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[2nd Annual Holiday Gift Grab](#), *6ABC Action News* (Dec. 20, 2019, 4 p.m. Broadcast)

[Winner Goes On Shopping Spree for Good Cause](#), *6ABC Action News* (Dec. 20, 2019, 5 p.m. Broadcast)

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[5 fun things to do in Philly this week](#), *Metro US* (February 18, 2020)



Action News at 4 p.m. December 20, 2019



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THE ACTION CAM WAS IN CENTER CITY FOR THE SECOND ANNUAL HOLIDAY GIFT GRAB.

THE INDEPENDENCE VISITOR CENTER CORPORATION KICKED OFF THE HOLIDAY SEASON WITH AN INSTAGRAM CONTEST TO PROMOTE SHOPPING LOCALLY AND GIVING BACK.

ONE CONTEST WINNER HAD JUST 60 SECONDS TO DO A SUPERMARKET-SWEEP STYLE DASH AROUND THE STORE.

CLEARLY WE SPED THIS VIDEO UP.

AFTER THE EVENT, THE ORGANIZATION WILL DONATE A MATCHING AMOUNT TO THE EAGLES AUTISM FOUNDATION.



Action News at 5 p.m.

December 20, 2019



[Click to view clip](#)

THE WINNER OF AN ONLINE CONTEST GOT TO GO ON A 60 SECOND SHOPPING SPREE FOR A GOOD CAUSE TODAY.

TRISTAN GUARINI WON THE INDEPENDENCE VISITOR CENTER'S INSTAGRAM CONTEST AND WAS AWARDED WITH A SHOPPING SPREE AT ITS GIFT SHOP.

TRISTAN HAD ONE MINUTE TO GRAB WHATEVER HE COULD TO TAKE HOME FOR FREE.

AT THE END, THE VISITOR CENTER TALLIED UP THE COST OF THE ITEMS, WHICH WAS JUST OVER ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS, AND MATCHED IT WITH A DONATION TO THE EAGLES AUTISM FOUNDATION.

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Mummers Parade 2020 Guide: How to watch, road closures, and more

by [Grace Dickinson](#), Updated: December 26, 2019



MARGO REED

Want to kick off the new year with a mega, Mardi-Gras-like party? Now in its 120th year, Philadelphia's Mummers Parade draws thousands of people together for an all-day celebration featuring lavishly costumed performers marching their way down Broad Street. Here's where and how to join the festivities, how you can survive the traffic chaos, and, if you're new to Philly, a little bit about what the hell is going on.

How to watch

Practical tips

- **Take transit.** With many road closures surrounding the route, it's highly encouraged to use SEPTA for commuting to the parade. Buses around City Hall and the parade route will be detoured. Information regarding bus detours, alerts, and New Year's scheduling can be found on septa.org.
- **Arrive early** to get a good spot. Visitors can bring lawn chairs to set up on Broad Street. [The forecast calls for temperatures in the mid-40s](#), so dress in layers and consider bringing hand warmers if you plan to stay until the sun goes down. (Can't find hand warmers? [It's not that hard to make them yourself.](#))
- **If you need a place to warm up**, stop by the [Kimmel Center's free New Year's Day celebration](#). Activities and live music are scheduled from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Upstairs, the Broad Street Bash (\$85) offers brunch fare, Bloody Marys, and balcony views of the parade from 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.; a cash bar will open at 3:30 p.m. to the public.

Time and location

The parade begins at **9 a.m. at City Hall**. A main judging stand is near the start at 15th Street and John F. Kennedy Boulevard. While the parade is free to attend, spectators can purchase bleacher seating in this area. Tickets are \$20 and can be acquired at the Independence Visitor Center or by calling 800-537-7676.

The Philadelphia Inquirer

GALLERY

by Inquirer Staff Photographers, January 6, 2020

Every Monday, we present a gallery of recent pictures taken by our staff photojournalists and tell the story behind one of them.



📷 23 of 23

TOM GRALISH / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

An unused display case becomes a smartphone-era "telephone booth" at the Independence Visitor Center.

READING EAGLE

When's the last time you visited Independence Hall? [A Day Away]

By Charles J. Adams III — For MediaNews Group | Jan 16, 2020



For more than four decades, I have scoured the cities and countryside of the mid-Atlantic states in search of unusual, unique, surprising and delightful destinations, but the turn of the new year reminded me of many places that many of you who are reading this right now may not have visited in quite some time.

They are the “Gosh, I haven’t been there since my fifth-grade class trip” kind of places. And while residents of the region too often overlook them, they attract tourists from around the world.

One of those places is Pennsylvania’s old, stately state house in Philadelphia, known to the rest of the country as Independence Hall.

