



***Beef Bytes***  
***December 17, 2013***

Dear Friends:

The PA House of Representatives is putting a wrap on 2013 session days this week. Both the House and Senate will return to Harrisburg on January 7<sup>th</sup> for a non-voting day and then return on the 13<sup>th</sup> to begin the 2014 session calendar. Political rumblings place pension reform and liquor privatization on the list for consideration as the new year begins.

The next newsletter will be published the first Monday of January. Until then, please call us if we can assist.

Thank you for placing your trust in Versant Strategies. Have a happy holiday season and a safe and healthy new year!

Sincerely,  
MeeCee

***Articles of Interest***

**CBE News:**

[New Directors](#)

The Center for Beef Excellence named the 5 directors for the next three year term. The team includes cattle industry members from across the state- with expertise in breeding, marketing, cattle processing, grazing and management of farm minerals. Thanks to all who give their time and talents to improve the beef industry in Pennsylvania through serving as a director!

**Pennsylvania News:**

[PA Farm Show](#)

The Pennsylvania State Farm Show is scheduled for January 4-11, 2014 at the farm show complex in Harrisburg. The event will feature livestock shows and exhibits in addition to displays that showcase the variety of ways that Pennsylvania agriculture impacts the lives of residents every day.

**National News:**

[Feedback on Ethanol Changes](#)

The Environmental Protection Agency listened to comments on proposed changes to the Renewable Fuels Standards before the rule will be put into effect. Supporters of the changes argue that artificial supply/demand changes are harming other sectors, while those

who oppose the changes claim that corn producers are already producing below break-even costs.

#### [New Biofuels Bill](#)

An Oklahoma Senator introduced a bill that would eliminate the mandate for corn based ethanol. This is the next step following recommendations from the Environmental Protection Agency to reduce the mandate. However, the bill will face strong opposition from lawmakers in corn producing states.

#### [Tyson Animal Care Standards](#)

Beef producers who supply meat for Tyson Foods will be required to comply with animal care standards to prevent abuse in the supply chain. A third party auditing firm will be used to confirm that producers are following the guidelines- many of which are already standard practice on the farms.

#### [Antibiotic Controls](#)

A voluntary program would allow pharmaceutical companies to sign on to a proposal by the Food and Drug Administration to phase out the use of several common antibiotics for production benefits such as feed efficiency and weight gain. The plan would target drugs that are considered important in human medicine and attempts to reduce antibiotic resistance.

#### **Global News:**

##### [Carbon Credit Program in Australia](#)

A greenhouse gas reduction initiative in Australia will allow cattle producers to replace urea supplements with nitrate salts to reduce the amount of methane produced by cattle and. The methane reduction can be claimed as carbon credits and sold on the open market. Nitrate salts are more expensive, but over time the program may prove to be economically beneficial.

#### **Cattle Management Articles:**

##### [Winter Management](#)

Producers can take several steps to protect animals from harsh winter weather. Dry animals don't mind the cold, but once cattle become wet they cannot retain heat as well. Providing wind breaks or shelter will help animals stay warm. Feeding lower quality forage also helps with heat generation through additional fiber to digest.

##### [Calving Preparations](#)

Producers should take steps now to gather everything that will be needed for calving season. This includes supplies such as chains, disinfectant, and OB lube to assist cows with difficult calving and supplies for young calves such as colostrum or electrolytes. Cleaning calving pens and preparing pastures for young calves will also make things easier when calves come.

##### [Vitamin Supplements](#)

The use of low quality forages when drought limits forage supplies has led to an increase in the incidence of vitamin shortages in beef cattle. This is a problem especially in late gestation and can lead to problems for both cows and calves. Cows can be tested in mid-gestation in order to correct the diet before calving to avoid problems.

##### [Proper Transportation Methods](#)

Stress during transportation can have a negative impact on carcass quality. Animal should not be hit during loading and any narrow entrances or protruding objects in the chute

system should be removed. Bruising causes increased trimming of the carcass and dark cutters or downer cows have little to no value as beef.

