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HOUSE BILL 523, STORAGE OF FIREARMS
HOUSE BILL 1484, HANDGUN SAFETY PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
HOUSE BILL 1793, PROHIBITING FIREARMS IN MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS
"OPENING STATEMENT"

I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THIS COMMITTEE FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY BEFORE YOU THIS MORNING.

I REPRESENT COLONEL PAUL J. EVANKO, THE COMMISSIONER OF THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE. ACCOMPANYING ME THIS MORNING IS TROOPER KURT TEMPINSKI WHO IS A BALLISTICS EXAMINER ASSIGNED TO OUR BETHLEHEM REGIONAL LABORATORY.

AS A PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCY, THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE GENERALLY SUPPORTS ANY AND ALL EFFORTS WHICH HAVE AS THEIR OBJECTIVE THE PROTECTION OF THE COMMONWEALTH'S CITIZENS. THE THREE HOUSE BILLS UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THIS COMMITTEE CONCERN FIREARMS WHICH OUR TROOPERS, DURING THE COURSE OF INVESTIGATIONS, ENCOUNTER ON A REGULAR BASIS. IN 1997, THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE LABORATORY, BALLISTICS UNIT, WHICH PROVIDES BALLISTICS SERVICES TO ALL POLICE AGENCIES IN THE

COMMONWEALTH, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THOSE IN ALLEGHENY AND PHILADELPHIA COUNTIES, RECEIVED 1,475 FIREARM CASE SUBMISSIONS. OF THAT NUMBER, 603 CASES (41%) WERE RELATED TO HOMICIDES, SUICIDES OR AGGRAVATED ASSAULTS. IN A MAJORITY OF THESE CASES (63%), HANDGUNS WERE USED. WHILE WE DO NOT COMPILE STATISTICS RELATING EXCLUSIVELY TO ACCIDENTAL SHOOTINGS, WE KNOW THAT THEY REPRESENT A RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBER OF ALL SUBMISSIONS TO OUR LABORATORIES.

WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPROPER, ILLEGAL USE OF FIREARMS AND THEIR ACCESSIBILITY TO THOSE PERSONS INTENT ON SUCH ACTIVITY. WITH REGARD TO THE HOUSE BILLS UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THIS COMMITTEE TPR. TEMPINSKI IS PREPARED TO PRESENT SPECIFIC INFORMATION HE HAS OBTAINED. GENERALLY, I WOULD LIKE TO OFFER AN OVERVIEW.

THERE ARE MANY TYPES OF SECURITY DEVICES AVAILABLE FOR THE SAFE STORAGE OF FIREARMS. THEY RANGE IN PRICE FROM THE INEXPENSIVE TO THE VERY EXPENSIVE. THEY ALL HAVE ONE COMMON FAULT AND THAT IS, MUCH LIKE OTHER SAFETY DEVICES, THEY ARE OF NO VALUE IF NOT USED. ANY LAW WHICH IS PASSED NECESSITATES A VIGOROUS EDUCATION PROGRAM DESIGNED TO INFORM THE PUBLIC OF THE LAW'S REQUIREMENTS AND TO ENCOURAGE ENTHUSIASTIC, VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE.

THE PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A STATE HANDGUN STANDARD COMMISSION MAY BE ONE WAY TO ENCOURAGE THIS COMPLIANCE. WE ARE, HOWEVER, CONCERNED ABOUT THE SAFETY STANDARD WHICH REQUIRES THAT A HANDGUN MUST BE PERSONALIZED IN ORDER TO BE SOLD, POSSESSED, TRANSFERRED, AND SO FORTH, WITHIN THE COMMONWEALTH. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, THIS TECHNOLOGY IS NOT YET FULLY DEVELOPED AND IT CERTAINLY IS NOT YET COMMERCIALY AVAILABLE. TPR. TEMPINSKI WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH SPECIFIC DETAILS CONCERNING THIS ISSUE.

THE PROPOSAL TO PROHIBIT A FIREARM OR OTHER DANGEROUS WEAPON IN A MUNICIPAL BUILDING IS LARGELY COVERED BY SECTION 908, PROHIBITED OFFENSIVE WEAPONS, TITLE 18, PENNSYLVANIA CONSOLIDATED STATUTES. THIS CRIME PROHIBITS POSSESSION OF FIREARMS OR DANGEROUS WEAPONS AT ANY TIME, IN ANY PLACE, BY ANY PERSON OTHER THAN THOSE SPECIFICALLY EXEMPT. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SECTION 908 AND THE PROPOSED NEW LAW IS THAT PERSONS NOW LAWFULLY LICENSED TO CARRY CONCEALED FIREARMS UNDER THE LAWS OF THE COMMONWEALTH WOULD NO LONGER BE PERMITTED TO CARRY A FIREARM IN A MUNICIPAL BUILDING.

THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT THIS BRIEF STATEMENT. BEFORE TPR. TEMPINSKI PRESENTS HIS INFORMATION I WILL BE PLEASED TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.