More than 4.5 million people visited the site last year, and the National Park Service has instituted a ticketing system that may seem cumbersome, but is actually fairly simple.

If, indeed, you have a few years behind you and haven’t been there since a school trip (or, probably more applicable, Sept. 11, 2001), you should go, but you must also brace yourself for the reality of 21st century security at the 18th century landmark.

Tickets are obtained in the Independence Visitor Center, just a block away, beyond the Liberty Bell Center, at Sixth and Market streets.

The Visitor Center also features a large souvenir and bookshop, several exhibits and the city of Philadelphia’s Visitor Information Desk.

The center offers free WiFi, and encourages the downloading of the NPS Independence app, which features tours, ranger programs and maps.

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It is also advised that visitors use the restrooms in the building before they head to Independence Hall, as there is none there.

Tickets are free, but necessary for admission to Independence Hall and the adjoining West Wing and Congress Hall.

That free ticket also offers a 50 percent discount on admission to the nearby National Constitution Center (where ticket prices range from \$11 to \$14.50).

Admission to Independence Hall is on a timed basis, and visitors must report to the entrance on the eastern end of the hall 30 minutes before the appointed tour time.

From there, it's through a security check (leave your pocketknives in your car) and a metal detector and then into what is one of the most venerated buildings in the country.

A National Park Service ranger provides a 20-minute, lively, factual review of the significance of the building in the East Wing of the colonial complex. Then, it's out and around to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court chamber, where the Declaration of Independence was read to the public for the first time on July 8, 1776.

Across the vestibule is the Assembly Room, where the Constitutional Congress and the Second Continental Congress met. The park ranger again tells the tales of what happened there in the steamy summers and steamier debates of the formation of the United States.

Depending on the season and the number of visitors, the tour may venture upstairs to the Long Gallery, the Governor's Council Chamber and the Committee of the Assembly Chamber.

While most of the furniture (and indeed, some of the building itself) are reproductions or, in the building's case, reconstructions, one precious relic stands behind the desk in the Assembly Room. It is the chair upon which George Washington sat for the nearly three months of debate. Look closely and you'll notice the golden carving at the top of its back, giving it the name known to the founders as the "Rising Sun" chair.

The West Wing of Independence Hall contains several exhibits related to the Revolutionary War era, including what is believed to be the inkstand used to sign the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. While no ticket is required for entry to that building, visitors must still go through the security checkpoint.

When opened, what was the Pennsylvania State House was the largest building, in what was also the biggest city, in the 13 colonies.

It stands now framed by glass, steel and concrete skyscrapers in what is the sixth largest city in the 50 states.

The Philadelphia Inquirer

‘America 250’ birthday planners seek local projects, national funds

by [Joseph N. DiStefano](#), Updated: January 18, 2020



The business leaders and politicians charged with marking the nation’s 250th birthday say they’re looking for party and project ideas. From all over, including Vice President Mike Pence.

“All 50 states, cities, the territories, the Native reservations, foreign countries,” says Dan DiLella, the Newtown Square-based developer (he heads Equus Capital Partners) who chairs the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission board, appointed by the president to get plans moving for “America 250” events.

The city where the Declaration of Independence was signed has played [a lead role in past anniversaries](#), and each left a mark. Fairmount Park was formed around the Centennial fairgrounds from 1876. The South Philly stadium complex site was first developed for the Sesquicentennial in 1926.

Independence Mall was cleared in advance of the Bicentennial in 1976, making way for today’s Liberty Bell Center, National Constitution Center, Independence Visitor Center, and President’s House-and-slave quarters attractions.

And Philadelphians were prominent in the commission’s nine-member delegation that called on Pence at the White House on Wednesday. One goal was to follow up on [its new, congressionally mandated, 276-page framework for projects and parties](#), to culminate on July 4, 2026. The report was sent to the White House last Dec. 31.

Still, “this is not just about Philadelphia,” commission member U.S. Sen. Pat Toomey (R., Pa.) noted after the visit. While Philadelphians hoped for a big commemoration in 1976, Toomey recalled how New York with its “tall ships” and fireworks ended up with the most memorable party. This time, “Philadelphia has a unique role. But it is a national event.”

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“This is not going to be a Philly-centric celebration, though obviously we think Philadelphia will play a role,” added another commission member, David L. Cohen, the Comcast executive and University of Pennsylvania trustees chair.

The commission is collecting cash to inspire proposals that “educate, engage and unite” groups of Americans around common themes of “liberty, diversity, inclusion and innovation,” as DiLella put it — from brick-and-mortar infrastructure to parades and parties.

According to its report, members hope to raise up to \$225 million in federal appropriations and at least \$250 million in corporate and private grants as sweeteners to attract funding for local projects and pay its own \$100 million operating budget. The commission is still working on its systems for collecting proposals.

