



COUNTY OF LEHIGH

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Donald T. Cunningham, Jr., County Executive

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

February 16, 2012

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County Executive Don Cunningham Delivers 7th State of County Address
Lehigh County emerges from Great Recession with sound finances

Allentown – Lehigh County Executive Don Cunningham delivered his seventh annual State of the County address to nearly three hundred business and community leaders at Coca Cola Park.

“Our agenda since 2006 has been to operate this multi-faceted government in a cost-effective way, keeping tax rates as low as possible, ensure safe and efficient delivery of services and to grow our economy and strengthen our communities,” said Cunningham in his opening remarks.

In 2012, Lehigh County property owners will receive a one-time expiring tax credit of \$30 as a result of last year’s tight fiscal management that allowed county government to underspend its budget by \$4.2 million.

“The state of Lehigh County’s finances and operations is very sound,” said Cunningham. “We continue to grow our economy, strengthen our communities and work regionally to improve public safety, combat crime and deliver services.”

Lehigh County continues to retain a AA1 bond rating, a \$25 million cash reserve, a debt service rate below 15 percent of its budget and an almost fully-funded pension fund. Cunningham gave credit to the county’s employees and employee unions for their part in reasonable contract negotiations and an employee cost-sharing strategy that allowed the county to enjoy health care costs in 2012 that are lower than they were when he took office in 2006. In fact, Lehigh County’s work force is five percent smaller than it was in 1990, and total personnel costs for this year are less than last year’s costs.

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This year, Lehigh County will also finish the last of an aggressive capital improvement plan that has been the most extensive in its history, ranging from a renovated and expanded courthouse to a state of the art 911 dispatch center and more than 20 bridge replacements and repairs.

Cunningham also said that the county's crime data center will open this year. For the first time, data collected from each of the police departments in Lehigh County will be available in real time to all police departments, effectively creating a county-wide police department for data. This unique center, which will officially be called the Regional Intelligence and Investigation Center, will be linked to operations in other counties as well as the Pennsylvania State Police. In one week, Lehigh will be the first county in Pennsylvania connected to the Pennsylvania Criminal Intelligence Center, providing local law enforcement with access to state data and vice versa.

Lehigh County also recently completed the renovation and expansion of the county's alternative community corrections center to house low-risk inmates more cheaply, and this march, construction will begin on a new public safety facility that will update the coroner and forensic operations and house emergency management equipment and vehicles.

Cunningham ended his address by reminding county residents that 2012 is Lehigh County's bicentennial. He reminded residents to visit Lehigh County's community celebration on Saturday March 10 at the Allentown Fairgrounds' Agri-Plex. The highlight of the community celebration is the induction of the inaugural class of Lehigh County's Hall of Fame.

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