

2015-2016 BUDGET REQUEST

PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE

STATEMENT TO HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

MARCH 18, 2015



Good morning Chairman Adolph, Chairman Markosek and members of the House Appropriations Committee. I am Colonel Marcus Brown, Acting Commissioner of the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP). With me today is the Deputy Commissioner of Operations, Lt. Col. George Bivens and the Director of the Fiscal Division, Mr. William Box.

As you know, the PSP was beset by tragedies over the course of this past year. During those difficult times, our members benefited from the overwhelming support and kindness displayed by the citizens of this great Commonwealth. Indeed, during those difficult months, many of you sitting on this committee directly reached out to our members and command staff. For that, we are extremely grateful. I would like to dedicate this testimony to Corporal Bryon Dickson and Trooper David Kedra who became the 95th and 96th members of the Department to pay the ultimate price while making this Commonwealth a safer place for all of its citizens and guests.

The PSP is one of the most comprehensive providers of police services in the country. We are the tenth largest police department in the nation and second largest internationally accredited law enforcement agency in the world. Currently, we patrol 82% of the land area and 60% of the Commonwealth's highways, including all of the interstates. We provide either full-time or part-time police protection to one in four Pennsylvanians. Last year, Troopers made over 66,000 criminal arrests and issued over a half million traffic citations. Troopers also made approximately 18,000 arrests for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The demand for PSP services has

grown considerably over the years. Last year, members of the PSP handled approximately 794,000 incidents. This figure represents a nearly 20 percent increase in total incidents compared to the number of incidents handled by the PSP in the year 2000. The PSP was also tasked with many new responsibilities during this timeframe, while experiencing increased demand for many existing specialized services; e.g., crime laboratory, criminal intelligence, criminal history checks, etc. These additional demands have placed a strain on the Department's ability to maintain adequate staffing to support its core purpose of providing patrol and criminal investigation services to those areas of the Commonwealth that are without the protection of an organized municipal or regional police department.

Of primary concern to the PSP is the funding of regular Cadet classes in the upcoming and future fiscal cycles. We must acknowledge the diligent work of this committee and the General Assembly in recognizing and supporting our fiscal needs in the past. While the PSP has received funding for several Cadet classes during the last few years, until recently, the number of new Troopers joining the ranks of the department has not kept pace with attrition. The cause for the concern is that, over the next several years, the PSP is expected to lose a substantial number of veteran Troopers who were members of the large Cadet classes that graduated in the early 1990s. Within four years, more than 50 percent of our enlisted ranks will have reached retirement tenure.

As of March 9, 2015, there were 421 vacant enlisted positions within the PSP. These vacant positions comprise nearly ten percent of the authorized enlisted complement of the agency. We would like to thank Governor Wolf for his generous proposal to fund four cadet classes that would send 350 cadets through our training academy. Upon their graduation to the rank of Trooper, our enlisted complement should be in excess of 4,500. This represents the highest number of filled enlisted positions in over a decade. We believe this number should be viewed as the “Public Safety Line” – a level that will greatly reduce the chance that public safety will be compromised.

The PSP is very much aware that each state agency must practice sound fiscal policy. With due consideration given to the Commonwealth’s budgetary constraints, the PSP will continue to seek and implement operational efficiencies. One of the most complex operations in PSP history commenced in Pike County on September 12, 2014, when Corporal Bryon Dickson was murdered in an ambush style sniper attack that also seriously injured Trooper Alex Douglass. The associated investigation and 48-day manhunt for the perpetrator is estimated to have cost the PSP approximately \$11,700,000. The PSP did not request supplemental funding to cover the cost of the investigation opting instead to make difficult decisions that allowed us to remain within our existing budget.

The safety and efficiency of Troopers and municipal police officers is greatly enhanced by unique elements within the Pennsylvania State Police. These specialty

units are staffed by highly trained members of the department, many of whom provide this service in addition to their primary function as Patrol or Criminal Investigation Unit members.

One prime example is our elite Special Emergency Response Team (SERT) which is increasingly being called upon to assist Troop operations and municipal police departments across the entire state. In 2014, SERT was activated 118 times. Many of those activations were for highly volatile situations involving a barricaded gunman or high risk warrant service. Another highly trained specialty unit increasingly being called into action is our Hazardous Device and Explosives Section (HDES), commonly known as the “bomb squad.” This unit responds to statewide requests for suspicious packages, improvised explosive devices and discovered military ordinance. In 2014, HDES handled 252 requests for service. Our Clandestine Lab Response Team (CLRT) has the unenviable job of collecting evidence and conducting “clean-up” operations for all suspected illicit drug labs. In 2014, the team responded to over 249 incidents – a 200 percent increase from just five years ago.