- 12-16-2013 [\*\*Inside PDA for December 13, 2013\*\*](#)  
(Press Release)
- 12-16-2013 [\*\*Congress close to 'dairy cliff;' milk could jump to \\$8 a gallon\*\*](#)  
Just months after Congress flirted with a national debt ceiling disaster during the government shutdown in October, dithering lawmakers could set off a consumer pinch in January. Welcome to the "dairy cliff." The farm bill expires at the end of the year and if Congress does not... - [Scranton Times](#)
- 12-12-2013 [\*\*F.D.A. Restricts Antibiotics Use for Livestock\*\*](#)  
WASHINGTON — The Food and Drug Administration on Wednesday put in place a major new policy to phase out the indiscriminate use of antibiotics in cows, pigs and chickens raised for meat, a practice that experts say has endangered human health by fueling the growing epidemic of antibiotic... - [New York Times](#)
- 12-12-2013 [\*\*No Farm Bill in Sight as Recess Looms for Congress\*\*](#)  
WASHINGTON — Prospects for passage of a new farm bill before the end of the year appear dim, with just a week left before Congress adjourns for the holidays, although lawmakers insisted they were close to a deal. The current measure expires at the end of the month. Members of the House... - [New York Times](#)
- 12-10-2013 [\*\*More Helpful Fatty Acids Found in Organic Milk\*\*](#)  
Whole milk from organic dairies contains far more of some of the fatty acids that contribute to a healthy heart than conventional milk, scientists are reporting. The finding, published Monday in the journal PLOS One, is the most clear-cut instance of an organic food's offering a nutritional... - [New York Times](#)
- 12-10-2013 [\*\*Local advocates, farmers, congressmen focus on immigration reform debate\*\*](#)  
This was supposed to be the year Washington legislators figured out a path forward on immigration reform. And even as the prospect of finding a solution in 2013 begins to fade, Lancaster County's congressmen, Joe Pitts and Pat Meehan, believe there is hope reform might happen in the future.... - [Lancaster Intelligencer Journal](#)
- 12-10-2013 [\*\*Organic milk likely more heart healthy due to cows eating more grass, study says: Will you switch?\*\*](#)  
It just might get worth it to shell out more money for organic milk. A new study by Washington State University suggests that organically raised cows eat more grass and produce milk that is richer in "good" fatty acids. By comparison, the cows that produce regular milk are often fed corn... - [Harrisburg Patriot-News](#)

## **Legislative Activity**

[HB 1523](#) [Toepel, Marcy](#)

(PN 2030) Amends "An act authorizing the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the local government units thereof to preserve, acquire or hold land for open space uses" adding that revenue from the tax levy may be used for expenses necessary to prepare the resource, recreation or land use plan; and for costs associated with design, engineering, improvement and development of the real property

consistent with the approved resource, recreation or land use plan. Effective immediately.

**Companions:** [HCO 594](#) Toepel, Marcy (M)  
1-10-13 H Filed

**Printer Number(s):** [P2030](#)

**Bill History:** 12-10-13 S Set on the Senate Calendar  
12-10-13 S Laid out for discussion  
12-10-13 S Third consideration  
12-10-13 S Final Passage (Vote: Y: 50/N: 0)  
12-11-13 S Signed in the Senate  
12-11-13 H Signed in the House  
12-12-13 G In the hands of the Governor  
12-22-13 G Last day for Governor's action

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[SB 491](#) [Folmer, Mike](#)

(PN 1599) Amends The Local Tax Enabling Act providing for the definition of "farming" and allows taxpayers to use the Annual Local Earned Income Tax Return form available from the department's website to file the final return. Provides a taxpayer will be considered to have met the requirements for declaration and minimum payment of estimated tax for any year in which the taxpayer timely declares and makes quarterly payments of estimated tax in amounts that equal at least one-fourth of the total incomes and net profits tax due and not withheld under section 512 in the previous year, provided that the taxpayer can show through the taxpayer's annual earned income tax return that tax liability was incurred. Further allows a taxpayer to use a prescribed formula for determining quarterly tax payments. Allows farmers to file only one tax return per year, avoiding the quarterly requirement. Allows employers to file quarterly returns in certain circumstances. Effective in 180 days. (Prior Printer Number: 454)

**Companions:** [SCO 230](#) Folmer, Mike (M)  
12-13-12 S Filed

**Printer Number(s):** [P0454](#) [P1599](#)

**Bill History:** 12-11-13 S Set on the Senate Calendar  
12-11-13 S Rereferred to Senate Appropriations

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[SB 638](#) [Vogel, Jr., Elder](#)

