

Testimony: Act 2 Training

Dr. William G. Pettigrew, Jr.

House Judiciary Committee Hearing

Thursday, February 21, 2008

Good afternoon. I want to thank the Chairman and the members of the House Judiciary Committee for allowing me to share information on the training that deputy sheriffs receive in Pennsylvania. My name is Dr. William Pettigrew. I am the superintendent of the Mars Area School District and a member of the Deputy Sheriffs' Education and Training Board.

The Deputy Sheriffs' Education and Training Board was created as an advisory board to the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency by Act 2 of 1984. The 10-member board has two Common Pleas judges, two sheriffs, three current or former deputy sheriffs, one educator, one county commissioner and a representative from the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office.

Under Act 2, the Board is charged with establishing and administering a program of basic and continuing education training for deputy sheriffs. The Act requires newly hired deputy sheriffs to attend basic training in order to be certified by the Commonwealth as a deputy sheriff. In addition, all deputy sheriffs are required to renew their certification through continuing education every two years.

In 1999 and 2000, the Board and its training development contractor, Temple University's Department of Criminal Justice, produced and delivered a core 560-hour curriculum. In December 2002, the Independent Regulatory Review Commission approved the regulations of the Deputy Sheriffs' Education and Training Board, which included expanding the Deputy Sheriffs' Basic Training Program from 560 hours to 760 hours.

The increased hours included topics of Patrol Procedures and Operations, Motor Vehicle Code/Accident investigation, DUI Enforcement, Criminal Investigation and Drug Related Investigations.

Today, all deputy sheriffs are required to take 760 hours (19 weeks) of training at the Pennsylvania State University's Justice and Safety Institute in State College. Under Act 2, deputy sheriffs have one year from the start of employment to obtain this certification.

As you know, municipal police officers in Pennsylvania are required to complete Act 120 training. This program is delivered at more than 20 locations across the Commonwealth, while Penn State is the only location for deputy sheriffs training. I believe this ensures the continuity of training for all deputy sheriffs who receive identical and consistent training from the same training source no matter where they are employed.

We have supplied members of the Committee with a comparison sheet on the Act 2 and Act 120 training programs. You can see from the comparison that the programs are very similar. Deputy

Sheriffs need additional training for civil law procedures, courthouse security and prisoner transportation.

Some of the training programs under Act 2 include:

- Introduction to Criminal Justice and Civil Law (12 hours)
- Criminal Law (60 hours)
- State and Local Antiterrorism Training (16 hours)
- Accident Investigation/HAZMAT training (24 hours)
- Principals of Criminal Investigation (44 hours)
- Family Crisis/Domestic Violence (8 hours)
- Lethal Weapons/Proficiency (80 hours)

Clearly, the Act 2 training program as administered by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency is a comprehensive law enforcement training program. As a member of the Deputy Sheriffs' Education and Training Board, I have stressed the need for physical conditioning in our basic training and continuing education. Deputy sheriffs are required to take 48 hours of physical conditioning as part of training for certification.

During our 2005-2007 training cycle, continuing education provided three separate courses of instruction, including Use of Force, Prison Transport, Infectious Disease Prevention, Legal Updates, Drug Identification, Cultural Diversity and Domestic Violence.

The deputy sheriffs who attend the training program and receive their Act 2 certification from the Commonwealth through PCCD have a wide knowledge of law enforcement issues and procedures. They are trained to handle law enforcement situations and can be a valuable asset in protecting our communities.

As an educator, I know that there are school districts that rely on deputy sheriffs as school resource officers. I urge the General Assembly to pass House Bill 466 to reaffirm, by statute, the authority of deputy sheriffs to perform law enforcement duties as needed in their communities.

The training they receive warrants their designation as law enforcement personnel.

I will now answer any questions you have on deputy sheriff's training. If I cannot immediately answer the question, I will work with the PCCD staff to get you an answer.

Thank you.