

1 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
2 COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

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4 Pennsylvania State Police/Homeland Security
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6 House Appropriations Committee

7 Main Capitol Building
8 Majority Caucus, Room 140
9 Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

10 Tuesday, March 1, 2016 - 1:00 p.m.

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12 COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

13 Honorable William Adolph, Majority Chairman
14 Honorable Karen Boback
15 Honorable Jim Christiana
16 Honorable Gary Day
17 Honorable George Dunbar
18 Honorable Keith Greiner
19 Honorable Seth Grove
20 Honorable Sue Helm
21 Honorable Warren Kampf
22 Honorable Fred Keller
23 Honorable Tom Killion
24 Honorable Jim Marshall
25 Honorable Kurt Masser
Honorable David Millard
Honorable Duane Milne
Honorable Mark Mustio
Honorable Michael Peifer
Honorable Jeffrey Pyle
Honorable Marguerite Quinn
Honorable Curt Sonney
Honorable Mike Vereb

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COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Honorable Joseph Markosek, Minority Chairman
Honorable Leslie Acosta
Honorable Matthew Bradford
Honorable Tim Briggs
Honorable Donna Bullock
Honorable Mary Jo Daley
Honorable Madeleine Dean
Honorable Maria Donatucci
Honorable Stephen Kinsey
Honorable Michael O'Brien
Honorable Kevin Schreiber
Honorable Peter Schweyer

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Honorable Matt Gabler
Honorable Mark Gillen
Honorable Will Tallman
Honorable Tommy Sankey
Honorable Cris Dush
Honorable Barry Jozwiak
Honorable Mark Keller
Honorable Steve McCarter
Honorable Rick Saccone
Honorable Todd Stephens
Honorable Leanne Krueger-Braneky
Honorable Vanessa Lowery Brown
Honorable Jaret Gibbons
Honorable Dom Costa
Honorable William Keller
Honorable Mike Regan

Honorable Chris Sainato, Chairman
Democratic Veterans & Emergency Preparedness
Committee

Honorable Paul Costa, Chairman
Democratic Liquor Control Committee

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STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

David Donley
Majority Executive Director

Ritchie LaFaver
Majority Deputy Executive

Curt Schroder, Esquire
Majority Chief Counsel

Miriam Fox
Minority Executive Director

Tara Trees, Esquire
Minority Chief Counsel

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INDEX OF TESTIFIERS

PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE

Colonel Tyree C. Blocker
Commissioner

Lt. Colonel Lisa Christie
Deputy Commissioner of Administration

Major William Horgas
Acting Deputy Commissioner of Operations

Lt. Colonel Stephen Bucar
Deputy Commissioner of Staff

Marc Infantino
Director of Bureau of Staff Services

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1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.
2 Good afternoon, everyone. I'd like to reconvene
3 the House Appropriations Committee.

4 But before we get started, we have some
5 honored guests. And at this time, I'm going to
6 turn the mike over to Chairman Markosek.

7 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: Thank you,
8 Chairman Adolph. And welcome everybody. Good
9 afternoon.

10 Before we get started, I do have some
11 guests here who have traveled up here from my
12 hometown of Monroeville, Pennsylvania, which is the
13 eastern part of Allegheny County. With us here
14 today, and they're here for an event, I guess that
15 will be held here, they're being honored for the
16 Narcan use that some of our officers have been
17 involved with that have saved some lives.

18 So, I just wanted to -- First of all,
19 maybe they can all stand up, are the mayor of
20 Monroeville, Greg Erosenko; our Monroeville Chief
21 of Police, who is also the cousin of Representative
22 George Dunbar, Doug Cole; Officer Depolis
23 (phonetic) and Officer Lukowich, who are also here
24 from Monroeville, who traveled up here to be
25 honored today. So I just -- Gentlemen, thank you

1 for your service.

2 (Applause).

3 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Of course, I
4 was not going to be outdone by Chairman Markosek,
5 so I immediately called some folks from Delaware
6 County who happened to be here as well. And it's
7 really an honor, because these folks have been
8 involved in this drug issue for a long time. It
9 just happens that they're here today and,
10 obviously, our state police could understand this.

11 With us today is Delaware County's
12 District Attorney Jack Whelan. Jack, if you would
13 stand. Emily Harris; Emily, please stand. And
14 John Ryan, the head of the CID, Department of
15 Delaware County. Thank you, gentlemen and lady,
16 for an outstanding --

17 (Applause).

18 MR. WHELAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
19 May I be excused?

20 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Yes, you may.
21 I never have a disagreement with our district
22 attorney.

23 Our first hearing today, ladies and
24 gentlemen, is with the Pennsylvania State Police.
25 I'm going to turn the mike over, right over to the

1 one in charge. Commissioner, the mike is yours.

2 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Thank you,
3 Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to be here
4 with you today, and I would ask that I be allowed
5 to make some prepared remarks that I have--they'll
6 be brief--just kind of give you an overview of some
7 things.

8 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Go right
9 ahead. And before or after your prepared remarks,
10 if you'd introduce your staff --

11 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Will do.

12 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: -- it would
13 be appreciated. Thank you.

14 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Well, that's part
15 of the opening remarks, sir.

16 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Very good.

17 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: As indicated, my
18 name's Colonel Tyree Blocker, and I'm the
19 Commissioner of the Pennsylvania State Police.
20 With me today is our Acting Deputy Commissioner of
21 Operations, William Horgas. And to my immediate
22 right is Lieutenant Colonel Lisa Christie, who is
23 our Deputy Commissioner of Administration and
24 Professional Responsibility. To my left is
25 Lieutenant Colonel Steve Bucar, who is our Deputy

1 Commissioner of Staff. To Lieutenant Bucar's left
2 is Mr. Marc Infantino, who is our Director of our
3 Bureau of Staff Services.

