

2019-2020 BUDGET REQUEST

PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE

STATEMENT TO HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS

COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 25, 2019



Good morning Chairmen Saylor and Bradford and members of the House Appropriations Committee. I am Lieutenant Colonel Robert Evanchick, Acting Commissioner of the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP).

Before I continue, I would like to dedicate my testimony today to the memory of the 98 Members of the Pennsylvania State Police who gave the ultimate sacrifice and lost their lives in the line of duty in service to the Commonwealth over our 113-year history.

With me today are the Acting Deputy Commissioner of Administration and Professional Responsibility, Major Scott Price; the Acting Deputy Commissioner of Operations, Major James Degnan; and the Acting Deputy Commissioner of Staff, Major Edward Hoke.

I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to the Members of this Committee and the rest of the General Assembly for the strong backing provided to the Pennsylvania State Police over the years. I speak for the entire agency when I say your support enables us to make Pennsylvania a safer and more secure place to live and work.

Over the past year, PSP has moved forward with new initiatives designed to enhance our ability to provide the citizens of this great Commonwealth with the superior police services they deserve.

Our Overdose Information Network (ODIN) application was launched on March 12, 2018 in conjunction with the Governor's statewide disaster declaration for the heroin and opioid epidemic. ODIN is a database developed to collect data on fatal and non-fatal overdoses, Naloxone administrations, and identifiable markings on drug packaging. It provides criminal justice agencies with real-time

information to aid in drug and overdose investigations and gives law enforcement, government officials, community leaders, and policymakers reliable information to make informed decisions when combating drug issues that could compromise public health and safety. In addition, features within the application will enhance the ability of criminal justice agencies to predict, react, and respond, not only to the existing opioid use and overdose epidemic, but any future drug crises.

The Records Management System project (RMS) presents an important change in the way our Department conducts its operational functions. Under this initiative, all incident reporting will be electronically completed to provide data that is designed to maximize officer safety and allow Commanders to utilize resources to maximum effectiveness. The implementation of the most recent phase of RMS will fully integrate the Department's incident reporting system into our mobile office and will allow members to gain much needed operational efficiencies.

Governor Wolf has proposed a budget that offers adequate funding for our operations. This will allow us to continue to be one of the most comprehensive providers of professional police services in the country.

Included is funding to supplement gun check fees to ensure operation of our Pennsylvania Instant Check System, or PICS for short. PICS has been highlighted by the national news media as a “model gun background check system”. In 2018, The PICS Section handled over one million Interactive Voice Response System (IVR) and web background checks. Our system downtime was again limited to less than 1 percent. There were 11,127 PICS background denials reported. In addition, 162 fugitives were identified and apprehended through the background check process because of the discovery of outstanding warrants for the individual attempting to obtain a firearm or License to Carry.

The budget proposal also includes monies to continue our Statewide Public Safety Radio System. Moving to a P25 open standard radio technology will enable us to achieve increased reliability and interoperability in communicating with our local, state, and federal public safety partners.

The PSP provides full-time or part-time police protection to almost 67% of the Commonwealth's 2,560 municipalities. In addition, we also deliver specialized services to municipal police agencies at no cost. These services include drug identification, DNA analysis, and latent fingerprint examination at our seven crime laboratories. The demand for PSP services continues to grow. For example, Act 44 legislation was passed last year to improve school safety. Under this law, PSP was required to expand our Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Team beginning in 2019. Other pieces of legislation, such as Act 79 which limited third-party safekeeping of

firearms in Protection from Abuse cases and Act 56, or “Clean Slate” require PSP devotion of resources.

The Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Team (RVAT) conducts safety assessments at sites across the Commonwealth, including public and private K-12 schools, higher education facilities, pre-schools, houses of worship, government (federal, state, and local) buildings, critical infrastructure, key resources, events, and private sector locations. In 2018, the team conducted 104 assessments, the majority of which were done at schools and churches.

To fund these critical services, Governor Wolf has proposed a sliding fee for municipalities which rely on PSP for full-time police coverage. In 2018, 7 municipal police departments changed from full or part-time municipal coverage to relying on PSP for its full-time police services. This proposal is a beginning step to address

the importance adequately funding the PSP. Because our budget is primarily driven by personnel costs, decreases to it could result in future Cadet classes being cancelled and our ability to provide top-notch services to the citizens of this Commonwealth could be adversely affected.

It is my humble privilege to serve as the Acting Commissioner of the Pennsylvania State Police. The professional efforts of the men and women of this agency, both enlisted and civilian, are critically important to the safety of the citizens of Pennsylvania.

Thank you for allowing me to address your Committee. I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.