

Let's Make the Groundhog the PA General Assembly Mascot

Comments from Fair Districts PA Chair Carol Kuniholm,
Groundhog Day Press Conference, February 2, 2026, Harrisburg



Today we're here with our democracy allies to celebrate Groundhog Day, and to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the first Pennsylvania constitution.

So, to start with, Happy Groundhog Day!

Back in 2022 some esteemed Pennsylvania legislators introduced [a bill to designate the noble groundhog](#) as the official state rodent of Pennsylvania. That legislation, proposed by seven highly respected senators, would have allowed the groundhog to take its rightful place alongside our state animal (the white-tailed deer), our state bird (the ruffed grouse), our state fish (the brook trout), the state insect (the firefly), state dog (the Great Dane), state amphibian (the Eastern hellbender), and state fossil (the trilobite).

The original cosponsor memo noted the groundhog's intelligence, its ability to form complex social networks, and that it is one of the few species who enter true hibernation, spending large parts of the winter sound asleep.

The memo also referenced the importance of Punxsutawney Phil, "Seer of Seers, Sage of Sages, Prognosticator of Prognosticators and Weather-Prophet Extraordinaire."

That bill, like more than nine-tenths of other bills introduced here in the General Assembly, never saw a final vote. In fact, like thousands of others each session, it was never even considered in committee.

Today, on Groundhog Day, members of organizations concerned about Pennsylvania's democracy and legislative process are asking our state legislators to consider a resolution to make the groundhog the official mascot of the Pennsylvania state legislature.

The nation has many groundhog prognosticators. Last January, NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, "In honor of Groundhog Day and in the spirit of fun, pitted groundhogs from all over the United States against each other to see which of those rodents was the most accurate," based on their predictions from 2005 to 2024. [\(Rankings\)](#)

Staten Island Chuck, from Staten Island, New York, was found to be correct 85% of the time. General Beauregard Lee, from Georgia, was correct 80% of the time.

Punxsatawney Phil tied with Woody the Woodchuck from Michigan for last place at 35%.

For that reason, the groundhog seems a fitting mascot for a state legislature that passes far fewer than 35% of bills introduced. For years, far fewer than 10% of bills introduced in the PA General Assembly have been given a final vote, putting Pennsylvania, like Punxsatawney Phil, in the lowest tenth of effectiveness when compared to other states. [\(see Fix Harrisburg\)](#)

But our proposed bill goes beyond the statistical comparison to Punxsatawney Phil and refers as well to the 1993 movie, *Groundhog Day*. In that film, Bill Murray, portraying a weather man concerned solely about his own career, with little interest in the fate of those around him, found himself in a continuous doom loop, repeating the same day in Punxsatawney again, and again, and again, with growing anger and frustration. No one knows for sure how many times that one day was repeated before Bill Murray's character finally broke free by listening to and caring about the people around him. In the same way, it's hard to tell how many times, and across how many years, many of Pennsylvania's bills have been introduced - and ignored. We have no way to count the number of bills, the needed solutions to acknowledged problems, that have been handed on from one legislator to another, session after session, decade after decade, without ever reaching a final vote.

For one other reason the groundhog would make a fitting mascot. [Pennsylvania has the largest assembly of prognosticating groundhogs](#) in the nation, just as Pennsylvania has the largest assembly of full-time legislators.

For those reasons, and in honor of Punxsutawney Phil, Octorora Orphia, Schnogadahl Sammi of Kunkletown, Mount Joy Minnie, Harleysville Hank and a dozen other groundhog prognosticators stuffed, wild, or tame, we will be seeking prime sponsors to introduce the proposed legislation, with no hope it will be considered, and no expectation of passage.