duplication of services and excess costs for taxpayers.

1 (3) A program of providing State aid to political
2 subdivisions that successfully implement strategies to
3 regionalize, consolidate and share services is an innovative
4 and important means of providing a financial incentive to
5 overcome the institutional limitations on political
6 subdivisions.

7 (4) To overcome these institutional limitations and to
8 ensure property tax relief, the Commonwealth should provide
9 State aid to political subdivisions that realize budgetary
10 savings from shared, regionalized or consolidated services
11 and pass these savings on to taxpayers through a reduction in
12 property tax obligations.

13 (5) Combining State-funded property tax relief with
14 fiscal assistance for the planning and start-up costs
15 associated with entering into new shared, regionalized or
16 consolidated service agreements will serve as additional
17 incentives for political subdivisions to take advantage of
18 potential savings provided by way of such agreements.

19 Section 3. Definitions.

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

23 "Department." The Department of Community and Economic
24 Development of the Commonwealth.

25 "Political subdivision." A county, city, borough,
26 incorporated town, township, school district, vocational school
27 district and county institution district.

28 "Program" or "REAP." The Regional Efficiency Aid Program
29 established under section 4.

30 "REAP aid." State aid provided to political subdivisions

1 under the Regional Efficiency Aid Program established in section
2 4.

3 "Regional service agreement." An agreement entered into by a
4 political subdivision in accordance with 53 Pa.C.S. Pt. III
5 Subpt. D (relating to area government and intergovernmental
6 cooperation) or any other agreement between political
7 subdivisions that is permitted by law.

8 "Residential property." A "homestead" as defined in 53
9 Pa.C.S. § 8401 (relating to definitions).

10 "Secretary." The Secretary of Community and Economic
11 Development of the Commonwealth.

12 Section 4. Regional Efficiency Aid Program.

13 The Regional Efficiency Aid Program is established in the
14 department. A political subdivision that enters into a regional
15 service agreement, either as a provider or receiver of services,
16 may apply for State aid for the purpose of providing tax
17 exclusions for residential property within the political
18 subdivision. State aid shall be granted for each calendar year
19 during which a regional service agreement is in effect.

20 Section 5. Formula for calculation of REAP aid.

21 (a) General rule.--The annual amount of State aid a
22 political subdivision is eligible to receive under the program
23 shall be the total of the number of points accumulated for the
24 regional service agreements of the political subdivision
25 multiplied by \$1 per point, multiplied by the latest population
26 of the political subdivision using the most recent State
27 population estimates provided by the United States Bureau of the
28 Census and multiplied by the weighting factor of fiscal stress
29 of the political subdivision.

30 (b) Determination of variables.--A system for determining

1 the number of points and weighting of fiscal stress used in the
2 formula for allocating State aid shall be determined by the
3 department within six months of the effective date of this
4 section. The system shall include:

5 (1) A schedule of the number of points for each type of
6 regional service agreement.

7 (2) The assignment of the number of points based on the
8 percentage of the cost of the regional service in the current
9 budget of the political subdivision, a relative value scale
10 of the importance of the regional service, a combination of
11 the two or such other criteria as designated by the
12 department to provide incentives deemed necessary or
13 appropriate.

14 (3) An increase in the number of points by an amount not
15 to exceed 25% of the number provided to the recipient, to be
16 granted to the provider of the regional service.

17 (4) A formula for weighting points based on a political
18 subdivision's degree of fiscal stress.

19 (c) Program administration.--The secretary shall consult
20 with the Secretary of Education with regard to school districts
21 and vocational school districts in the administration of the
22 program.

23 Section 6. Application and award process.

24 (a) General rule.--The department shall establish procedures
25 for the administration of REAP aid and provide for an
26 application and award process that:

27 (1) Is consistent with the timetable and process of
28 fixing property tax rates.

29 (2) Ensures that a political subdivision provides or
30 receives bona fide regional services.

1 (3) Ensures that to qualify for the receipt of REAP aid,
2 a regional service agreement results in:

3 (i) savings of the cost of services, including any
4 new capital expenditures, reflected as current or future
5 budget reductions;

6 (ii) limits on future costs increases;

7 (iii) minimizing the costs of a new service; or

8 (iv) other criteria as the department may deem
9 relevant.

10 (4) Provides for monitoring, oversight and enforcement.

11 (b) Department review.--Each year the department shall
12 review applications and determine the amount of REAP aid for
13 which each political subdivision is eligible. The department
14 shall allocate aid to ensure that school districts and
15 vocational school districts receive their share of aid based on
16 proportion of taxes or other appropriate measure.

