

COSTARS Connection

The Commonwealth's Cooperative Purchasing Program

Passport to Business Opportunity and Procurement Savings



Tom Wolf, Governor
Curt Topper, Secretary

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COSTARS Voting Systems Contract On The Way

By Bruce Beardsley, COSTARS Marketing Manager

The bid solicitation for the new COSTARS-39 Voting Systems and/or ePollbooks contract was reposted on Dec. 17, 2018 with bids due no later than Jan. 31, 2019. The Department of General Services (DGS) will not accept additional bids in response to the solicitation until such time as a Solicitation Addendum may be issued by DGS re-opening the bidding to new bidders.

For all bids received on or before Jan. 31, 2019, DGS has begun its evaluation of each bid in the order that the complete bid package was received. Contracts will be executed for the bidders deemed responsive and responsible immediately following each bid's evaluation. Like all COSTARS contracts, this will be a multiple award contract. Awarded voting systems and all related equipment must be certified or in the process of achieving certification by Pennsylvania's Department of State.

In February, Governor Tom Wolf ordered counties that planned to replace their electronic voting systems to buy machines that leave a verifiable paper trail as a safeguard against hacking. Pennsylvania was among the 21 states that were targeted by hackers before the 2016 presidential election. Prospective suppliers have assured the state that they have the capacity to produce, deliver, and train county personnel prior to the 2020 elections. The contract requires delivery within 90 days of the supplier's receipt of a purchase order unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the buyer. The supplier must agree to deliver items to multiple sites if specified in the purchase order. A 5-year service and maintenance plan, consumables (toner, ink, paper, etc.) sufficient for one election cycle, training, and assembly and installation are among the items that must be included in the price.

Some federal money has already been appropriated to assist counties and Governor Wolf is committed to requesting the Pennsylvania legislature to allocate additional funding. The COSTARS contract requests that suppliers provide leasing, financing, and installment purchase arrangements.

Some counties have already begun the purchasing process by going through their formal bidding procedures. Use of the COSTARS contract will allow counties to negotiate with all the awarded suppliers to choose best value, without the additional advertising, legal, time, and clerical expense of the formal bidding process. Some counties are considering joining with other counties to negotiate a better joint purchasing arrangement, a process allowable under the COSTARS program.



COSTARS in the News

The COSTARS Team is always looking for stories in the news about COSTARS members who are saving money by purchasing through the COSTARS Program. Below are a few of our latest finds.

-  In a November *TribLive* article, the town of McCandless was planning to purchase two 2018 Ford Police Interceptor SUVs from COSTARS Supplier, Whitmoyer Ford in Lancaster County. Purchasing them before the end of 2018, would result in an estimated savings of \$11,000.
-  According to the *Courier Express*, the DuBois School Board approved the purchase of two ovens for the DuBois Area High School through the COSTARS program, the commonwealth's cooperative purchasing program.
-  In a recent *Times Leader* article, the Luzerne County Convention Center Authority approved the purchase of a pickup truck with plow attachment from Ken Pollock Nissan, a COSTARS supplier. Quotes were obtained for Ford, Chevrolet and Dodge trucks with plows and the Nissan offered significant savings.
-  Per a January *Meadville Tribune* article, the Crawford Central School Board approved the purchase of a 2019 Ford Transit eight-passenger vehicle from Hondru Ford of Manheim through COSTARS, the state's cooperative purchasing program. It will be used to transport students.
-  In January, the *Courier Express* reported that the Somerset Borough Council voted to purchase two vehicles through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Cooperative Purchasing Program, or COSTARS. The council purchased an International dump truck and a Caterpillar mini excavator.

Tell us about your successful money-saving purchases and we will include them in our next edition of the *COSTARS Connection* newsletter!

Commonwealth Auto Auction Save on Pre-Owned Fleet Vehicles

Every other month, the commonwealth holds an auction through Manheim Auto Auctions giving the public a chance to buy commonwealth-owned vehicles that are being taken out of fleet, including: fleet vehicles; police cars; seized vehicles; and some PennDOT vehicles. The auctions are held at Manheim's Grantville location (488 Firehouse Road, Grantville PA 17028), starting at 10 a.m.