Our Bureau of Criminal Investigation operates the Commonwealth’s federally designated all-hazards fusion center, also known as the Pennsylvania Criminal Intelligence Center (PaCIC), which received nearly 1,500 tips associated with a wide variety of topics including those associated with suspected terrorism, drug dealers, and the whereabouts of fugitives. All of these tips were investigated by either members of the PSP or allied agencies. The PaCIC remains a national model of information sharing

by providing law enforcement agencies archived public information, situational awareness reports, investigative material, and criminal information. For the third consecutive year, the PaCIC attained a perfect score of 100 on the fusion center annual assessment administered by the U.S Department of Homeland Security and was only one of a handful of fusion centers nationwide to have achieved a perfect score in each of the past three years. The center is staffed by 40 analysts and supervisors along with representatives from a host of state and federal law enforcement agencies and all-hazards partners including the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Homeland Security. Collectively, the PaCIC serves approximately 1,000 law enforcement agencies in the Commonwealth as well as owners and operators of Pennsylvania's designated critical infrastructure locations and key resources. The PaCIC received approximately 34,000 requests for information from federal, state, and local agencies, and as a result of those requests, the PaCIC analysts completed over 53,000 products for their agencies, enhancing and furthering their investigations.

The Governor's Office of Homeland Security (GOHS) works with federal, state, and local government agencies, regional task forces, educational institutions, professional associations, non-governmental organizations and all aspects of the private sector to help bolster the security of the citizens of Pennsylvania. The GOHS leads a Public/Private Cyber Security Work Group tasked with identifying and mitigating threats and vulnerabilities. It sponsors educational events across the Commonwealth on a range of homeland security topics including the following: counterterrorism preparedness, cyber security, human trafficking, large-venue security, protection

against weapons of mass destruction, school safety, soft-target awareness, and special-event preparedness. In 2015, the GOHS exercises and/or events are planned with the Ladies Professional Golf Association, NASCAR, and the Little League World Series.

Having developed the software that is used statewide to target the most heinous violators of child pornography file sharing, the PSP continues its prominent leadership role in the field of computer crimes investigation. We operate computer crimes task forces in every troop conducting forensic examinations and providing training for both state and municipal law enforcement. In this age of expanding technology, the need for this expertise continues to grow, as does the ever-expanding number of digital devices involved in criminal investigations. This is one of the most significant challenges to the future of traditional police work.

In addition to routine patrolling and solving crimes, the PSP provides a range of other services. Some of the most visible of these are the sexual offender registry (Megan's Law), the state crime lab, the Pennsylvania Access to Criminal History (PATCH), and the Pennsylvania Instant Checks System (PICS).

In 2014, the PATCH received and responded to nearly 1.4 million requests for criminal history records. Significantly, we have recently seen a sizable upsurge in persons requesting criminal history information via the PATCH. Requests over the last three months are up over 90,000 when compared to the same three month period a year ago. The most likely reason for the spike is due to the recent overhaul of the

state's child protective services law and its expansion of background check requirements for those who regularly interact with children. As a result, the units that are tasked with processing these checks frequently use overtime to keep pace with the volume and curtail backlogs.

Last year, the PICS conducted nearly 900,000 gun background checks. Late in 2013, PSP elected to shift resources with an emphasis placed on investigating potential violations of the Pennsylvania Uniform Firearms Act that come to light during the background check process. In 2014, the PICS referred over 4,000 cases to PSP troops and municipal police departments for further investigation and prosecutorial determination. This is a significant increase from past years.

I could not be more proud of the men and women of the Pennsylvania State Police who continue to serve our citizenry with professionalism and valor, often in the face of extreme adversity. Last year alone, members of the PSP were involved in 27 incidents where gunfire erupted. Clearly, police work remains a dangerous occupation. In the few months that I have served as the Acting Commissioner of the Pennsylvania State Police, I can tell you that I have seen firsthand that the Department's reputation for being one of the finest law enforcement agencies in the nation is well deserved. Thank you for allowing me to address your committee. I will be pleased to take any questions you may have.