An initial \$3 million was appropriated in this year’s federal budget. There were also donations from Comcast, Citizens Bank, Essential Utilities (the newly renamed Aqua America) and others; personal grants from DuPont boss Ed Breen, Phillies owner John Middleton, and others; and aid from Pepper Hamilton, Reed Smith, Deloitte, Edelman, and other professional firms. A new America 250 Foundation — Cohen is on the executive committee — will help raise more money.

The commission’s top staffer is another Philadelphian, Frank Giordano -- he built his father’s garage into a large truck-leasing business, and is, like DiLella, a former president of the Union League, a connection they worked at the White House visit: The pair reminded Pence that the Union League’s portrait of his favorite president, Calvin Coolidge, is on loan to Pence’s working office, across the street from the White House. So that’s where the vice president took the delegation to pose for pictures.

Pence “was very gracious, enthusiastic, took a lot of pictures,” said Toomey.

The vice president, a former Indiana governor, also offered to make some calls: “He said, ‘I know a lot of governors,’” and added some lessons learned when his state planned its own bicentennial, according to Cohen.

Pennsylvania and New Jersey are among a handful of states that have already created their own “America 250” commissions to seek federal funds and private funding, and draw up plans. Pennsylvania’s is headed by Delaware County supermarket owner and developer [Pat Burns](#).

The national commission’s initial [report](#), “Inspiring the American Spirit,” is a guideline to forming such groups, and contains few specific proposals, only examples: refurbishing the Smithsonian Institution’s historic “castle” on the Mall in Washington, or helping upgrade the First Bank of the United States building in Old City (a project already partly funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the National Park Service, plus private grants.)

The commission numbers 16 private citizens (most represent potential donors), eight members of Congress, and nine federal officials. Six of the 33 are from Pennsylvania. DiLella is chairman; besides Cohen and Toomey, members include U.S. Sen. Bob Casey (D., Pa.); Penn president Amy Gutmann; and Andrew Hohns, an infrastructure-finance investor who founded the nonprofit USA 250 group in the late 2000s to spark interest in the anniversary.

I asked DiLella and Cohen how the politicians and employers hope to ensure that masses of Americans feel represented by the decisions of the elite commission. Through the state and local commissions, they said.

“This has to be everyone’s celebration,” Cohen added. “The design we’ve laid out is meant to engage.”



City Changes Philadelphia's Nickname To 'City Of Sisterly Love' During 2020

By [CBS3 Staff](#) January 30, 2020 at 8:35 p.m.



[Click to view clip](#)

PHILADELPHIA (CBS) — Philadelphia is known around the world as the City of Brotherly Love. But that iconic nickname is changed. For the rest of 2020, Philadelphia will be known as the City of Sisterly Love.

Philly is known for a lot of things — its cheesesteaks, its Rocky statue and its history.

“A very nice high-speed place with a lot of things going on,” Sam Capalbo said.

And as long as anyone can remember, it’s been known as the City of Brotherly Love.

That was until Thursday morning when Philadelphia City Council unanimously voted to change the nickname to the City of Sisterly Love.

“Wow. Power to the sisters,” Maurice Moore said.

“Now that is a different scope I’d like to see,” Cornella Norton said.

“It’s for the year 2020, just in honor of the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment,” Councilmember Katherine Gilmore Richardson said.

That’s when women were given the right to vote, of course. This change in the city’s identity was sponsored by Gilmore Richardson.

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“This is not about excluding anyone,” she said. “It’s about uplifting women.”

It’s also about having those women spend more money in the City of Sisterly Love.

“We are working in partnership with Visit Philadelphia on that new campaign, the City of Sisterly Love to encourage women and women groups to travel together.” Independence Visitor Center Executive Vice President Jennifer Nagle said.

Nagle says you’ll see a big marketing campaign in markets within a day’s drive of the city.

The target — think more Adrian, less Rocky.

“Hey Adrian, she really ran the show,” Nagle said.



Gov. Tom Wolf has awarded \$1 billion in economic developments grants; some areas fare better than others

Updated Jan 31, 2020; Posted Jan 31, 2020



Since Gov. Tom Wolf took office in January 2015, he has approved about \$1 billion in grants to fund economic development projects across Pennsylvania.

Those grants - each worth \$1 million or more - have financed a wide array of projects, including hospital expansions, museums, community centers, the expansion of a brewery and construction of a grocery store.

To win grants in the state's highly competitive [Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program](#), projects must carry a promise of regional, cultural, civic, recreational, and historical improvement and be construction ready. The Wolf administration regards the program as critical to bolstering the state's economy and improving communities.

A PennLive analysis of the program shows certain areas of Pennsylvania seem to be benefitting more than others. Ultimately, the governor decides which projects get funding. However, state lawmakers play a big part by making the case for projects in their districts, some more aggressively than others.

