

HOUSE BILL 1154

Good morning, my name is Thomas J. Nestel, Deputy Commissioner, Administration and Training, Philadelphia Police Department. I am here today to discuss House Bill 1154 which is attempting to institute uniform identification cards for all Law Enforcement personnel in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

It is my recommendation that a further study be done before implementation of House Bill 1154. Uniform Police Officers in the City of Philadelphia wear a badge with their badge number clearly visible on their outer most garment and a frontispiece with the same number on their uniform hat. Patrol personnel also wear a name-tag on their uniform shirt. If House Bill 1154 were implemented, I recommend the City of Philadelphia be exempt.

I feel that exempting the City of Philadelphia from the requirements of House Bill 1154 would not set a precedent. As the law is presently written, the second largest police department in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania State Police) is excluded from House Bill 1154.

It would be difficult for the Philadelphia Police Department to adapt the new uniform identification card. Presently, the PPD's identification card contains photograph, bar codes, name, rank, and badge number. This card is utilized not only for identification but also for evidence tracking and monitoring the attendance of our personnel in court. Other enhancements are being developed for the utilization of the bar-coded identification card.

The administrative and financial burden in implementing this proposed legislation would present a hardship to the City of Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Police Department has invested one million two hundred thousand dollars, (1,200,000) for its image capturing system (electronic mug shots) which is utilized to produce the department's identification cards. The Philadelphia Police Department will have seven thousand sworn personnel by June 30, 1998. Implementation of House Bill 1154 would require the department to issue 7000 photo identification cards every other year.

The Pennsylvania Municipal Police Officer's Education & Training Commission presently maintains a central registry which contains information and fingerprints on every certified Police Officer within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This appears to negate the necessity of creating another central data base. The Commission also issues a bi-annual certification card for law enforcement officers in the Commonwealth. If House Bill 1154 were implemented, consideration should be given to redesigning or eliminating the current MPOETC certification card.

I recommend that House Bill 1154 not be enacted until a study is conducted to address the serious problem of individuals impersonating law enforcement officials. Consideration should be given to exploring the feasibility of enacting legislation to prevent unauthorized personnel from purchasing police equipment such as uniforms, badges, dome lights and other police related equipment.