

Testimony of Joseph Kovel

President of the Pennsylvania State Troopers Association

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My name is Joseph Kovel and I have the honor and privilege of serving as President of the Pennsylvania State Troopers Association. We represent nearly 3900 State Troopers who protect the neighborhoods, streets and highways of every county of this Commonwealth. Unfortunately that number of troopers is well below the authorized complement of 4300.

I would like to thank Senator Gene Yaw serving as Chairman of this subcommittee of the Senate Law and Justice Committee and Chairwoman Tarah Toohil who is presiding over the subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee today for inviting me here to testify. Additionally, I would like to thank members of both committees for taking time to attend today's hearing and for the time they have taken in the past to devote to Pennsylvania State Police issues.

I am here today to speak about the Pennsylvania State Police complement issues, but specifically what the effects have been on the complement due to Marcellus Shale drilling. I have specifically looked at the statistics of the Mansfield station in Tioga County and the Towanda station in Bradford County.

Looking first at the Mansfield station for the years 2009-2011. The number of incidents responded to each year has increased 56% over that time frame. Vehicle crashes have increased 63% over the same time period. DUI arrests increased approximately 22% and the number of traffic citations increased 43%. Meanwhile the number of additional sworn members added to Mansfield compliment since 2010 has been 6 troopers an increase of 26%.

Looking at the Towanda Station the number of incidents responded to each year has increased 26.5% from 2009-2011. Vehicle crashes have increased 66% during that time frame. DUI arrests have increased 110% and traffic arrests have increased 55% as well. Since 2010 they have added 4 sworn members to the staffing levels at PSP Towanda an increase of almost 12%.

These statistics show that the workload has increased dramatically since Marcellus Shale drilling has begun across Pennsylvania. I specifically looked at these northern areas of Pennsylvania due to the location of today's hearing. These same types of statistics are occurring in Washington County, Pa. where a large amount of Marcellus Shale drilling has been occurring. With the serious increases in vehicle crashes, DUI's, requests for assistance in curbing bar fights, and the increased need for motor carrier safety inspections, the need for more Troopers in these areas is critical. But what I ask this committee today is where do we take the Troopers from to cover these areas? How many extra Troopers do you have in your home areas that you can give up to cover the Marcellus Shale region?

The Pennsylvania State Police have vacancies approaching 450 and a great many more retirements are expected within the next year. Colonel Noonan himself has stated that it is conceivable that the number of vacancies within the Pennsylvania State Police could reach 1,000 by this time next year. I come to you today on behalf of the families of Pennsylvania and say, protect us. I come to you today on behalf of the Troopers from the greatest State Police agency in the country and say, reinforce us. As our numbers continue decline the obvious question is when does the Pennsylvania State Police become reactive to crime instead of proactive in preventing it? The answer is today. We struggle with these declining numbers to provide the level of protection the families of Pennsylvania deserve and have become accustomed to. I have testified before and I know the committee members agree that one of the core functions of government is to provide for public safety. I ask you to go back to Harrisburg and encourage your fellow legislators to find the funding necessary to fund the Pennsylvania State Police. I ask you to demand that the money be found to keep Pennsylvania safe.

Again I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I would be happy to answer any questions.