

STATEMENT TO SENATE VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS  
COMMITTEE

September 2, 2015



Good morning Chairman Vulakovich, Chairman Costa, and members of the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee. I am Major Marshall Martin, Director of the Legislative Affairs Office for the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP). With me today is Mr. Robert Barnham, Acting Director, Statewide Radio Network, PSP. Thank you for inviting us to be here.

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. There is a state police station in almost every county in the state and we provide either full-time or part-time police protection to one in four Pennsylvanians.

The PSP has many assets including an authorized complement of approximately 4700 Troopers, 89 traditional stations or "barracks", patrol vehicles, boats, helicopters, fixed wing planes and horses. We have direct responsibility for the statewide radio system (PA STARNET), Pennsylvania's all-hazards fusion center (PACIC), the 24 hour Watch Center and a host of special response teams. The resources of the PSP, professionally commanded and coordinated, play a vital role in the health and safety of all Pennsylvanians and those that visit or traverse the Commonwealth on our highways.

Also, vital to this role is the outstanding cooperation we receive from our partner state agencies including the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA), the

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and the Department of Health (DOH). It was with this spirit of cooperation that we have engaged in a great number of meetings and planning sessions associated with the re-write of Title 35 for a number of years. At least two legislative sessions ago, the PSP and PEMA collaborated on a Senate initiative to update and modernize Title 35. Upon review of current Senate Bill 35 (SB 35), sponsored by Senator Lisa Baker, it appears many of the concerns previously deliberated were properly addressed. The PSP is supportive of SB 35 and would only request minor changes, if moved.

However, in so much as it is the interest of this committee to evaluate the full spectrum of issues surrounding this law; the PSP offers the following opinions as you deliberate the re-write. The PSP would ask that careful consideration be given to the protection of investigative and intelligence information. It is imperative that the rights of those involved in criminal investigations and the integrity of those investigations be carefully taken into account when considering the extent of access to and sharing of sensitive information. Similarly, while emergency management planning should allow for broad sharing of information, it is imperative such things as police tactics and strategic operations remain confidential as not to diminish officer and public safety.

Further, we would ask that appropriate care be taken in drafting language to ensure that agencies with responsibility to provide and administer valuable state resources maintain authority over those resources to ensure their most efficient use and accountability. Consistent with this, they must coordinate their response with other

agency heads and organizations during incidents of natural or manmade disasters. In short, any legislation in this regard should reflect the principals of the Incident Command System for identifying and committing Commonwealth personnel, equipment and resources.

Finally, should the committee consider conferring arrest powers under the laws of this Commonwealth to federal law enforcement officers, in such instances as declared disaster emergencies; we believe it is imperative they come under the operational control of the PSP. This would mirror existing law as it relates to outside state law enforcement personnel who are called to assist. Clearly delineating the chain of command for rare incidents such as massive fugitive searches is critical to officer and public safety.

Once again, I would like to thank the committee for inviting us here to speak on this matter. I will now be happy to take any questions you may have.