

PAR CAPITOL REPORT – JULY 2020

New Law Creates Preliminary Licensure Determination Policy for Professional Licensure Boards

The General Assembly has passed several criminal justice reform bills over the past few weeks, including **Senate Bill 637** (Disanto, R-Dauphin) that will have an impact on real estate licensing for applicants with a criminal history. SB637 unanimously passed both the Senate and House and was signed into law by the governor as Act 53 of 2020.

Act 53 clarifies that conviction of a crime does not automatically preclude issuance of a state professional or occupational license. The state licensing boards/commissions must first determine if the particular criminal offense is directly related to the duties, functions and responsibilities of the license applied for, and then must conduct an individualized assessment of the applicant.

The law also requires the boards/commissions to begin issuing preliminary licensure determinations, whereby individuals with criminal convictions may ask whether their criminal history precludes licensure prior to obtaining the education required for issuance. Each board/commission is required to establish a list of the criminal offenses that may constitute grounds for denial.

PAR will be reaching out to both the state Real Estate Commission and Board of Appraisers to understand how they intend to implement this new application process, and we will continue to communicate with members as we receive information about the application launches.

New Leadership Elected in House

Speaker of the House Mike Turzai resigned in June, resulting in leadership elections in the House Republican Caucus. Rep. Bryan Cutler (R-Lancaster) was elected to serve as the new Speaker of the House, Rep. Kerry Benninghoff (R-Centre) as the new majority leader and Rep. Donna Oberlander (R-Clarion) will serve as the majority whip.

As a result of these developments and the May passage of a temporary budget, rather than the normal full June legislative session, the Senate and House were only in for seven and five days respectively. During this time, the General Assembly focused on COVID-19 and criminal justice reform related legislation.

At the end of June, the General Assembly did not adjourn until September as is customary. At this time, it is expected the Senate and House will return to session for a couple of days in July and August, but no dates have been established and both chambers remain at the call of the chair.