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**May 2, 2019**

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## **Governor Wolf Touts Need for Education Investments and Broadband for Rural Communities**

**Boalsburg, PA** – Speaking to the Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools today, Governor Tom Wolf discussed investments in education and his Restore Pennsylvania plan to help address the rural broadband crisis.

“Pennsylvania’s students and their futures are top priorities for me,” said Governor Wolf. “My administration is investing in education so students start school ready to learn and are eventually ready to graduate and succeed at work.

“Supporting a great education is particularly impactful in rural and small towns where schools are often at the center of communities. My proposals will help schools to keep great teachers, increase access to broadband in rural communities, and create the skilled and highly qualified workforce that will attract industry and jobs.”

During his first term, Governor Wolf fought for education funding that reversed the devastating funding cuts of the previous administration. This year, the governor is proposing a \$200 million increase in basic education, building on the \$633 million increase in basic education and Ready to Learn Block Grant funding increases over the past four fiscal years. The governor also wants to increase special education funding by \$50 million following a \$90 million increase since he took office.

The governor’s budget also includes the bold [Statewide Workforce, Education, and Accountability Program \(SWEAP\)](#) to expand opportunities for Pennsylvanians from birth to retirement.

Governor Wolf’s SWEAP proposal includes:

- Lowering the age when students must start school from 8 to 6.
- Raising the dropout age from 17 to 18.
- Addressing the teacher shortage by modernizing the minimum teacher salary to \$45,000 from the outdated floor of \$18,500.

- Studying the impact of universal free full-day kindergarten for all five-year-old children.
- Building on the successful launch of PAsmart by providing an additional \$10 million to create a more skilled and qualified workforce.
- Launching the Keystone Economic Development and Workforce Command Center to partner with the private sector and schools around workforce development.

Rural school students would also benefit from Restore Pennsylvania, a \$4.5 billion investment over the next four years to expand high-speed internet access and other high-impact infrastructure projects throughout Pennsylvania.

“Lack of quality internet access means our children miss out on learning opportunities and their parents lack easy access to important school information,” Governor Wolf said. “Our students, parents, and our teachers deserve better, and we can provide that through Restore Pennsylvania.”

Restore Pennsylvania would be funded by a commonsense severance tax and help bridge the digital divide making Pennsylvania a better place to work, do business, and live. Grants will be available to support installation of infrastructure to bring high-speed internet to every corner of the commonwealth. Funding will support every phase of the process from feasibility testing to connection.

Restore Pennsylvania would also address blight, mitigate the effects of localized flooding, and expand green infrastructure.

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