Grant amounts: 2015 through 2019

Members of the governor's administration and the General Assembly say the grant program finances important projects and applications are subject to a rigorous review. But some argue it isn't the best way to spend public money.

Critics say the grants are often more about helping state lawmakers win another term or giving a hand to favored corporations or groups. Current and former Capitol staffers note that lawmakers who aren't on the best of terms with legislative leaders often don't get grants.

Nathan Benefield, vice president of the conservative-leaning Commonwealth Foundation, regards the program as more about political development than economic development. He said the project awards tends to accelerate when a legislative election is approaching.

"We ought to rename RACP the "Reelection Assistance Capital Program," he said. "The reality is borrowing

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money from the next generation to subsidize sports stadiums and corporate headquarters isn't the path to make Pennsylvania more prosperous."

A Commonwealth Foundation colleague Steve Bloom, a former GOP House member from Cumberland County, agreed.

"Pennsylvanians would be better off if the state wasn't involved in picking winners and losers for corporate handouts," Bloom said. "Most of these projects should be funded in the competitive capital markets or by private civic and charitable efforts."

Projects in the state's two most populous counties, Philadelphia and Allegheny, have been the biggest beneficiaries of grants over the past five years, PennLive found. Philadelphia received \$238.7 million and Allegheny pulled in \$149.3 million over that span.

Wolf's home county, York, ranked third in grant awards. Since Wolf took office, York County, Pennsylvania's eighth largest, has received \$58.7 million in grants.

Other counties have received substantially less. Since 2015, Dauphin County has received grants totaling more than \$24 million; Lancaster, \$20 million; Lebanon, \$4.5 million; Cumberland, \$4 million; and Perry, \$3 million.

Grants through this program supported the construction, expansion and upgrades to Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital in Hershey; the Bass Pro store in Swatara Township; the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center and the Carlisle YMCA in Carlisle, the cancer center at Good Samaritan Hospital in Lebanon; and the Strand Performing Arts Center in York, among others.

Since its inception in 1986, the RACP program has awarded grants totaling \$4 billion, with another \$1.1 billion approved but not yet spent by grant recipients.

Former Gov. Ed Rendell's administration issued the most grants (1,649), when the Legislature allowed the debt ceiling to swell to \$4 billion – or 10 times the \$400 million it started out with under former Gov. Dick Thornburgh. Thornburgh handed out the fewest grants (9), according to an [October analysis of the program by the state's Independent Fiscal Office](#). Wolf ranks behind Rendell as the second most generous governor when it comes to RACP grants.

State Sen. Kristin Phillips-Hill, R-York, said the grants are financing worthy projects in her district and elsewhere. Still, she acknowledges her belief that politics does play a role in which ones get funded.

"It's Harrisburg and there's politics in everything that we do," Phillips-Hill said.

Raising the ceiling

The state borrows money for the grant program. The state Legislature has set the borrowing limit at \$3.25 billion. But Wolf said Wednesday he wants to expand the program.

As the cornerstone of his effort to rid schools of lead and asbestos, Wolf intends to ask lawmakers to raise the state's RACP borrowing limit by \$1 billion. He also wants to modify the program to allow grants to finance lead and asbestos remediation projects at schools, which aren't eligible for a RACP grant.

By raising the debt ceiling, it won't crowd out funding for other projects and he argued this route will make money available sooner to rid schools of toxic materials. He hopes it will receive less resistance from state lawmakers than seeking a tax increase to raise that money.

Standing with Democratic lawmakers and school officials at a news conference, Wolf said he hopes the Republican-controlled Legislature will support this request.

"This is not a Republican or Democratic problem. This is a Pennsylvania problem," he said. "It should not take a lot of convincing."

How grants are awarded

To be considered for a RACP grant, a project must get on at least one capital budget project list within the last 10 years. This is essentially a wishlist of hundreds of projects hoping for state assistance.

Since 1999, the grant program has operated like a line of credit. As outstanding debt is retired, that amount is freed up to fund new projects.

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To be considered, projects must carry a price tag of at least \$1 million. Half of the money must come from non-state sources and is paid out on a reimbursement basis. A qualifying project must increase - or at least maintain - current employment levels, tax revenue or produce other economic benefits.

Dennis Davin, the state's Community and Economic Development Secretary, said Wolf emphasizes that he wants to give grants to projects that are ready to go.

"That's another big part of what we look at," Davin said. "To try to ensure the best we can, that we believe projects are construction ready."

Beyond that, it helps to get the backing of legislators who know what projects will have the most impact.

"A lot of what we see from them are really good projects," Davin said. "So when they say something we take that to heart."

