



# Pennsylvania Conference of Teamsters

## Strength in Numbers 95,000

# LEGISLATIVE ACTION ALERT

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## New Pennsylvania laws to know in 2024

### Dog law

On Monday, Oct. 23, Governor Josh Shapiro signed Senate Bill 746 into law updating and changing Pennsylvania's dog law. The new law requires dogs to be licensed at the time they are bought or adopted, or by the time they are three months old, whichever comes first. The law also requires people who sell or offer dogs for adoption to provide a copy of the dog license application. Additionally, the following updates were made to Pennsylvania dog laws:

- Dogs now need to be licensed at three months of age, or at the point of transfer to a new owner
- Increases annual and lifetime dog license fees and kennel fees, and authorizes the Department of Agriculture to increase license fees, as specified
- Requires pet shops and kennels offering dogs for sale or adoption to display specified information about the dog
- Adds additional penalties and fines, as delineated, and increases violation fees
- Authorizes the department to revoke a kennel's license or refuse a kennel license application for individuals convicted of animal cruelty
- Requires dangerous dogs to not only be muzzled and leashed, but also under physical restraint.

## Porch Pirating

On December 14, Gov. Josh Shapiro signed Senate Bill 527 making the act of porch pirating a felony. The new law, Act 41 of 2023, specifically targets those who steal mail, including packages, bags, or letters. Under the new law, theft of mail can constitute a summary offense, misdemeanor, or felony depending on the repeated offenses and the value of the merchandise that is stolen.

## Probation Reform

On December 14, Gov. Shapiro signed Senate Bill 838, reforming Pennsylvania's probation system. Advocates of the bill said the reform would "eliminate excessive incarceration, give individuals a more reliable second chance to get their lives right, and offer taxpayers a break from ever-rising state correctional costs." The new law requires mandatory probation review conferences after two years or 50% of the probation sentence, whichever is sooner; or after four years, or 50% of the probation sentence for felonies, whichever is sooner. The reformed law also instructs judges to have a "presumption against confinement" for minor technical violations, including repeated violations. The law instructs judges to only send people back to jail for a "serious violation."

## Racially Restrictive Deeds

On Dec. 14, Gov. Shapiro signed HB 1289 to make it easier for homeowners to repudiate racially discriminatory deed covenants. While these deeds are no longer enforceable, racist and discriminatory language still exists in many deeds. The new law gives homeowners the ability to submit a form rejecting and disavowing racist language, at little to no cost.

## Protections for Incarcerated Women

On December 14, Gov. Shapiro signed HB 900, also known as the Dignity for Incarcerated Women Act, as Act 47 of 2023. According to the act's sponsors, limits the use of solitary confinement, restraints, and cavity searches on pregnant or postpartum incarcerated women. The new law also provides for care, postpartum recovery, feminine hygiene products, and family visitation.

## Medical Marijuana

On December 14, Gov. Shapiro signed Senate Bill 771, as Act 63 of 2023 making it easier for growers to sell Medical Marijuana in the state. According to the act's sponsors, prior to the bill becoming law, the state's Department of Health allowed some growers to sell directly to patients, while others could not. The new addresses this problem by expanding the state's permitting program to allow all growers to sell their products in the same way.

## Police Fitness

On December 14, Gov. Shapiro signed HB 863 to lower the fitness requirements for prospective police officers. According to the sponsors of the bill, before the bill became law, prospective police officers needed to score in the 30th percentile on fitness tests including long-and short-distance runs, bench presses, and sit-ups. Under the new requirements, prospective police officers now only need to score in at least the 15th percentile.

## Retail Theft Crackdown

A new law establishes a Deputy Attorney General within the Attorney General's Office whose job it will be to oversee a team of prosecutors who will be geographically placed throughout Pennsylvania to prosecute retail theft.

## Police Applicant Fingerprint Checks

This new law gives the Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission (MPOETC) the statutory authority needed to conduct fingerprint-based criminal history checks for municipal police officer applicants.

## Automatic Voter Registration

If you renew your driver's license or state I.D. in Pennsylvania, you can be automatically registered to vote, though you have the choice to opt out of being registered. People who are not eligible to vote will not be presented with the voter registration screen during any of the DMV processes.

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