

P E N N S Y L V A N I A

---

**STATE**  **TROOPERS**  
ORGANIZED 1962 A S S O C I A T I O N

---

**Testimony provided by: Bruce A. Edwards, President  
Pennsylvania State Troopers Association (PSTA)**

**February 4, 2010**

Senator Pippy, Senator Logan, and members of the Senate Law and Justice Committee, good morning and thank you for the opportunity to share with you the position of the Pennsylvania State Troopers Association (PSTA) with you regarding Senate Bill 984. I am Bruce Edwards, President of the PSTA and it has been my pleasure to work closely with many of you over the years as we strive to insure adequate resources and personnel to fulfill one of the most important state constitutionally mandated obligations, to provide for the public's safety. The PSTA represents over 4,000 active men and women who endeavor everyday to insure our public's safety by enforcing our laws, patrolling our streets and highways, leading drug interdiction efforts, investigating fires, and solving major crimes wherever they may occur. While Pennsylvania is blessed to have some of the finest local law enforcement agencies located in communities and cities all around our Commonwealth, the reality is that the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) are the primary law enforcement agency for over 85% of the geographical territory of our state. In addition, virtually all of the local law enforcement agencies rely upon the State Police crime labs and forensic investigators for assistance in solving major crimes, and we have primary jurisdiction on all interstate highways within our Commonwealth. The women and men who comprise our ranks are dedicated, well trained, and hard working. They have pledged their all to defend and protect those in need and unfortunately, on too many occasions, to the extent of giving their lives.

But I need to caution the committee, no level of dedication, training, or equipment, can make up for the lack of police presence within your districts and communities. The fiscal challenges that resulted in no funding in the current fiscal year for a state police cadet class, which in my memory is the first time that has ever happened, has also compelled more and more local communities in budget cutting efforts to disband their local police services, placing an even greater strain on my members' ability to respond timely to incidents and to provide the levels of proactive policing necessary to insure the public's safety.

In 2001 the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee evaluated the complement of the PSP and their duty assignments. In that evaluation it was noted that generally accepted policing standards called for 50% of a patrol trooper's time to be available for preventative or pro-active policing. Unfortunately, the study found our available time to only be 36%. In fact, the study found that "After adjusting for "obligated time," the equivalent number of State Troopers available to conduct proactive patrol work as of April 2001 was 712". Ladies and gentlemen, that was with a force of 4119 Troopers, not much lower than we have today. Yet, in the nine years that have transpired since 2001, we have been charged with more laws to enforce, more mandates to perform, more highways to patrol, and more communities to protect. I would venture to say that if a comparable study were performed today, they would find our obligated time is near or exceeding 70% of a patrol troopers time, leaving 30% or less for preventative and pro-active enforcement.

The phrase, "a thin grey line", has never been more accurate. Unfortunately that endangers my members and your constituents.

So how would SB 984 help to remedy that situation? For those of you who have been around as long as me, you will remember the Resident Trooper concept. A community would pay the cost of having a fulltime trooper assigned exclusively to their community. Unfortunately, due to the costs attributed by the department for that trooper assignment, no communities availed themselves of this option. It just proved to be too costly. When local communities were presented with the choice of finding local revenues sufficient to pay for the resident trooper or incur no expense and just continue to rely on the State Police to respond as needed, they chose the status quo. In essence the department priced themselves out of being a viable option. So, instead of generating funds to offset trooper patrols in these communities, we retained the responsibility to provide police services, but gained no new revenues.

SB 984 seeks to modify the resident trooper concept by limiting the expenses the PSP can recover from participating municipalities to salary and benefits. In exchange for this limitation the State Police retain full authority to assign the trooper's patrol duties and the rights to redirect their assignments as situations arise. As drafted, SB 984 clearly provides the PSP with full supervisory control over any trooper assigned patrol duties within a contracting municipality. It seems to us that limiting the contractual expenses to salary and benefits, which account for the majority of costs of a patrol trooper, is a reasonable concession for the operational flexibility SB 984 would provide the State Police. Further, since the legislation would allow a municipality to contract for a specified number of patrol hours, it enables municipalities to afford providing an assurance to their constituents of greater levels of State Police services and coverage. It allows a "customization" of specified State Police coverage with the municipalities' ability to pay. While, this approach may not be the optimum police services approach, it is better than the current "all or virtually nothing" option local municipalities currently face.

Establishing a local police force is an expensive proposition that many local communities simply can not afford. SB 984 provides an opportunity for those communities to contract for police services that would otherwise be beyond their means. It also would aid the PSP to increase police presence throughout the Commonwealth as troopers assigned to provide contractual services would not count against complement. Since SB 984 would offset the majority of the costs associated with each contracted patrol trooper, this allows the state to expand the number of State Troopers patrolling our communities and highways at a fraction of the costs to do so without SB 984.

My Board has raised some questions regarding the practical application of implementing SB 984 which would either have to be addressed through an amendment to the legislation or within the regulations the department would develop to implement SB 984. These questions include:

- Should the legislation clarify if the same trooper will be assigned to the participating municipality or is it just a commitment to X number of hours of PSP patrol time within that jurisdiction, regardless of who is performing the patrol duties?
- Since troopers assigned to such patrols will not count towards authorized complement, will such contracts be for fulltime services only or can less than 40 hours per week of coverage be contracted? If so, how do part-time assignments get counted against complement?
- In a situation where we have the equivalent of 25 troopers assigned to such contracts in municipalities that then default back to PSP coverage on an as needed basis (current situation), what happens to those 25 troopers if including them in the authorized complement would cause us to exceed the authorized compliment?
- When calculating the hours of patrol time will it include travel to and from the municipality or just the hours the patrol car is in the jurisdictional boundaries of the contracting municipality?

While the PSTA endorses the concept of SB 984 and believes its enactment may help to ease somewhat our critical understaffing situation, it alone is not sufficient to remedy the crisis in public safety we are heading towards if we do not appropriately fund the operations and personnel levels of the PSP. We currently have 182 vacancies within our authorized complement. We typically have 150 troopers retire annually, which means by the end of this fiscal year we could have as many as 332 vacancies. In addition to that, several years ago 60 troopers were assigned to patrol the interstates in Philadelphia, which we patrol everywhere else within the Commonwealth, but regardless, that is 60 fewer troopers that have been available elsewhere within the Commonwealth. So in essence, we will have nearly 400 fewer troopers patrolling our roads and communities than we should. Without funding in the 2010/11 budget for at least 150 cadets, our ranks will continue to shrink. Should we go another year without a cadet class, this time next year we could be nearly 600 troopers short. When I look ahead to the 2011/12 budget and the anticipated financial impact of pension funding, it becomes very easy to foresee a situation where again no cadet funding is provided and we approach understaffing levels of 800 or more troopers, endangering your constituents and my members by severely compromising our ability to serve and protect.

Thank you for your time and attention and I am more than happy to respond to any questions.