Legislators funnel their grant requests through their caucus leaders, who are known to cut a deal with the governor in budget negotiations about how much money, if any, is available for projects in their members' districts.

How leaders decide which projects to recommend to Wolf varies from caucus to caucus. Legislative staffers said the potential economic impact of a project weighs into shaping the list that goes to the governor.

Sam Smith, a former GOP representative from Jefferson County who served as House speaker and majority leader, described the standard he used when sifting through requests from lawmakers and deciding what should go to the governor. He said he considered how a project would play with his own constituents if it were in his district.

"When the state says they're funding this and I'm taking credit for it, I want that to be something that the majority of people say, 'That's a good use of my money.' That was always in the back of my head," Smith said. But Smith said other caucus leaders used a different standard.

While he said he tried to be fair about spreading money around, "I know leaders who have been way less than fair," Smith said. "Some leaders may not have really provided access to all of their members to even make a case for a grant."

Some legislative districts have seen no RACP money for projects. That, too, can be for various reasons. Some members are opposed to debt and don't want to seem hypocritical in asking the state for money that would be borrowed.

House Majority Leader Bryan Cutler, R-Lancaster County, said he doesn't see it as his job to prioritize projects but rather to serve "as a conduit for members to the administration, who ultimately make the final decision."

Mike Straub, a spokesman for the House Republican caucus, explained members prioritize their requests and House GOP leaders provide the list to the Wolf administration.

"If the administration reaches out for additional input, we are happy to provide it, or coordinate with the members to provide additional information," Straub said. "But again, ultimately, the administration has final say on what the priorities are for RCAP – regardless of what feedback we provide them regarding the member's requests."

Lawmakers who aggravate caucus leaders can find projects in their districts get overlooked, current and former lawmakers and legislative staffers said. In addition, lawmakers and staffers said legislators representing politically vulnerable districts often get their projects funded.

Senate Majority Leader Jake Corman, R-Centre County, said there's no particular standard he uses in reviewing grant requests.

"We just take a look at them and pass them on to the governor," Corman said. "Ultimately, it's his decision. We probably submit far more than what gets funded every year but I don't know there's a science behind it." "We just try to make sure everyone in our caucus is able to help their districts," Corman added.

Asked if Wolf's treatment of requests for grants differs from past governors, Corman said, "We've always had a good relationship with all the governors on this thing. So it's about the same. It's easier to get Democratic governors to spend debt money than it is Republican ones."

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Lawmakers can be joined by paid lobbyists and community groups in pitching projects to the governor. The governor relies on input he receives from them as well as his budget office and the Department of Community and Economic Development about a project's merits.

Again, it's the governor who makes the final decision. But PennLive reviewed a sampling of legislative news releases following the most recent distributions of grants and many fail to mention Wolf's name.

Leading the pack

When lawmakers are running for re-election, they often tout their ability to bring home grants to their districts.

When it comes to RACP dollars, no one can trumpet this achievement louder than Sen. Larry Farnese, a Philadelphia Democrat.

Since Wolf took office, Farnese's Center City and South Philadelphia district has reaped more than \$118 million – or nearly \$500 per resident.

He secured \$10 million for the Fashion District, a retail, dining and entertainment venue; \$4 million for updates to the Merriam Theater at the Kimmel Center; \$2 million to modernize Independence Visitor Center; and \$1.5 million for renovations to Yards Brewery and Taproom, among many others.



The cost of construction can be higher in Philadelphia than other parts of the state but Farnese is more apt to credit his staff for his district's success in getting grants. He said they have more than a combined century of experience in assisting organizations in applying for grants.

He said the cultural, educational, medical, historical and other institutions in his district are important economic drivers for the city and the commonwealth as a whole.

"The governor recognizes that the arts and cultural institutions that are contained in this district and the development of those institutions turn into jobs," Farnese said. "They are high-paying, family-sustaining jobs that come back and produce tax revenue and they create and sustain a tax base that enables the city and quite frankly, the commonwealth to move forward."

York County groups have succeeded in capturing a good share of the grants. Phillips-Hill, the York County senator, admits it helps to have the governor come from her county. But others deserve credit, too, she said. The county's mostly but not entirely Republican legislative delegation, the York County Economic Alliance and community leaders work together as one voice to promote economic development projects.

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"We may have our differences but when it comes to York, we all pull together and work together for the greater good of the county," Phillips-Hill said.

But Phillips-Hill will only support a project that she sees as a good investment of taxpayer dollars.

"It needs to be a project that is going to produce the kind of economic development, job growth and improvements in the communities that they want and deserve for those tax dollars," she said.

For example, she said they secured a \$1 million grant for the Jewish Community Centre of York this year to expand childcare services to the southern part of the county. She said the center's childcare facility is full and has a waiting list.