The public may register and view auction vehicles before the day of the sale (preferred). Registration and viewing can be done the Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday prior to each sale from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Upcoming Auction Dates:

Feb. 26, 2019	Aug. 6, 2019
April 23, 2019	Oct. 22, 2019
June 11, 2019	Dec. 10, 2019

For additional information, please visit: <https://www.dgs.pa.gov/State%20Government/Vehicle-Management/Pages/Auto-Auction-Information.aspx>.



Welcome Aboard to COSTARS New Commodity Specialist!

By Kim Bullivant,
COSTARS Marketing Manager

The COSTARS team would like to welcome our newest member, Commodity Specialist Dave Gibson. Dave comes to us from the PA

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs where he held the role of Manager of Procurement and Contracting, servicing the procurement needs for the Pennsylvania National Guard and Pennsylvania's six homes for veterans. Prior to joining the commonwealth, Dave served as an aviation electrician's mate in the U.S. Navy, maintaining and repairing anti-submarine helicopters. Additionally, he worked as an electrical aircraft mechanic for Boeing Defense, Space and Security, and a project engineer and program manager for Liberty Electronics, Inc.

Dave's background in electrical engineering proved to be an asset, prompting him to found Yankee Lighting Company, LLC, a small manufacturing and distribution business for a line of energy efficient lighting products in 2002, and Del-Lite Systems, LLC, where he developed longer lasting, more efficient LED headlights and tail lights for Amish buggies in 2004.

When he is not performing his duties as a COSTARS commodity specialist or inventing new products, Dave enjoys spending his free time designing miniature railroad trains and volunteering at the Manheim Historical Society to help maintain and design miniature trains and scenery for a miniature railroad display modeled after the Manheim Railroad Station. Another one of Dave's many passions is collecting, refurbishing and riding antique bikes. One of his favorites was a working bike that had a long and lustrous career at Hollywood's Universal Studios from 1939-2001!

As a COSTARS commodity specialist, Dave will be managing the COSTARS-8 Maintenance Repair & Operation Equipment & Supplies (MRO), COSTARS-28 Energy Conservation Management Supplies, COSTARS-30 Energy Consulting Services and COSTARS -33 Street Lighting, Parking Meters, and Street Furniture (AKA Streetscape) contracts. Gibson mentioned he is looking forward to working with COSTARS members including local governments, firehouses and other non-profit organizations. "I'm particularly interested in researching and exploring the possibility of expanding the product offering under the COSTARS-33 contract," Dave said.

If you would like to learn more about the contracts Dave manages, you may contact him at 717-346-2680 or davgibson@pa.gov.

Contract News



Equipment and Supplies.

The following category has been added to the COSTARS-12 contract - **Medical Examiner Equipment and Supplies** which includes: Cadaver Bags and Sheets; Table Accessories - Saws, Scissors, Needles, Scalpels, Forceps, Blades, Trays, Chisels, Hammers, Probes, etc.; Disposable Shoe Covers; Clothing; Face Masks; Face Shields; Hair Nets; Safety Glasses; etc.; Scales; Hazardous Protective Kits and Biohazard Bags; Walk-In Cooler/ Refrigerator; Stretchers/Carriers.

COSTARS-12 contract description has been changed to **Emergency Responder**

Members can search suppliers currently on this contract by visiting: <https://www.dgs.pa.gov/Local%20Government%20and%20Schools/COSTARS/Member-Information/Pages/default.aspx> > yellow Members button > Search Contracts link. To become a supplier on this contract, visit: <http://www.dgs.pa.gov/Businesses/Materials%20and%20Services%20Procurement/Supplier-Information/Pages/CostarsBiddingOpportunities.aspx>



Special Introductory Offer from WEX and Sunoco



The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has contracted with WEX to offer a program designed to help COSTARS members control fueling and vehicle costs. **The Commonwealth Fleet Card Program, statewide contract #4400009775** simplifies fueling with purchase controls, spending limits, powerful online management tools and **acceptance at 95% of fueling stations.**

If you are a COSTARS member that manages a fleet of vehicles, your organization is eligible to apply. In addition to expense reduction, the Commonwealth Fleet Card Program provides:

- **Better savings.**
Earn fuel volume rebates and reduce your overall administrative costs.
- **Better security.**
Use custom spending controls and Driver IDs at the pump to help prevent fraud and misuse.
- **Better accounting.**
Track spending online and download detailed reports. Tax exemption and reporting are available for qualified fleets (state exemptions at participating merchants only).
- **And a better experience.**
Use at any major fuel station in your state — and throughout the U.S. Plus, all cardholders enjoy U.S.-based customer service, 24/7.