(PN 1604) Amends The General County Assessment Law providing no high tunnel shall be assessed or taxed as real estate regardless of whether the structure has become affixed to the real estate. Provides a definition of "high tunnel". Effective in 60 days. (Prior Printer Number: 693, 996, 1309)

**Companions:** [SCO](#) Vogel, Jr., (M)

604 Elder  
1-29-13 S Filed

**Printer Number(s):** [P0693](#) [P0996](#) [P1309](#) [P1604](#)

**Bill History:** 12-10-13 S Meeting set for Off the Floor, Rules Committee Conference Rooms ...Senate Rules and Executive Nominations  
12-10-13 S Re-reported on concurrence as committed Senate Rules and Executive Nominations  
12-11-13 S Set on the Senate Calendar  
12-11-13 S Laid out for discussion  
12-11-13 S Senate concurred in House amendments (Vote: Y: 49/N: 0)  
12-11-13 S Signed in the Senate  
12-16-13 H Signed in the House  
12-16-13 G In the hands of the Governor  
12-26-13 G Last day for Governor's action

## **Capitol Review**

Something odd happened in Washington D.C. this week. Two prominent Congressional leaders, one from each party, got together and worked out a framework for a two-year federal budget. [Seriously, they compromised](#). And judging by the screaming of the Tea Party and the wailing on the far left, it must have been a pretty decent plan. Congratulations to Senator Patty Murray and Representative Paul Ryan for pulling the sword out of that rock.

Of course, on the other end of the compromise spectrum, we had the always-entertaining Senator Rand Paul, who proclaimed that an extension of unemployment benefits would be a ["disservice to workers."](#) He also believes antibiotics are a disservice to sick people.

Meanwhile down in South Africa, [President Obama shook the hand of Raul Castro](#). And just like that, Twitter was broken.

A brief kerfuffle broke out in the normally staid State Senate this week, as Christopher Abruzzo was [confirmed as the new secretary](#) of the Department of Environmental Protection. Some Democrats were not at all pleased with Abruzzo's comments on climate change (he is rather "meh" about the whole thing) and there was plenty of sound and fury and accusations and innuendo and dogs and cats living together until...

The Senate [voted to confirm Abruzzo by a 42-8 margin](#). This is what some call a "teachable moment" in Pennsylvania. The environmental movement, while periodically relevant, is far from a powerhouse in this great commonwealth.

One western Pennsylvania news outlet this week breathlessly trumpeted [a new finding on food stamp fraud](#), which opponents of food stamps like to point to as a reason to gut the program. According to a new study, up to \$858 million worth of SNAP benefits are going to folks who don't qualify. Which explains, of course, why Congress would want to cut \$40 BILLION from the program. When your only tool is a hammer, SNAP is an awfully convenient nail up in Congress these days.

As the debate on charter school reform meanders through the General Assembly, the focus seems to be landing more and more at the doorstep of the Philadelphia School District, which seems to be making some lawmakers cranky. So we thought we might clarify why the Philly schools are so interested in what comes next. The district is home to [half the charters in the whole state](#), and lays out \$708 million annually to those charters. To put that in perspective, it is roughly 10 times the entire budget for the Department of Labor and Industry for this fiscal year. So yeah, they kinda have a dog in this hunt.

Some very conservative, anonymous-donor-driven group is coming out with guns blazing [against Governor Corbett's Healthy PA plan](#), mainly because the proposal plays footsie with Medicaid expansion, which we all know will be the downfall of western civilization. They even call it CorbettCare. See what they did there? So cute.

Meanwhile, Corbett may have some time to figure out how to move 50,000 Pennsylvania children [off of the CHIP rolls and onto the Medicaid rolls](#), we learned this week. The feds seem to be willing to work this one out with the Corbett folks, which could bode well for the aforementioned CorbettCare proposal.

Health care behemoth UPMC may have crossed the Rubicon this week, as they launched a series of [campaign-style attack mailers against House members](#) who have the unmitigated gall to want to protect competition in the health insurance market. If you are a non-profit and you decide the best course of action is to attack sitting lawmakers, you have obviously gone round the bend.

In related news, [UPMC still has no employees](#). Nothing to see here; move along.

Meanwhile, in the other corner, Highmark is [reporting a six-fold jump in enrollees](#) last month as the Obamacare train continues to lurch forward. We assume Highmark has employees to process these new enrollees.

