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of the County of Pike

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**WRITTEN REMARKS OF**  
**PIKE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
**RAYMOND J. TONKIN**

On September 12, 2014, the path of history in Pike County changed forever. With the sound of four gunshots the life of Bryon K. Dickson, II was lost, the lives of Trooper Alex Douglas and Nicole Palmer changed forever.

Known as an idyllic vacation spot and a wonderful place to raise a family, Pike County is now forever known as where the barracks shooting took place.

Last year while at the Pennsylvania Farm Show I spoke to a couple in the food court. When I mentioned I was from Pike County, they asked "Isn't that where the state trooper was shot?"

Today I would like to share some of my experiences as District Attorney in relation to the manhunt. While the District Attorney is seen as the representative of people in the criminal courtroom, this case shows how vital the role of the district attorney can be to an investigation, long before an investigation becomes a case and long before the case enters a criminal courtroom.

On September 12, 2014, after 11:00 p.m., I had retired for the evening looking forward to a travel baseball tournament with my son the next day. In the distance I heard a helicopter and thought it was a medical helicopter going to make a landing at the nearby Wallenpaupack Area Middle School. Not long after the first, I heard another helicopter, this one passed over my home shining a search light into my neighborhood. I thought it was a second medical helicopter circling to land at the nearby Middle School. While wondering if there had been a severe car accident, I fell asleep.

Around 3:00 a.m. I received a call from the Pike 911 Center telling me two troopers had been shot and to ask me to respond to the command center at a church at the Blooming Grove Road at Route 402. Other members of my office were also notified to respond; First Assistant District Attorney Bruce DeSarro, Assistant District Attorney Sarah Wilson and then Assistant District Attorney Kathleen Martin.

From those initial moments after notification, the shooting there were tasks I was faced with as district attorney that I would like to mention today. Myself and First Assistant District Attorney DeSarro were driven to the barracks in the early morning hours in an armored vehicle to observe the scene. After the removal of Corporal Dickson's remains from the barracks, he was to be taken for an autopsy. I worked with the State Police and the Pike County Coroner, Kevin Stroyan to coordinate the autopsy.

From there numerous interactions involving the Office of District Attorney took place. While the public saw the manhunt unfolding on T.V. and in the media every day, there was an ongoing criminal investigation to conduct in anticipation of a criminal prosecution. Some examples, are a review of search warrant applications, review of applications under the Wiretapping and Electronic Surveillance Control Act, ensuring the availability of documents for discovery in the criminal case, and working with the Pennsylvania State Police on press conferences. My experience as a criminal prosecutor was vital to all of these parts of the incident, that eventually became one of the most well-known capital criminal trials in the history of our Commonwealth.

That a district attorney from a small population county can be thrust into a situation like the one before you underscores the need for experience. Currently to become district attorney 16 P.S. 1401 requires a person to be admitted to practice before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court for one year prior to taking the oath of office. The Statute does not require any criminal litigation experience. I can assure the committee that an attorney with only one year experience would not have had adequate experience to properly address the guidance to law enforcement and the preparation and presentation of this case in a criminal courtroom.

Your invitation to me to testify here today shines a light on how the office of district attorney is not simple a courtroom lawyer but can perform a vital role during an incident such as this one.

I would urge this committee to recognize this role and consider the introduction of changes to 16 P.S. 1401 to reflect the experience the office of district attorney requires to properly and adequately serve the citizens of the Commonwealth.

Thank you for your time and vital attention.