17 Section 7. Exemption from certain limitations.

18 Political subdivision appropriations for regional services
19 for which REAP aid is provided shall be exempt from the
20 limitations on appropriations under any law limiting political
21 subdivision expenditures.

22 Section 8. Duties of county tax assessment offices.

23 (a) General rule.--The county assessment office in which a
24 political subdivision or subdivisions have applied to receive
25 REAP aid shall identify property that qualifies as residential
26 property.

27 (b) Information and certification provided by taxpayers.--

28 (1) As a condition of eligibility under the program,
29 taxpayers may be required to provide information and certify
30 that the property for which an exclusion is sought is

1 residential property. The information and certification shall
2 be in a form to be adopted by the Department of Revenue.

3 (2) County assessment offices may use any other
4 informational resources to determine whether a parcel
5 qualifies as residential property.

6 (3) The determination of the county assessment office as
7 to whether a parcel qualifies as residential property may be
8 appealed to a court of common pleas.

9 (c) Explanation.--Each county assessment office shall
10 provide to political subdivisions within the county an
11 explanation of the manner in which residential properties shall
12 be identified. The explanation shall be included in the
13 application.

14 (d) List to department.--By March 31 of each year, the
15 county assessment office shall provide to the department a list
16 of those properties identified as residential property, together
17 with a certification that the county assessment office has made
18 a good faith effort in identifying the properties.

19 Section 9. Exclusion from taxation.

20 (a) General rule.--A political subdivision shall exclude
21 from taxation a portion of the assessed value of residential
22 property identified under section 8 as follows:

23 (1) The department shall certify to each board of county
24 commissioners, the Local Government Commission, the
25 Department of Revenue, the Majority Leader and the Minority
26 Leader of the Senate and the Majority Leader and the Minority
27 Leader of the House of Representatives, by April 30 of each
28 year, the amount of REAP aid due to each political
29 subdivision for that tax year.

30 (2) The department shall calculate a tax exclusion rate

1 by dividing total REAP aid by the total taxable value of
2 residential property in qualifying political subdivisions.

3 (3) The tax exclusion rate shall be multiplied by the
4 taxable value for each residential property, the product of
5 which shall be deducted from the total taxes due, before
6 deductions, on each residential property for the tax year.
7 The tax exclusion rate and amount of the exclusion shall be
8 displayed on a taxpayer's tax bill.

9 (b) Limitations.--The tax exclusions provided under
10 subsection (a) shall not exceed one-half of the median assessed
11 value of all homestead property within a local taxing
12 jurisdiction. A local taxing authority may not increase the
13 millage rate of its tax on real property to pay for these
14 exclusions.

15 Section 10. Payment of REAP aid.

16 The total amount of REAP aid shall be paid by the State
17 Treasurer as State aid to each political subdivision in two
18 equal installments payable on August 1 and November 1 of each
19 year.

20 Section 11. Administration.

21 The department shall establish a procedure for providing
22 information to taxpayers about the REAP aid program and the
23 amount of REAP aid for which each taxing district is eligible.

24 Section 12. Duties of Department of Revenue.

25 (a) General rule.--The Department of Revenue shall assist in
26 identifying residential properties and may make any additions to
27 notices of assessments or to other forms or notices as the
28 Department of Revenue deems appropriate.

29 (b) Sharing of information.--Notwithstanding any other
30 provision of law to the contrary, the Department of Revenue may

1 provide such information as it deems necessary to the department
2 or to the county assessment offices in order to implement this
3 act.

4 (c) Regulations.--The Department of Revenue may promulgate
5 rules to effectuate the purposes of this act, including
6 regulations for the identification of residential property and a
7 requirement that taxpayers timely complete certifications or
8 applications in order to be eligible for a tax exclusion under
9 this act.

10 Section 13. Regional Efficiency Aid Program Fund.

11 (a) Establishment.--The Regional Efficiency Aid Program Fund
12 is established within the State Treasury and shall be a
13 nonlapsing revolving account. The fund shall receive
14 appropriations and repayments of loans as may be determined
15 necessary by the State Treasurer.

16 (b) Administration.--Upon request of the Governor, the
17 General Assembly shall appropriate the necessary funds to the
18 fund for purposes of the program. The fund shall be administered
19 by the department.

20 Section 14. Effective date.

21 This act shall take effect in 60 days.