"There's a great need for it," Phillips-Hill said. "It's hard for parents to go back to work if they don't have anyone to care for their children."

Rep. Jared Solomon, D-Philadelphia, is among the minority of lawmakers who appear to find themselves in a drought since Wolf took office.

But that is not actually the case, he said. He pushed for a grant for a project just outside his district (in Rep. Kevin Boyle's district) that will benefit residents in both House districts. He said a mental health provider is going to renovate and expand an existing structure to offer health care services in Northeast Philadelphia, so people can avoid driving into Center City. Additionally, they are going to devote a floor in the building for community use.

Rep. Greg Rothman is among those whose district hasn't seen a dime of RACP money during the Wolf years. The Cumberland County Republican said he would advocate for funding for a project if asked but doesn't believe he ever was.

"We have private developers all over my district who don't ask and don't get any money from state government," Rothman said. "They don't want it. They want to do their own projects and not have the strings attached."

Rep. Cris Dush, a Jefferson County Republican, has had some dollars flow into his district for projects. But Dush said it wasn't because he did anything more than offer a letter of support. He said he refers constituents to their senator, Senate President Pro Tempore Joe Scarnati.

"The only way it gets done in my district is if Joe is going to do it," Dush said. "He manages to get it so I stay out of it. When he's trying to do stuff like that, I stay out of it and let him do his magic."

'Skin in the game'

Given the subjective nature behind the decision-making of grants, some may equate this to funding in other administrations dubbed "walking around money," or "WAMs."

Those familiar with the program say that analogy would be wrong. The application process in the RCAP program is arduous and audited.

Smith, the former House speaker, said, "You almost got to have a PhD in public administration to try to figure out how to do that stuff quite candidly."

There is far less flexibility and more transparency than lawmakers had with WAMs. Another key difference is the grant money is not handed out upfront. Instead, it works on an on-going reimbursement basis.

"The initial payment request must include construction costs because the commonwealth will not reimburse any costs until actual construction takes place," according to the state Independent Fiscal Office's description of the program. "All requests require supporting documentation in order to gauge the progress and validity of costs."

That is the reason Smith said he loves this grant program.

"It requires skin in the game from the people wanting the money. They got to spend it before they get the money and I think in that regard it's one of the best," Smith said.

The Independent Fiscal Office's analysis of the program found 57 percent of grants were issued for economic development projects such as business park redevelopments, private business assistance, new business ventures, sport facility expansions or targeted industry grants to union halls and similar groups.

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Fourteen percent of the grants were for school, college or library facility projects. Twelve percent went toward public works and infrastructure projects such as sewer upgrades or recreation trails. Eleven percent was directed to hospitals, shelters, police and fire stations. And the remaining 7 percent went to projects at museums, zoos, art galleries and other historic and cultural projects.

This analysis was prompted by a legislative request to determine the impact of lowering the debt limit for this program. It noted to avoid exceeding the cap, governors could reduce the number of grant awards they issue, lower grant award amounts, or draw out the payment cycle for reimbursing grant recipients.

Senate Democratic Leader Jay Costa of Allegheny County noted this administration has had less money to work with because of the constraints placed by Republicans on the amount of funding that is available. But he gave Wolf credit for spreading the money around by distributing smaller grants than previous administrations.

The highest grant awarded by Wolf has been \$10 million. Meanwhile, former Gov. Ed Rendell awarded a \$25 million grant to the Penn State Dickinson School of Law to keep the Carlisle campus open.

Former Gov. Tom Ridge, a Republican, handed out \$85 million grants to support the construction of new sports stadiums in Philadelphia and \$75 million for stadiums in Pittsburgh.

Still, Costa said, “The grants are extremely competitive with hundreds of millions of dollars more in requests being made than available resources. DCED and the governor’s office have done a great job vetting applicants, learning the reality on the ground on where investments can be most successful, and using limited resources to spur economic growth.”

According to administration officials, they estimate that less than 10% of projects that receive grants fail to progress to the point where they are eligible for reimbursement of costs incurred.

Meanwhile, proposals are awaiting action to lower the borrowing limit – taking it in the opposite direction of what Wolf is proposing – and make other changes to ensure the state is getting the bang for its buck.

Rep. Andrew Lewis, R-Dauphin County, has introduced a bill that would lower the program’s debt ceiling to \$2.65 billion in 2026. Currently, state law has it dropping to \$3.15 billion in 2021.

“I just want to get this down to a responsible level,” he said.

Along with others, Lewis said he thinks some work needs to be done to ensure taxpayers are getting the best return on their investment from this grant program but “that’s a battle for another day.”

Solomon is proposing legislation that would require recipients of major state grants, including the RACP grants, to enter into community benefit agreements before receiving any money. The pacts would promise employment and training opportunities for local residents, not jobs for people outside the area.

