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Gov. Wolf: A Leader for the People

An honest legacy founded on innovative policies and fiscal responsibility

Harrisburg, PA – When Governor Tom Wolf came to Harrisburg in 2015, he had big plans to move Pennsylvania forward. He promised to fight for schools that teach, jobs that pay and government that works. During his two terms in office, Governor Wolf delivered on those promises. He turned around the state’s finances while simultaneously advancing innovative policies and making smart investments for a stronger commonwealth.

“I have really enjoyed my time in office, especially the people I have had the honor of interacting with day in and day out,” said Gov. Wolf. “We argue, we debate; but at the end of the day, most folks in this building are all working to do what’s right for the people of Pennsylvania. It’s been an honor do this work on behalf of the nearly 13 million Pennsylvanians who call this beautiful state home.”

By working every day to build a safe and equitable commonwealth for everyone, Governor Wolf’s commitment to change has fueled the commonwealth’s comeback. He leaves Harrisburg having made Pennsylvania a much better place than it was when he arrived.

Governor Wolf believes strongly that the success of one fuels the success of us all, that’s why he has prioritized education from the beginning.

“When we invest in our schools, we are investing in a brighter future for our children and our commonwealth. That’s why I fought not only for historic education funding, but also for programs to train and develop our workforce,” Governor Wolf said. “Pennsylvania is on a better path now – not despite all the funding we’ve given education, but because of it. We have shown that investing in our students, our educators, and our workforce pays off with better jobs and more opportunities for everyone.”

The governor’s targeted education investments in Pennsylvanians include:

- [Invested more in education](#) than any other Pennsylvania governor. Made the largest single-year funding increase in state history.
- Established the [Fair Funding Formula](#) to fund school districts more equitably.
- Implemented the [Level Up program](#) to boost funding for the 100 most underfunded school districts in Pennsylvania.

- Launched the [PAsmart program](#) to expand STEM education and make computer science available to all students.
- [Raised the high school dropout age](#) to 18 and reduced the required attendance age to 6.
- Ensured nurses and public servants won't have to [pay state income tax on federal student loan debt relief](#).
- Created a \$5 million [higher education scholarship program for state employees](#) and their dependents.

Governor Wolf has been an unfailing advocate for ethical, honest, accountable, transparent government that works for the people.

Governor Wolf implemented a major overhaul of Pennsylvania's elections by signing into law comprehensive election reforms that made voting more accessible for Pennsylvania citizens. The Governor launched [online voter registration](#) and signed legislation that brought the [most significant improvement to Pennsylvania's elections](#) in more than 80 years.

Governor Wolf also oversaw health care reforms that will make it easier for Pennsylvanians to access affordable, high-quality care. During the Wolf Administration, Pennsylvania's uninsured rate dropped to the lowest it has ever been. Governor Wolf's legacy is one of lower costs for Pennsylvanians and healthier, safer communities.

Numerous initiatives by Governor Wolf helped improve the lives of Pennsylvanians and the health and safety of their communities, including:

- Established [Pennie](#), Pennsylvania's state-based health care marketplace. Provided affordable coverage to more than 340,000 Pennsylvanians.
- [Expanded Medicaid](#), helping 2.3 million low-income and working Pennsylvanians access health care.
- [Legalized medical marijuana](#), which now provides help to more than 414,000 Pennsylvanians
- [Required insurers to provide mental health and substance use disorder treatment coverage](#) that's similar to what they provide for physical health.
- [Declared a statewide disaster declaration to address the opioid epidemic across the commonwealth](#), establishing the first-of-its-kind Opioid Command Center.
- Signed an [executive order](#) to protect LGBTQIA+ Pennsylvanians from conversion therapy.
- [Secured critical investments to support affordable housing](#) development and help Pennsylvanians make home repairs.
- Protected victims of abuse by [preventing domestic abusers from possessing guns](#).
- [Increased funding](#) for grassroots violence prevention programs.

It goes without saying that the COVID-19 pandemic was the greatest challenge Governor Wolf faced during his two terms in office. The governor demonstrated steady leadership when there was no playbook.

"I will question the decisions made during the pandemic until the day I die," said Gov. Wolf. "But what allowed me to sleep at night is that I didn't play politics and made decisions with the health and safety of Pennsylvanians as top priority."

Governor Wolf is a proud Pennsylvanian who cares deeply about not only the future of his fellow Pennsylvanians, but about their everyday quality of life. Importantly, he and First Lady Frances Wolf prioritized food security, believing that no one in this land of plenty should go hungry.

