

## **Governor Signs into Law Three Bills Affecting Oil and Gas Drilling, Real Estate Taxation**

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On July 7th, Governor Corbett signed into law House Bills 143, 144, and 562. House Bill 143 amends the Pennsylvania Farmland and Forest Land Assessment Act of 1974 to permit property owners under preferential assessments to lease a portion of their property for non-coal surface mining use. A property owner making such a lease would only be assessed roll-back taxes on that portion of the property which was leased.

House Bill 144 also amends the Act of 1974 to clarify that the portion of land which becomes subject to roll-back taxes due to oil or gas drilling is determined from the time a well production report is first due to the Department of Environmental Protection. The legislation also clarifies that the roll-back tax will be due in the year immediately following the year in which the well production report is provided to the county assessor.

House Bill 562 amends the Agricultural Area Security Law to include a statutory definition for the term “contiguous acreage.” Under this definition, land owners with property divided by a stream, public road, bridge or railroad will be eligible for farmland preservation. The legislation also adds to the existing right to mine and remove coal from property subject to agricultural conservation easements the right to mine and remove non-coal minerals, such as natural gas.

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