Participation is FREE!
No enrollment, setup or card fees.
For more information, call 1-866-527-8870.
Or visit <https://www.wexinc.com/solutions/fleet-cards/select/state-pennsylvania-fleet-card/>

As a special introductory offer, your organization can save 15¢ per gallon* on fuel purchased at Sunoco stations for the first three months of the account.

New accounts only. Must apply by 3/29/2019.

**Limited time offer for new accounts only; subject to credit approval. Must apply by the published "Apply By" date. Fuel rebate applies to gallons purchased at Sunoco-branded locations for the first 6 months with the State of PA Sunoco Universal Fleet Card. Standard fuel rebates will be applicable thereafter. Ask sales representative for complete details. Rebates are subject to change at any time without prior notice.*

Members Signing Up for COSTARS Credit Card Program



By Bruce Beardsley, COSTARS Marketing Manager

COSTARS members of all types and sizes are signing up for the new Credit Card Services contract being offered to COSTARS members by U.S. Bank. Large school districts, small boroughs, public authorities, county conservation districts, and volunteer fire companies have enrolled after recognizing the attractive benefits of the program including no-minimum spending requirement rebates, online spending data, and widespread acceptance.

Sandi Vazquez, Secretary/Treasurer for Biglerville Borough, in Adams County, has been looking for a long time for a credit card for the borough that didn't require her to provide her personal credit history to get a card, since her name would be on it. In addition to not requiring that information, Vazquez felt secure with U.S. Bank, a well-known, well-respected large financial institution. She was also impressed by the bank representative's helpfulness in explaining the program and enrolling the borough. The borough has already used the card several times without problems. "It's been real good for us," Vazquez said and "I'm spreading the word among other borough secretaries."

The Bowmanstown Volunteer Fire Company has also joined the program, having learned about it through a mailing. Fire Chief Michael Spiriana was attracted to the program primarily because it was sponsored by COSTARS. Being a small entity, he was particularly attracted to the rebate program. He thinks it's a "great program" and has been recommending it to his fellow fire chiefs.

According to Ryan Calloway, Vice President with U.S. Bank Corporate Payment Systems, while the credit cards can be used for small dollar purchases eliminating the hassle and cost of purchase orders, many public sector clients have begun to expand their programs into the Accounts Payables department. This expansion allows them to reduce paper checks and increase their overall rebate. Ryan states, "COSTARS members will be surprised by how many vendors not only accept the card, but can do so for very large transactions. U.S. Bank can provide an AP analysis of potential savings by simply getting a vendor list from clients and recommend changes that can benefit the entire procure-to-pay process. In addition, the COSTARS program uses total aggregate credit card purchases from all participating COSTARS members as a factor in determining rebates, meaning the more overall spend by all COSTARS members, the higher the rebate for everyone."

Laura Berzonski, Business Manager for the Hampton Shaler Water Authority, is doing exactly as Calloway has suggested. She had been looking to replace the authority's former credit card with one that offered additional features. U.S. Bank offered the "nicest features" among other credit cards she investigated, particularly the generous rebate. She has checked with the authority's vendors, and all were agreeable to accepting the credit card as payment, which makes the authority's accounts payable process much more efficient. For more information on how this card can benefit your organization, call Ryan Calloway at 704-243-3278 or email him at ryan.calloway@usbank.com.

Bidding Thresholds Increase (Effective Jan. 1, 2019)

The PA Department of Labor & Industry published the authority and municipal bidding thresholds for 2019. Under Act 90 of 2011, bidding thresholds provide for an annual inflation adjustment based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for All Urban Consumers.

