

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
RE EMERGENCY VEHICLE LIGHTING
HARRISBURG, PA
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1997 1 PM

STATEMENT BY
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PENNSYLVANIA CONSTABLES, INC
NATIONAL CONSTABLES ASSN

May I thank the Transportation Committee for affording me the opportunity to testify regarding identifying lights on law enforcement vehicles, particularly for elected and appointed constables.

I appear here as Executive Director of the statewide Pennsylvania Constables Incorporated (PCI), an affiliate of the National Constables Association, the professional voice of the constable system in the United States.

The PCI is an outgrowth of the initial Pennsylvania State Constables Association (PSCA), founded in Bucks, Delaware and Montgomery Counties in 1971.

Our President, Constable William Tuthill of the Township of Bristol in the County of Bucks, on behalf of the Board of Directors, has asked me to convey the consensus of the leadership and those working constables within the PCI.

Constable Tuthill states, "Under the present statutes, the scope of the duties and responsibilities of the position of constable, does not require any kind of specific lights to grace a vehicle operated by an elected or appointed constable."

Sheriff Larry Michaels, the popular sheriff in Bucks County, agrees and has opined that "Neither the constable nor the sheriff have need for lights on their vehicles". However, Police Chief "Tommy" Mills of Bristol Township has stated, "State and municipal police, as law enforcement personnel, should wear identical uniforms with vehicular lights designed alike."

Obviously the content of the duties and responsibilities of a constable should determine whether there is a need for a constable's vehicle to be designated both as an emergency vehicle and provided with identifying emergency lights. Such a network would indicate their presence and their need for a quick response to a request for instant assistance.

The constable system employed and statuted in 38 states amongst the 2,538 counties in the United States, enjoys official emergency lights on their vehicles. In all of these states, the constable provides his own vehicle.

With the aforementioned awareness, may I add - vehicular lights would be necessary under two proposals offered by the National Constables Association (NCA) ... (1) Police-Constable Buddy System and (2) a County Government Administration of the Constable System.

Under these proposals examples for vehicular lights would include:

(1) Speed checks - which presently require two police vehicles and at least three patrol persons at substantive cost to the taxpayers.

(a) the staff would include two constables paid on an hourly fee basis and two constable vehicles at no cost to the taxpayers.

(2) Fire Police Duties: To assist the fire departments and local police where necessary.

(3) Traffic Duties: Where authorized by the police department

(4) Accident Presence and Reporting: When authorized by the police departments.

(5) Transportation of defendants in criminal cases to arraignments and to prison.

(6) Security protection duties at locations within the local business and industrial communities.

(7) Community events as parades and other gatherings.

In most states, constables work both on a fee or salary basis. In both cases they have proven to be the most cost-effective, income-producing agency in the delivery of justice on the local municipal scene.

Under the fee plus mileage system, the wrong doer is assessed the constable fees at almost no expense to the taxpayer.

Finally, there is a critical need for regular meetings of all local law enforcement agencies for an ongoing understanding and a unified approach to each others turf area of duties and responsibilities, and how to better serve their residents, business, industrial, commercial, labor and educational communities.

Thank you.
Hal Lefcourt, APR
Executive Director, PCI/NCA