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State Representative Chris Ross
State Police Press Conference - June 6, 2000

Nothing is more fundamental to government than providing for the safety of its citizens. Here in Pennsylvania we have literally dozens of different law enforcement entities which coexist to provide this vital service. But prior to the creation of the Task Force on Improving Local Law Enforcement the General Assembly had never examined in a comprehensive way how these police forces fit together or were funded.

Over a two year period, the task force exhaustively analyzed the duties, training, and funding of these policing entities, and came up with a list of eight specific recommendations. Today the four House members who served on the task force are jointly introducing a package of six bills which will implement seven of the eight recommendations.

These bills will:

- Designate the Governor's Center for Local Government Services within the Department of Community and Economic Development to act as an advocate for municipal police at the state level.
- Create a low cost loan program to municipal police similar to the fund for volunteer fire companies. For the purchase, maintenance, and repairs of buildings, vehicles, and equipment.
- Allow municipalities to levy a special dedicated tax to fund police services.
- Designate funds through the Shared Municipal Services Program to facilitate joint municipal cooperation.
- Appoint a select committee to tackle the problem of lack of portability between police pension funds.
- Create a Municipal Police Fund to provide grants for municipalities which are considering providing police services.
- Reallocate fine moneys from the Vehicle Code and Judicial Code to those entities issuing the citation. Instead of distributing them to all municipalities regardless of whether they have a local police force.

This bi-partisan effort will, we believe, put additional financial support behind the local police forces who serve many of our citizens, help municipalities who are considering creating forces or sharing services, and signal that we at the state level intend to take seriously local police forces when legislation or budget matters are considered.

The final recommendation which requires the General Assembly to create a uniform basic training program for all criminal justice professionals requires some additional discussion between the Administration and the affected parties which is ongoing. We look forward to having appropriate implementing legislation drawn up when consensus is reached.