One of the governor's very first initiatives in 2015 was an [all-inclusive executive order addressing a multitude of food security and nutrition issues](#) in the commonwealth. He and the first lady have since worked year over year to improve access to food, eliminate food deserts, and improve nutrition for Pennsylvanians. Most recently, these efforts included a new \$1 million Hunger Free Campus Initiative and a \$2 million increase in funding for the [Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System](#) (PASS) in the governor's final budget.

In a [final report](#) by the Governor's Food Security Partnership, it was revealed that food insecurity decreased by 37% since the beginning of the Wolf Administration.

The Wolf Administration has made life-changing investments in the people of Pennsylvania thanks to Governor Wolf's commitment to fiscal responsibility. When he took office, Pennsylvania's finances were in bad shape. The Rainy Day Fund was down to its last \$231,800, and the commonwealth routinely faced multi-billion dollar budget deficits.

Through sound fiscal management, and by paying our bills, Governor Wolf has put Pennsylvania back on track.

"Our economic success and our fiscal strength add up to a huge win for Pennsylvanians," said Governor Wolf. "This is further evidence of something I have always known to be true: that sound financial management and investments that make a difference in the lives of Pennsylvanians go hand in hand. We've made Pennsylvania a more prosperous place in large part by investing in the people who call our commonwealth home."

As part of his commitment to responsible fiscal policy, Governor Wolf has:

- Raised Pennsylvania's [Rainy Day Fund](#) balance to a historic \$5 billion.
- Secured a [\\$5.3 billion budget surplus](#) and became the first governor to turn over a budget surplus to a successor since 1987.
- Signed [bipartisan pension reform](#) into law.
- [Reformed the liquor system](#) to expand beer and wine sales outside of state stores.

Over the past eight years, innovative, first-of-their kind policies and programs were trademarks of the Wolf Administration. Some of these programs and targeted investments include:

- Established the statewide [Broadband Development Authority](#) to expand high-speed internet access.
- Set [Pennsylvania's first statewide climate goals](#) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 26% by 2025 and by 80% by 2050.
- Signed the [PA Farm Bill](#), a first-of-its-kind package of legislation to support Pennsylvania agriculture.
- Enacted the first-of-its-kind [Clean Slate Law](#) to automatically seal certain types of criminal records – benefitting more than 1.2 million Pennsylvanians and granted 2,450 pardons for second chances.

- Launched the first statewide [“It’s On Us PA” initiative](#) to prevent campus sexual assault.
- Established a [School Safety Task Force](#) to make schools safer.
- Signed the first-of-its-kind [Pennsylvania GI Bill](#) into law. [More than 3,300 dependents](#) of Pennsylvania National Guard members have received free or low-cost higher education.

Governor Wolf has brought change to Harrisburg and fought for good government for the people. His successes include:

- Implemented a [gift ban for the executive branch](#) of state government.
- Placed [restrictions on lobbyists](#).
- Required cabinet secretaries to post their [expenses online each month](#).

Governor Wolf’s success in building a business-friendly climate was brought about through actions such as:

- Put Pennsylvania on a [path to a Corporate Net Income Tax rate of 4.99%](#), seventh lowest rate in the nation.
- Eliminated the outdated and unfair [Capital Stock and Franchise Tax](#).
- Launched [Manufacturing PA](#) to link job training to career pathways.
- [Diversified state contracting](#) so that small, diverse, and veteran businesses now make up 20% of the state’s total contractors.

While the governor’s legacy abounds with innovative new programs, policies for the people, and targeted investments in a more prosperous Pennsylvania, it is also a legacy that stands firm on the principles of human rights and dignity. Governor Wolf is proud of the many bills he’s signed into law, but also outspokenly proud of the 66 bills vetoed. From bills that would have banned abortion and targeted trans youth to those that would have made guns more accessible in dangerous situations, Governor Wolf upheld his promise to veto every bill that would harm Pennsylvanians.

“It has been a privilege to serve Pennsylvanians – to ensure their rights remain and give them the tools they need to succeed,” added Governor Wolf.

Governor Wolf has served for two terms as a leader consistently at work for the people of Pennsylvania. Learn more about how his [Priorities for Pennsylvania](#) have fueled the commonwealth’s comeback.

Note: At [PACast.com](#) is a full-length, broadcast quality final legacy interview with Governor Tom Wolf. There are also photos from the governor’s portrait unveiling at the Governor’s Residence and of the Governor and First Lady on their final departure from the Pennsylvania Capitol together.

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