The percentage change for the 12-month period ending Sept. 30, 2018, is 2.3%. Beginning on Jan. 1, 2019, the bidding thresholds for municipal authorities will be as follows:

- ◆ Purchases and contracts below \$11,100 require no formal bidding or written/telephonic quotations;
- ◆ Purchases and contracts between \$11,100 and \$20,600 require three written/telephonic quotations;
- ◆ Purchases and contracts over \$20,600 require formal bidding;

[Click here](#) to view the Pennsylvania Bulletin announcement (Nov. 24, 2018 edition) and for the specifics of the CPI adjustment.





Comparing Cooperative Purchasing Programs

Single Source vs. Multiple Award

By Bruce Beardsley, COSTARS Marketing Manager

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Procurement Code permits local public procurement units (LPPUs) to participate in competitively bid cooperative purchasing agreements conducted by or on behalf of one or more than one **public procurement unit**. A LPPU is defined as:

A political subdivision, public authority, tax-exempt, nonprofit educational or public health institution or organization, nonprofit fire company, nonprofit rescue company, nonprofit ambulance company and, to the extent provided by law, any other entity which expends public funds for the procurement of supplies, services and construction.

In 2004, Pennsylvania law authorized The Department of General Services to enter into cooperative purchasing contracts for the exclusive use of LPPUs and state-affiliated entities and COSTARS was born. Since then, COSTARS has become THE premiere cooperative purchasing program in Pennsylvania, with more than 8,900 members, 2,000 suppliers, and \$1.2 billion in spend. However, it is not the only game in town. While the establishment and use of COSTARS is specifically authorized by Pennsylvania's legislature, there are several other local and national non-profit cooperative purchasing programs (sometimes called co-ops or GPOs – group purchasing organizations) also available to Pennsylvania's LPPUs.

Since most of these programs solicit and award competitive bids through a “sponsoring” public entity (in the case of COSTARS, that entity is the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania), LPPUs in Pennsylvania are not required to execute a second formal bidding process, which saves time and money. (LPPUs should always consult with their solicitor when contemplating the use of a cooperative purchasing program to ensure that they comply with all relevant Pennsylvania statutes.)

There may be other price savings as well, depending on the details of the program, the criteria in which awards are made, the degree negotiation is encouraged and conducted, and the number of suppliers that offer bids. While many of these programs have similarities, there are significant differences in what products and services are offered, the number and nature of authorized vendors, vendor fees and selection process, pricing, and other factors.

One of the most important differences among co-ops is the number of awarded suppliers. Most GPOs award their contracts to only one or very few national vendors or manufacturers. Manufacturers are usually able to authorize local resellers. The details of the bid process, such as how many bidders submitted quotes, the criteria for award (it's usually not just price), the length of the contract period, the ability of the supplier to increase prices, how often the same

supplier is awarded, are all important considerations for a LPPU to consider before using a single (or very limited) - award co-op.

While those details are all publicly available (sometimes with some considerable effort), LPPUs rarely think of those issues or investigate them.

They assume that a single-award supplier in a co-op is providing the best price, and they seek no other prices. Because of the details mentioned above, that may not be the case. There have been some recent horror stories in the press about this issue and legislation was introduced to limit the use by some LPPUs of single-award co-ops in certain instances.

There is a growing recognition among procurement professionals that, for many goods and services, the typical formal RFQ (Request or Invitation for Quotes) bidding process does not necessarily achieve the best value. A back and forth, transparent negotiating process among pre-qualified suppliers, sometimes referred to as a “reverse auction”, (see the Summer, 2016 *COSTARS CONNECTION*), similar to the COSTARS model, is much more likely to achieve best value.

COSTARS, which serves only Pennsylvania members, has more than 2,000 participating suppliers and encourages small, local businesses to participate, which allows local governing bodies to keep their tax dollars in the local economy. Nearly 50 percent of COSTARS suppliers are small businesses. All COSTARS-exclusive contracts are multiple vendor contracts (some contracts have more than 200 suppliers) and members are encouraged (but not required) to negotiate prices below the contracted ceiling prices among several suppliers. Obviously, the more suppliers competing for business, the greater the ability to negotiate lower prices or other concessions.