“In the past 30 years we’ve awarded over \$5 billion in RACP grants alone. Just think of what the impact could have been had we required even modest community benefits from each of these projects for the families of our state,” Solomon’s memo to lawmakers states.

Phillips-Hill is interested in pursuing legislation to ensure taxpayers are getting a good return on their money.

“You don’t want a situation where you are just throwing money out,” she said. “It has to be really a good investment on the part of the people who pay our bills and if it’s not, it should not be happening.”

Database search compiled by PennLive data journalist Megan Lavey-Heaton.

JEWISH EXPONENT

— WHAT IT MEANS TO BE JEWISH IN PHILADELPHIA —

Population Study Reveals Demographics of Greater Philadelphia



Jewish Community By [Eric Schucht](#) - February 12, 2020

From left: Philadelphia City Councilman Allan Domb, author Jennifer Weiner, Jewish Federation Board Chair Susanna Lachs Adler, Jewish Federation Chief Operating Officer Steve Rosenberg, Sara Laver, Adam Laver and state Rep. Jared Solomon at the Community Portrait Press Conference at the Independence Visitor Center. (Courtesy of Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia)

The Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia has released the executive summary of a study it commissioned on the socioeconomics, public health and demographics of Jews living in Greater Philadelphia.

The key findings were formally announced at a press conference at the Independence Visitor Center this week. The data was presented by Jewish Federation staff and lay leaders, and local representatives from the Jewish community, including [author Jennifer Weiner](#) and City Councilman Allan Domb, spoke about their connections to Philadelphia's Jewish communities.

According to "[Community Portrait: A 2019 Jewish Population Study](#)," there are an estimated 351,200 Jews living in Philadelphia, Bucks, Delaware, Montgomery and Chester counties. That marks a 66% increase from a previous study done in 2009 — sort of. Overall population growth, along with a slightly broader definition of being Jewish, contributed to the sharp increase.

At the press conference, Jewish Federation Board Chair Susanna Lachs Adler spoke of how the study's results will affect local nonprofits, including the Jewish Federation itself.

"We now have the concrete data that will help us retool, rethink the way we allocate resources, the way we raise money, the way we grant and the way we structure ourselves for the 2020 decade ahead of us," she said. "We will use the feedback to help continue to build an inclusive model Jewish community, one that embraces the growing number of interfaith families, and one that embraces the growing number of Jews of color."

[Westat](#), a Maryland-based research firm, was hired by the Jewish Federation to conduct the study. The firm mailed survey questionnaires to 79,496 addresses — some gleaned from Jewish organizations, others picked at random. It

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is the first study of a Jewish community in the United States to use address-based sampling, a difference from the 2009 community study, which relied on landlines.

Using landlines for a survey can be problematic, as many households have transitioned to cellphones or have phone numbers from other area codes. Address-based sampling reaches more people, thus leading to a more accurate — and different — results.

About 58% of the population increase is believed to be attributable to the change in survey method, while about 3% derives from population growth and another 4% comes from the study's broader definition of Judaism.

The study defined a Jewish household as one containing at least one adult who identifies as Jewish by religion, ethnicity, culture or heritage. Unlike in 2009, it also asked if the household contained any adults who had a Jewish parent or who participated in Jewish activities as a child but do not identify with any particular religion today. Researchers said that definition is more inclusive and allows for a more accurate reflection of the community.

In all, 2,119 Jewish households responded to the survey in English or Russian. In addition, 17 in-person focus groups were conducted between Jan. 28 and July 16, 2019. The focus groups allowed researchers to compile qualitative data to supplement the other material and to delve deeper into subset communities, like Israelis, Russian speakers, older adults, college students and more.

The study results show that the Philadelphia area is home to the United States' third-largest Jewish community, after New York City and Los Angeles. However, cities including New York and Chicago have yet to release their own population studies, which will also use the new research method, so that ranking may change.

In the five-county area, Jews account for 9% of the entire population.

As for denominations, 26% of Jewish households that responded are Reform, 26% are Conservative, 8% are Orthodox, 6% are Reconstructionist, 1% are Renewal and 6% described themselves as "other." Some respondents identified as multiple denominations and 43% didn't identify with any denomination — a threefold increase from 2009.

About 10% of the Jews in Greater Philadelphia are Jews of color, meaning they identify as Hispanic, black, Asian or other nonwhite races.

In terms of sexual orientation, 4% identified as lesbian or gay, with another 5% identifying as bisexual or other.

The study was organized by a lay leadership committee co-chaired by Adam and Sara Laver. At the press conference, Adam Laver spoke about the importance of carrying out such studies.

"By gaining an understanding of the nuances of our communities, we will be able to tackle issues such as food insecurity, emergency services and educational needs in a much more informed manner," Laver said. "Quite simply, the information in this study can save lives."

