

## **PA ONE CALL CONFERENCE**

**Thank you Bill/Joe... I want to first say that it is an honor to be before your membership at your annual conference.**

**Over the past several years, I have had numerous opportunities to work with “Pennsylvania One Call”. The hard work, dedication and expertise of each and every person in your organization; is something many organizations strive to aspire towards. The product you deliver,...(PAUSE)...when you really think about it,... is safety and the protection of existing vital infrastructure. In the post September 11, 2001 world in which we now live... the PA One Call System remains not only a critical asset to local governments and construction entities,...it is now a vital resource for local, state and federal Homeland security initiatives.**

**Even though major combat activity in Iraq is winding down...threats of terrorism have not. Our nation and state must continue to remain vigilant in our efforts to make our neighborhoods, our infrastructure, our public places and our citizens safe from the cowardly tactics of terrorism. Terrorism and its threat to our borders is now...more than ever before...a threat which we must “step up to the plate” and encounter in a proactive manner. Many here today can remember the civil defense days of the 1950’s...and the “duck and cover” drills which ensued...and today remain a vivid memory for many folks. Well... I don’t have any “duck and cover” tactics to unveil here today...but, I do want to take this opportunity to briefly discuss Homeland Security initiatives, which are now being reviewed by the committee which I chair.**

**The first part of our legislative package...is the creation of a House Resolution, which Speaker Perzel has prime sponsored, with the support and efforts of Representative Bill Keller. This Resolution directs the Pennsylvania House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee to undertake an extensive study on Homeland Security initiatives for the Commonwealth,...and furthermore, this committee, with the assistance of various homeland security field experts...will issue a report to the full House of Representatives at the earliest practicable date.**

**The first in a series of hearings is to be held in Philadelphia on May 8<sup>th</sup>. The focus of this particular hearing will be on “International Transportation and Logistics Security”...which will have a strong emphasis on the security of our ports. As well, on May 15, the Committee**

**will conduct an informational meeting on the subject of Geospacial Information Systems and Mapping. Mr. Kiger has graciously accepted the committee's invitation to be a panelist that day...and I look forward to hearing expert discussion on homeland security and the role that modern mapping systems will play to enhance our preparedness and response. Future hearings will examine security issues that involve railroads, public transportation systems, public utilities, recreational facilities, and various other facets of homeland security.**

**As well, the House will be considering a homeland security package of bills in the following weeks. The subject matter of these bills ranges from...the creation of an enhanced wireless 911 telephone system...which will allow county 911 centers to locate persons calling 911 on a wireless**



**telephone,...to HB 8, which provides for a \$25 million grant program for Volunteer Fire and EMS departments,...as well as HB 767 (J. Taylor) which creates a state funded municipal firefighter training program for cities and municipalities with career firefighters..., and HB 1018, which establishes the Office of Homeland Security in law, and outlines the powers and duties of the Director who would now be confirmed by the Senate. The House will also consider HB 780...which would require the PEMA Council to review the training and equipment needs of our county HazMat teams,...in regard to their emergency response capabilities in the event of a chemical or biological emergency that is the result of a terrorist incident.**

**Overall, this legislative package is two-fold in purpose.**

**First, there are several bills which will enhance the**

**Commonwealth's emergency preparedness capabilities upon their enactment into law. Second, the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee's examination process, coupled with the enactment of a statewide mutual aid system by the General Assembly in the latter part of last session...will move the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania into a position where we are ready to receive and fully implement any and all programs which we anticipate the federal Office of Homeland Security will be handing down to the states in the near future.**

**In the coming fiscal year...approximately \$113 million in state and federal monies have been devoted to the Commonwealth's Homeland Security efforts. As additional federal monies and specific programs evolve at the federal level, this package will serve as the Commonwealth's**

**“catcher’s mitt”...thereby assuring that the Commonwealth is in a position to hit the ground running on these various federal homeland security initiatives. “A day late and a dollar short” is unacceptable when it comes to matters of Homeland Security. Pennsylvania will be at the ready...and we will continue to do all we can do to protect the citizens of our great Commonwealth...and provide exceptional emergency services on a daily basis for all emergencies...whether they are brought on by natural disasters or acts of terrorism...Pennsylvania stands ready.**

**We stand ready to work with communities, government agencies and private sector industries. I look forward to working with PA One Call on these homeland security issues, as well as on initiatives that are vital to the successful**

**delivery of the product that the PA One Call system provides  
to our communities across Pennsylvania.**

**Thank you and have a great conference.**