Penny the Pennsylvania Lottery spokesperson [will be among the nation's unemployed soon](#), we learned last week. Our first response was "Who?" Our second response was "Please do not bring that creepy Gus thing back."

Speaking of the lottery, it looks as though the clock has run out on the legislature's plan to move a bill to pave the way for the privatization of management at that bureau. Despite feverish last-minute negotiations, the specter of making millions of senior citizens nervous and cranky was apparently enough to sink that ship for now. [Expect the issue to resurface in January](#), along with a panoply of other gaming ideas as the state stares at yet another yawning budget gap.

Out in western Pennsylvania, [ground was broken this week on a new luxury hotel](#) adjacent to the Meadows Racetrack and Casino. Just another multi-million investment from an industry that carries a 47% tax rate. Not an "impact fee", mind you. A tax.

PennDOT is reminding folks this week not to expect [many big-ticket capacity building projects](#) to be funded with their new loot. The backlog of maintenance projects is rather lengthy, so they will be focusing on making sure existing bridges do not fall into the river before building any new, snazzy ones.

On the political front, Governor Corbett learned last week that he [may have a Primary opponent](#) in the person of conservative activist Bob Guzzardi. We do not imagine this news has kept the governor awake at night.

Also, word is leaking out that Attorney General Kathleen Kane may be setting her sights on a [challenge to U.S. Senator Pat Toomey in 2016](#). This was welcomed news for the Democratic gubernatorial hopefuls, as a Kane entrance into that field would have spelled certain doom for most of them.

In the We Can't Make This Up File, we will temporarily depart from the dumb things people do to the incredibly awesome things they do. And because it is 30 below zero in Harrisburg, we give you: [Helicopter Ice Hockey](#).

## ***In Other News***

- 12-16-2013     **[Bill would promote products 'Made in PA'](#)**  
HARRISBURG -- Would you be more likely to buy a product if it was labeled "Made in Pennsylvania?" A bipartisan group of state lawmakers has introduced a bill to create a "Made in PA" program, complete with a logo and website to encourage consumers to purchase products made close to home.... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 12-13-2013     **[70 mph speed limits coming to Pennsylvania in 2014](#)**  
It's OK to drive 70 mph in Pennsylvania, a new law says, but motorists won't be getting the green flag until summer at the earliest. And exactly where depends on the outcome of safety studies by the state Department of Transportation and the Turnpike Commission. But the top... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 12-12-2013     **[Marcellus shale, conservation keeping natural gas prices low](#)**  
Staying warm indoors this winter will cost people who heat their homes with natural gas half as much as it did five years ago due to the influx of Marcellus shale gas and conservation. - [Uniontown Herald-Standard](#)
- 12-11-2013     **[University of Pennsylvania students' robotic arm can make you stronger](#)**  
PHILADELPHIA -- Need a hand lifting something?.. - [AP](#)
- 12-11-2013     **[Pa. Senate confirms Christopher Abruzzo as Secretary of Environmental Protection](#)**  
E. Christopher Abruzzo has been confirmed as Pennsylvania's Secretary of Environmental Protection. It wasn't unanimous, but Abruzzo, who moved to the state's top environmental agency from Gov. Tom Corbett's office, where he was a deputy chief of staff, received a 42-8 vote in favor of confirmation.... - [Harrisburg Patriot-News](#)
- 12-11-2013     **[Time magazine names Pope Francis the Person of the Year](#)**  
The iconic red border of Time magazine will frame Pope Francis as its 2013 Person of the Year, the magazine announced Wednesday morning. By the judgement of Time's editorial staff, the pope-elected earlier this year after a surprise resignation by predecessor Pope Benedict--was the... - [Washington Post](#)
- 12-11-2013     **[Ferretti confirmed to lead DCNR](#)**  
HARRISBURG - After six months on the job, Ellen Ferretti of Dallas took the mantle of official secretary of the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources on

Tuesday. The Senate confirmed Ferretti to the cabinet post by a unanimous vote without debate. She drops the title of acting secretary held since last... - [Hazleton Standard-Speaker](#)

12-10-2013

**[For Bitcoin, Square Peg Meets Round Hole Under the Law](#)**

The advent of a new medium to conduct business inevitably means avenues for criminals to swoop in to take advantage. The development of Bitcoin, the virtual currency that is not issued by any government, presents challenges for the authorities to use laws that were not designed for the digital... - [New York Times](#)