About 6% of Jewish households are at or below 100% of the federal poverty level, with that number jumping to 20% for Jews of color and 22% for those from Russia or the former Soviet Union.

The study indicated that 5% of Jewish seniors and 10% of Jewish families with children live in poverty. Also, 11% of the region's Jews ages 18-64 do not have health insurance. About 47% of Jewish marriages are interfaith, an increase from 28% in 2009, which was believed to be an underestimate.

Other findings include:

24% of Jewish households have synagogue membership, down from 35% in 2009.

74% of Jewish adults reported having heard anti-Semitic or anti-Israel comments in Greater Philadelphia
40% are in favor of a two-state solution.

At the press conference, Councilman Domb said he looked forward to putting the study's findings into action to improve the local Jewish community, a thought echoed by state Rep. Jared Solomon.

"What I would say is the importance of the work is that what Allan and I need is collective data, otherwise we're flying blind," Solomon said. "So this is just critical work in getting the data set that will best inform the work that we do in communities every day."

The Jewish Federation plans to host a series of community meetings to further disseminate the study's findings.

Town Halls are scheduled for March 12 at 8:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. at the Jewish Community Services Building at 2100 Arch St. Other meetings are scheduled for community centers and synagogues throughout the region. More information can be found at JewishPhilly.org/populationstudy.



PHILADELPHIA

5 fun things to do in Philly this week

Looking for fun and unique things to do in Philly this week? Metro has you covered.

By Madeline Presland Published: February 18, 2020



Try signature Normandy dishes at a neighborhood bistro, sip for great causes and more.

Drink Like a Fish(towner)

Meet friends in Fishtown for an evening of natural wine tasting, snacks and building community. Fishtown Social hosts its first Drink Like a Fish(towner) fundraiser that gives natural wine lovers a chance to mingle as well as raising money for the local PSPCA. You'll have the chance to choose from 100 different wines to taste from owner Vanessa Wong's Instagram-worthy bottle shop and bar. Light bites are also included in the ticket price. Purchase tickets for \$65 apiece or \$100 per pair. *Feb. 18, 5 p.m.-9 p.m., Fishtown Social, 1525 Frankford Ave., \$65, fishtownsocal.com*

Old City LOOP

If you're in wedding planning mode, this is the event for you. Brûlée Catering hosts a fun bus tour to visit three of their historic venues and sample dishes that could be on the menu at your wedding. Start with a cocktail hour and hors d'oeuvres at the National Constitution Center, sample their most popular dishes at a Small Plates station at Independence Visitor's Center and finish with dessert (including a flaming donut station) at the Museum of the American Revolution. All guests will be entered in a raffle to win \$5,000 toward your wedding. This event is free, but advance registration is required. *Feb. 19, 5:30 p.m.-9 p.m., National Constitution Center, 525 Arch St., Free (Registration Required), brulee-catering.com*

Normandy Dinner at Bistrot La Minette

Don't miss your limited chance to try renowned dishes from Normandy by the way of Queen Village. The neighborhood's own Bistrot La Minette will serve a special menu highlighting the region's most famous flavors and dishes, including seafood, cheese and cider. The four course menu begins with a spicy fish soup and has a Normandy-style poached chicken breast for the main course. And of course, it wouldn't be a French meal without a

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cheese plate and a beautiful pastry for dessert. The meal costs \$35 per person and there is an optional \$15 beverage pairing that includes ciders, a signature cocktail and aperitif. *Feb. 19-20, Multiple times, Bistrot La Minette, 623 S 6th St., \$35, bistrotlaminette.com*

David Young at Free Library

Old City is typically thought of as the most historic section of the city, but did you know that Germantown is considered to be America's most historic neighborhood? Author and neighborhood resident David Young will speak about his 2019 book "Battles of Germantown" and expand on what he refers to as "effective public history", an effective tool for uncovering the real history of a neighborhood. Registration is encouraged for this free event. *Feb. 20, 6:30 p.m., Parkway Central Library, 1901 Vine St., Free, freelibrary.org*

Glamsino Royale

Get ready to attend the most glamorous happy hour for a good cause. The Kimpton Hotel Palomar in Center City hosts a night of cocktails, classic casino games and entertainment to raise money for Action Wellness, the Philly nonprofit that provides a healthcare and a range of other services for people with HIV. Don't miss the chance to see DJ Sharyn Stone, a popular Gayborhood DJ who works on a variety of HIV/AIDS causes. If you're feeling lucky, you can enter a variety of raffles to win prizes like hotel stays at Kimpton properties throughout the U.S. *Feb. 20, 6 p.m.-9 p.m., Kimpton Hotel Palomar, 117 S 17th St., \$50, actionwellness.org*