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BCAP NewsClips

January 29, 2020

**Northcentral PA
Frontier
Communications set
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Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf this week revisited a year-old \$4.5 billion plan he said would address some of the state's critical infrastructure needs. In doing so, he renewed a call to have lawmakers adopt it.

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During a half-hour news conference, Wolf said he was so confident in Restore Pennsylvania that if it were to be taken up in both branches of state government, it would receive enough support to land on his desk for his signature.

“I think it would pass overwhelmingly if it were brought to a vote,” Wolf said, pointing to bipartisan support that has included 95 co-sponsors in the House and 23 co-sponsors in the Senate.

When he first took the wraps off Restore Pennsylvania in early 2019, Wolf touted it as a plan to tackle a range of infrastructure issues, including blight, flooding, improving rural roadways and increasing broadband access across the state.

In the plan, Wolf said Restore Pennsylvania would be fortified from funding sources outside the state budget. A special severance tax on natural gas drilling, coupled with borrowing, would help fund the projects.

While he hinted at his recognition of criticism of the plan alongside the bipartisan support in both chambers of state government, Wolf said he has not seen other viable alternatives to Restore Pennsylvania.

“There has been a lot of talk the past year,” Wolf said. “I’m open to other suggestions. But we can no longer wait.”

At the news conference, Wolf said needs in the state have only increased since he first announced his Restore Pennsylvania plan.

In the past year, Wolf said 1,313 homes across the state were impacted by natural disasters. He also pointed to the 160,000 Pennsylvanians who lack basic Internet access in more sparsely populated areas.

Other members of Wolf’s administration also spoke to the state’s continued infrastructure challenges.

Patrick McDonnell, secretary of the state Department of Environmental Protection, said he was concerned about a number of issues within his office, including water quality, in part brought on by large-scale storms.

“Restore Pennsylvania would have been an enormous step forward,” McDonnell said. “But the past continues to hold back our future. The problems are not going away, and they’re not getting better on their own.”

Cindy Adams Dunn, secretary of the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, also spoke about the delay in putting Restore Pennsylvania to a vote. Adams said the state’s vast forest system has suffered at the hands of deferred maintenance from flooding and other natural occurrences.

“Like any good Girl Scout, I want to see this camp better than I found it,” Adams Dunn said of her frustration in not being able to fully meet the system’s needs.

Critics of Restore Pennsylvania include the advocacy group Food and Water Watch. In an op-ed posted last fall on Penn Live, Sam

Bernhardt, state director, said Wolf's plan is disguised as an effort to support the fracking industry.

"When he unveiled the plan, the governor made it clear that he would use it to create new fossil fuel subsidies, including steering money to the petrochemical industry," Bernhardt said.

Wolf said he was revisiting Restore Pennsylvania this week for two reasons – a primer to his budget address next week and a renewed call to take action as the state's historically heavy rain season looms in the months ahead.

"I'm trying here," Wolf said. "I'd really like some help." – ***Bradford Era***