These programs are available to LPPUs as tools to save money and to make more effective, flexible, and efficient buying decisions. Some GPOs specialize in serving specific memberships or specific products. For example, there are programs that cater only to hospitals or only deal with food. The federal government's co-op program (GSA) is only open to government agencies and is limited to technology, security, and law enforcement products and services. PEPPM specializes in technology products. Most programs offer a limited, but diverse, selection of categories. COSTARS offers an extensive variety of products and services through 35 COSTARS-exclusive contracts and more than 100 statewide agency contracts. However, there may be products that are not offered through a COSTARS contract, but may be available through another co-op program.

From the suppliers' perspective, the ease of bid submission and award process varies widely among different programs. Some programs award their contracts to the lowest responsible bidder, while most programs use a point system where price is one factor among others, such as breadth of product selection, ability to serve a national market, and quality of marketing plan. COSTARS-exclusive contracts are awarded to all responsive and responsible bidders, while most Pennsylvania statewide agency contracts (most of which are available for use by COSTARS members) are awarded to best value bidder(s). Suppliers are encouraged, but not required, to proactively market their products to COSTARS members and the COSTARS program provides tools to assist in that effort.

Virtually all programs, except COSTARS, charges suppliers a percentage of their co-op sales, which is presumably added in and included in the buyers' pricing. COSTARS assesses a flat, annual administrative fee (\$166 for verified small diverse businesses, \$500 for certified small businesses, or \$1,500 for all others). The average COSTARS exclusive supplier generated more than \$400,000 in COSTARS sales in 2017.





Attention Suppliers!

Sales Reporting Update

COSTARS growth (\$1.22 billion in FY 2017) is beginning to impact the capacity of our sales reporting function. Please keep the following in mind:

- ✉ For large volume suppliers using the uploaded template reporting method, if there are more than 500 line items to report, the system may record the sales as “**Sales Reported Successfully.**” However, the line items may not be immediately displayed on the Sales Journal. DO NOT upload the sales a second time since that will result in duplicate reporting. Return to the function the next day and those sales should be displayed, confirming that they were properly recorded.
- ✉ If at all possible, whether reporting manually or uploading the template, combine like items (same customer, same quarter, same product category) into one transaction and one line item using any date within that quarter as the sales date.
- ✉ For complete instructions on sales reporting, go to: <https://www.copacustomhelp.state.pa.us/gm/folder-1.11.97296?originalContext=1.11.97212>.

Small Business Update

The Wolf administration has increased the revenue limit for self-certifying small businesses from \$20 million to \$38.5 million. The main purpose of the increase is to enable more businesses to compete for, and be awarded, commonwealth contracting opportunities within Pennsylvania’s Small Business Contracting Program, according to Department of General Services (DGS) Secretary Curt Topper.

As it relates to COSTARS suppliers, the increased cap will make more suppliers eligible for the reduced annual administrative fee of \$500 for certified small businesses. Businesses that may have had trouble meeting eligibility requirements due to their annual earned revenue, but may now be eligible, are encouraged to visit Pennsylvania’s Supplier Portal and complete the self-certification process (For complete instructions, go to: <https://www.dgs.pa.gov/Businesses/Small%20Business%20Contracting%20Program/Pages/default.aspx>).

The reduced fee, if applicable, would become effective at the suppliers’ next renewal date.

The increased limit, which had remained the same since 2012, will put the Commonwealth’s maximum cap more in line with Federal Government standards.

DGS’s Bureau of Diversity, Inclusion and Small Business Opportunities (BDISBO) is accepting applications for businesses interested in participating in the statewide Mentor-Protégé Program (MPP). The application period runs through Feb. 22, 2019.

The objective of the MPP is to pair prime contractors and/or suppliers with DGS-verified Small Diverse Businesses (SDBs) to help them successfully compete for commonwealth supplies and services procurement contracts. Small Diverse Businesses are those owned by minorities, women, LGBT, veterans and people with disabilities.

For more information visit the DISBO Mentor-Protégé Program Application page online at <https://www.dgs.pa.gov/Businesses/Small%20Diverse%20Business%20Program/Pages/MPP-Application-Process.aspx>

Nearly 1,700 COSTARS Members are Out of Touch!

