

TESTIMONY FOR
WEST BRADFORD TOWNSHIP, CHESTER COUNTY;
WHITE TOWNSHIP, INDIANA COUNTY;
MIDDLETOWN TOWNSHIP, DELAWARE COUNTY;
SOUTH MIDDLETOWN TOWNSHIP, CUMBERLAND
COUNTY

BEFORE THE
SENATE LAW AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE

ON

SENATE BILL 984

PRESENTED BY

JACK M. HINES, JR.
MANAGER
WEST BRADFORD TOWNSHIP

FEBRUARY 4TH, 2010

WESTMORELAND COUNTY, PA

Chairman Pippy and Honorable members of the Senate Law and Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding Senate Bill 984. We are supportive of SB 984 as it is currently written.

My name is Jack M. Hines, Jr., and I am manager of West Bradford Township in Chester County. I am here today to provide the perspectives of several municipalities from across the state regarding this bill. Representatives of these various municipalities are here with me today. Although we are similarly situated in that we do not each have a municipal police department and are all currently served by the Pennsylvania State Police, geographically we are located in four different counties across the Commonwealth.

Our collective position in support of and possible use of the provisions of this bill is best exhibited by explaining why the bill would be of interest to West Bradford Township.

First, West Bradford Township is large in terms of area contained within its borders at nineteen square miles. The Township has grown in population over the past four decades to an approximate population of 12,000. Most of our population resides in single-family dwellings built on ground that used to be orchards and small farms. We are what is referred to as a “bedroom community”. There are few commercial or industrial activities in the Township and most residents work outside of the community. At one point, the Township had a local police department with a limited number of police and part-time staff; however the department was disbanded in the early 1970’s when the police chief was arrested and it was discovered that the department did very little actual police work. Today the needs for police coverage

are very limited due to the demographics of the community. The listing of police services that have been provided to our residents by the Pennsylvania State Police have included very few significant incidents and when there has been significant incidents they were typically incidents at the Embreeville Center, a former state hospital that has been used to house a variety of programs involving minors that have been involved in activities ranging from serious crimes, to sexual problems to delinquency, etc. In short there is not a need for a full time, fully equipped local police department to service the residents of West Bradford.

I point out the needs of my municipality for an explicit reason.

Many years ago, West Bradford's citizens chose not to invest in a local police force and the dynamics of our community currently do not require local, full time policing services. Other Pennsylvania State Police funding bills currently before the house mandate payment for "local police services" at significant cost without considering the unique characteristics of each municipality. THE CHOICE SHOULD REMAIN A LOCAL ONE and SB 984

enables that choice by allowing a municipality to initially choose to participate, and then allowing that municipality to pay for the level of service desired based on local needs and concerns.

Second, police work today requires very skilled, highly motivated and well-educated individuals who work in a well-organized, efficient and layered organization. It is not plausible for every municipality to provide that service on an individual basis. There are a number of municipal departments that are excellent local police departments but that does not mean that every municipality has the ability or the workload to create its own department. Some would advocate that every municipality should have its own department however having your own police department does not necessarily guarantee that that department will provide the service level that the citizens deserve. Being able to use the Pennsylvania State Police overcomes all of the concerns that a municipality could have: professional organization, logistical support, opportunities to employ highly specialized people, skills developed

by every officer because of their service over a broad area, dealing with the occasional “bad apple” that turn up in any organization, and the ability to muster a variety of resources for a particular need. The communities represented with me today support the concept of contracting with the Pennsylvania State Police in a limited capacity so as to benefit our community and provide additional revenue for use by PSP.

Third, if our communities were to establish our own police departments or create a regional force, that action would create an additional burden on the services and funding provided by the Commonwealth to local police departments, thereby diluting the benefits available to existing police departments. For example the Commonwealth assesses a tax on casualty insurance that is written on a company that is not domiciled in Pennsylvania. That money is then distributed to municipalities to supplement the pension costs of both uniformed and non-uniformed employees. Current distribution of those funds provides one unit

(approximately \$3000) for each non-uniformed employee and two units (approximately \$6000) for each police officer. If additional municipal forces are established that amount would be smaller as the amount collected would remain equal, or less due to the economy, while the distribution would be to a greater number of municipalities.

Last, another important provision of this bill is the ability of the local PSP commander to rotate his trooper's assignments at his discretion. This provision would add two distinct benefits; 1. It would not interfere with the career path of officers and 2. It would not perpetuate an officer's possible "skill deterioration" that might occur if he is assigned to a municipality with limited activity.

Furthermore, other peripheral activities such as the use of the courts, crime laboratories, training, etc. would be better served and be less costly to the Commonwealth because of the efficient manner that these services and other agencies are dealt with currently by the Pennsylvania State Police.

In conclusion this bill provides an opportunity for municipalities to help pay for and utilize a highly professional police department when the unique needs of a municipality and its residents do not require an individual department. There is no statewide statute mandating that every municipality provide for local policing services, just as there are very few statewide mandates dictating other municipal services. As with other possible local municipal services, the choice for policing services would appropriately remain a local one. Additional funding would be provided to Pennsylvania State Police under this bill and funding for existing departments would not be diluted. Ultimately, our citizens would benefit from having fully trained, experienced, and professional police service, a win-win situation for all involved.

Thank you. I would be glad to answer any questions that you have and I am sure that my colleagues would also welcome any questions you may have of them.