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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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HARRISBURG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact Jon Macks at 843-1700

O'DONNELL WORKS ON AID FOR JUVENILES

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell, D-Philadelphia, is leading an effort in the General Assembly to revamp the funding mechanism by which services are provided for incarcerated juveniles.

Under current law, juveniles who are held in detention centers awaiting adjudication receive services from county and private agencies and the courts. State funds are used to reimburse only the courts and private agencies. O'Donnell has prepared a bill which would allow state funds to be used for reimbursement of court provided services.

"Unlike adults, a juvenile who is incarcerated and not yet adjudicated cannot be set free on bail," O'Donnell said. "These juveniles have only been accused of a crime; they have not been found guilty or delinquent. If we are going to keep them incarcerated before adjudication, we must insure that adequate services are provided."

"This legislation is designed to add equity to the present system," O'Donnell said. "Currently, funds given to county and private agencies to provide services are not available for identical services provided by the courts. Because courts are sometimes better-equipped to provide these services than are county and private agencies, legislation which provides reimbursement funds for court services could result in an improvement in the efficiency and quality of these services."

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O'Donnell
add 1

O'Donnell said that the legislation will only affect services provided for a juvenile prior to his adjudication as a delinquent.

O'Donnell plans to confer with other House leaders next week in an effort to insure passage of the bill.

ROBERT W. O'DONNELL
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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

August 1, 1983

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: ROB DUNHAM, 843-1700

O'DONNELL ENDORSES MERIT SELECTION OF JUDGES

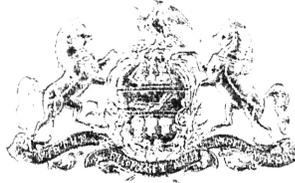
State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell (D-Germantown), the House Majority Whip, today advocated the merit selection of judges as "a necessary reform of our statewide judicial system."

O'Donnell, who appeared with District Attorney Ed Rendell at a recent press conference criticizing statewide election of appellate court judges, called for the implementation of a merit selection process "that is free from political entanglements and conflicts of interest, and that will be responsive and fair."

O'Donnell said that, "too often, political considerations get in the way of judicial qualifications in determining who is elected to our state Supreme Court, Superior Court, and Commonwealth Court. Recent allegations of judicial misconduct and political interference in statewide judicial elections clearly demonstrate that the system must be reformed."

"I have looked at merit selection systems in other states, and I have been favorably impressed," O'Donnell said. "However, I remain concerned that the process be sensitive to the inclusion of minorities and women. The appellate branch requires legal scholarship, high ethics, and practical street sense, and must be drawn from all segments of society."

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December 15, 1983

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: ROB DUNHAM, 843-1700

HOUSE PASSES CRIME VICTIMS BILLS

The State House of Representatives has approved a three-bill package of legislation that would create a Crime Victims Bill of Rights and expand the scope of state services offered to victims of crime.

The House also approved by a vote of 193-0 an amendment by State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell (D-Germantown), the House Majority Whip, that would extend victim services to Municipal Court Cases. The proposals originally had limited victim services to proceedings before the Courts of Common Pleas.

Mrs. Catherine Bachrach, coordinator of the Northwest Interfaith Movement Community Safety Program said "we consider the Crime Victims Bill of Rights to be landmark legislation. It provides long overdue recognition that victims and witnesses -- and not just defendants -- should receive equal protection under the law."

O'Donnell, who is a sponsor of the proposals, called the House action "an important step in humanizing court proceedings and ensuring that the criminal justice system treats crime victims fairly. Now that the House has passed the bills, we must all see to it that the State Senate gives its final legislative approval."

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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HARRISBURG

June 5, 1984

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: ROB DUNHAM, 843-1700

O'DONNELL FEE BILL PASSES HOUSE

The Pennsylvania House of Representatives by a unanimous 195-0 vote today approved State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell's bill that would raise a half million dollars in court fees each year for the City of Philadelphia.

The bill, which O'Donnell (D-Germantown) introduced only last month, would increase the fees assessed for various legal papers and motions.

O'Donnell called the bill "doubly beneficial to the City. First, it means more money for Philadelphia at a time when we need every dollar we can get. And second, it will fight the backlog in our overcrowded courts by discouraging frivolous and unnecessary legal motions."

O'Donnell noted that "the court fees in question have not been increased since 1959. It's about time we bring Philadelphia's fees into line with those charged in the rest of the state."

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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August 9, 1984

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: ROB DUNHAM, 843-1700

O'DONNELL APPOINTED TO CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMISSION

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell (D-Germantown) has been appointed by Mayor W. Wilson Goode to serve on Philadelphia's Criminal Justice Coordinating Commission.

O'Donnell, the House Majority Whip, will represent the state legislature on the Commission, which has been charged with developing solutions to the city's complex crime, safety, and court problems.

O'Donnell called the Commission assignment "a very substantial challenge. The problems of crime in our neighborhoods are enormous, and I'm happy to get the chance for deeper involvement in these issues."

The Criminal Justice Coordinating Commission is responsible for coordinating and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of Philadelphia's judicial operations. It formulates plans and policies on matters that involve two or more branches of the city criminal justice system.

"Our court system has very serious problems that need to be addressed, from building the new Justice Center and relieving prison overcrowding to making the courts fairer, more just, and more effective," O'Donnell said.

"I am looking forward to working with the Mayor, the District Attorney, and the other members of the Commission in tackling these problems."

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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February 14, 1986

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: ROB DUNHAM, 843-1700

O'DONNELL TO CHAIR NATIONAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell (D-East Falls), the House Majority Whip, has been appointed Chairman of the Law and Justice Committee of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

In accepting the appointment, O'Donnell said "I welcome the opportunity to work with other states to influence our national policy in these areas. It is important that the federal government deals effectively and responsibly with law and justice issues.

"The Law and Justice Committee historically has lobbied for federal aid to crime victims, missing and runaway children's programs, and to law enforcement agencies, and has opposed efforts to weaken the authority of individual states in consumer protection matters," O'Donnell explained. "As chairman, I will have the chance to testify before Congress and to meet with federal legislators to outline improvements for our national criminal justice policies."

O'Donnell, who previously served as chairman of NCSL's Legislative Organization and Management Committee, was a member of the House Judiciary Committee before joining the House Democratic leadership in 1980. He has been a member of the Mayor's Criminal Justice Coordinating Commission and has sponsored the Pennsylvania divorce reform bill as well as other court reform measures.