By Bruce Beardsley, COSTARS Marketing Manager

Almost 20 percent of COSTARS members will not receive this newsletter (or any other correspondence from COSTARS) because their email addresses on file have been changed and not updated. That means approximately 1,700 COSTARS members won’t be informed about:

- ◆ Road salt update and reminders
- ◆ New contracts
- ◆ New contract provisions
- ◆ Program procedural changes
- ◆ Procurement legal changes
- ◆ Grant and rebate availabilities
- ◆ Procurement Expo news
- ◆ Website changes
- ◆ Upcoming training opportunities
- ◆ And more

COSTARS receives several phone calls each month from members telling us they weren’t notified about some program change or enhancement. Upon research, we invariably find their email address had changed and the member did not update their Member Profile. It is critical that COSTARS has accurate contact information for each member, including an email, street address, phone number and a primary contact’s name and contact information.

Last year, we sent hard copy correspondence through the U.S. Postal Service to all members requesting updated information. We thank the nearly 500 members who updated their Member Profile (although more than 1,100 letters were returned as undeliverable!). Our efforts to get accurate information will continue this year (We recognize the irony that this article is only being read by members who received this newsletter via a correct email).

Beginning in March, we will use automated calls to contact members who still have inaccurate contact information (Hopefully, their phone numbers are still correct!). Further actions will continue through 2019.

For complete instructions on how to update your Member Profile, you may refer to: www.costars.state.pa.us > Member Information > Click on the Yellow Members Button > Training Center > Update COSTARS Member Profile. For additional assistance or questions, please call 1-866-768-7827.



COSTARS On The Road

Recent Events

- ♦ Nov. 19 Credit Card Services Webinar sponsored by U.S. Bank
- ♦ Dec. 4 Credit Card Services Webinar sponsored by U.S. Bank
- ♦ Dec. 17 Credit Card Services Webinars sponsored by U.S. Bank
- ♦ Jan. 17 Delaware Valley School Facilities Managers Association Members' Training Lansdale

Upcoming Events

- ♦ Feb. 13 Webinar sponsored by Eastern PA Water Pollution Control Operations Association - Reinholds
- ♦ Feb. 19 Prospective Suppliers Workshop sponsored by Southwest PA PTAC Exton
- ♦ March 6-7 PA Association of School Business Officials Annual Conference Hershey

COSTARS Marketing Managers make it their mission to spread the message about the COSTARS Program, recruit new members and suppliers, and provide training about the program. Marketing Managers Bruce Beardsley and Kim Bullivant travel throughout the commonwealth speaking at conferences, workshops and seminars sponsored by associations, suppliers, universities, legislators, chambers of commerce and others.

To submit a request for a COSTARS representative to speak or conduct a training session for members or suppliers at an upcoming event, please contact Bruce or Kim at toll free telephone number 1-866-768-7827 or email to GS-PaCostars@pa.gov. The COSTARS Marketing Team's Calendar of Events is also available on the COSTARS website on the [COSTARS Program Resources](#) page.



Government That Works!

2019 PA PROCUREMENT EXPO & FORUM

pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES

Sept. 4 and 5, 2019

FARM SHOW COMPLEX, HARRISBURG
More than 350 exhibitors and 2,000 attendees expected!
A premier networking and educational event for public procurement decision-makers and suppliers!

COSTARS TIP

COSTARS often communicates to our members and suppliers through mass emails which can be mistaken by your computer's SPAM protection as junk mail.

To ensure you are not missing important information from COSTARS, make sure your system allows emails from GS-PACostars@pa.gov.



Like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, and connect with us on LinkedIn to begin receiving COSTARS updates!

Remember, this does not replace important updates we send to you via email, so please be sure to maintain your member and supplier information in the COSTARS system.

Visit our Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Costars-PA-Department-of-General-Services/904261462952351?ref=hl>

Visit our Twitter page at:

<https://twitter.com/COSTARSNews>.

Visit our LinkedIn page at:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/department-of-general-services-costars-program/>

COSTARS Connection

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Further information on the COSTARS program is available by phone at 1-866-768-7827 or by visiting the [COSTARS](http://www.costars.state.pa.us) website at www.costars.state.pa.us.

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At DGS, our mission is to help government operate more efficiently, effectively, and safely - delivering exceptional value for all Pennsylvanians.