4 Mr. Chairman, over the past year and a
5 half, the actions and practices of law enforcement
6 agencies have come under intense public scrutiny.
7 Nationally, public protests over police-related
8 incidents have become almost commonplace. Whether
9 those events were occurring in Ferguson, Missouri,
10 or New York City, or Baltimore, Maryland, or
11 Chicago, Illinois, they were reflective of a
12 significant portion of those communities expressing
13 dissatisfaction, suspicion, and distrust with their
14 law enforcement providers.

15 However, I am pleased to note that the
16 Pennsylvania State Police has largely remained
17 above such public criticism and continues to enjoy
18 broad-based support from the citizens and guests of
19 this great Commonwealth. We could not enjoy the
20 support without the strong backing and commitment
21 to public safety displayed by Governor Wolf and
22 members of the General Assembly. That support has
23 not gone unnoticed, and I would like to express my
24 sincere gratitude for that support.

25 I could go on and highlight a number of

1 other things, but my staff and I are very much
2 interested in listening to the committee; answering
3 any questions and concerns that they may have at
4 this time.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,
6 Commissioner. And welcome, everyone.

7 This, obviously, is a budget hearing on
8 the fiscal year '16-17. However, the Chairs do
9 give a little leeway to the members to get involved
10 in some policy decisions, and so forth, as well.
11 So I'm sure you're going to hear all types of
12 questions regarding policies and, of course, some
13 budgetary issues as well. Okay.

14 The custom of this committee, Chairman
15 Markosek and I, is, we invite the chairmen of the
16 standing committees of the House when it's related
17 to the state agency. And with us today, we have
18 Chairman Chris Sainato, Chairman of -- the Democrat
19 Chair of Veterans and Emergency. And also with us
20 today is the Democratic Chair of the Liquor
21 Control, Paul Costa. So welcome, Chairmen.

22 Chairman Markosek for any opening
23 comments or questions.

24 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: Yes. Thank
25 you, Chairman Adolph. Gentlemen and lady, welcome.

1 I'm glad to see you're here, and you do a fine job
2 and keep up the good work.

3 Chairman Joe Petrarca of our Judiciary
4 Committee could not be here, but he asked me to
5 maybe get a status report on the closing of the
6 barracks in Westmoreland County, the Route 66
7 barracks, which is in his district. They don't
8 want those moved, apparently, and he asked to get a
9 status report on that, and also to indicate that if
10 you're going to close that, for whatever reason,
11 that you put the new barracks near where that is
12 because it's easy to get to and offers his
13 constituents, in his opinion, some very good
14 service.

15 Can you comment on that at all?

16 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Sure. I believe
17 you're referring to our Kiski Valley station.
18 Quite frankly, Representative, we're always looking
19 very critically at our state police installations
20 to ensure that they are located in, geographically,
21 to our primary jurisdiction. We take pride in the
22 fact that we have stations, geographically, located
23 in the Commonwealth to ensure that we provide
24 maximum services.

25 With regard to that particular station,

1 I would probably redirect that question over to
2 Marc Infantino, who is our staff services person
3 to, perhaps, maybe give you an update, if he has
4 it, on the status of that station.

5 MR. INFANTINO: Yes, sir.

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.
7 If you can pull that mike as close as possible to
8 you. It's not real strong.

9 MR. INFANTINO: It looks like we've
10 actually selected a new lease, and it's out for
11 over at DGS for board approval.

12 When we do a station relocation, it's
13 usually within a 5-mile radius of the current
14 station, in concert with the troop and our bureau
15 of research and development for where the zones
16 have been adjusted, or whatever.

17 So, I'm not exactly sure exactly the
18 location of the new facility. We can get back to
19 you on that. But it would be within that 5-mile
20 radius, I believe.

21 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: Okay.
22 Well, I appreciate that. If you would maybe make
23 it a point to respond to Chairman Joe Petrarca with
24 that information. And I will also, after we're
25 done here, provide you with a copy of the letter he

1 had given to me indicating his apologies for not
2 being able to be here and ask the question. But,
3 he is the Chairman of our Judiciary Commitment, and
4 we wanted to make sure that his question got asked.
5 Thank you.

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,
7 Chairman. The next question will be by Chairman
8 Chris Sainato.

9 CHAIRMAN SAINATO: Thank you, Mr.
10 Chairman.

11 Thank you, Commissioner. And I do want
12 to echo Chairman Markosek and Adolph's thank you
13 for the great job that you do. It's one of those
14 jobs that's thankless. I know with what's
15 occurring today in society, it's not an easy job
16 each and every day that you're out there. I have
17 just two quick questions.

18 The first one is on the statewide radio
19 system. I know our committees had that discussion
20 in the past. It's my understanding that the
21 initiative cost is close to \$750 million, and
22 you're still having some complications with it.
23 Could you comment on that?

24 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: I appreciate that
25 question. Our statewide radio system is a critical

1 component to trooper's safety in the Commonwealth
2 of Pennsylvania. It is absolutely essential that
3 we have the capability to communicate, as
4 necessary, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

5 We are in the -- We're in the position
6 where we are transitioning to what we call a Peak
7 25 system that will really enhance trooper's
8 capability to communicate. There will be some
9 infrastructure challenges that will need to be
10 addressed in terms of site towers to facilitate
11 that. There will also be a need for some enhanced
12 radios to coincide with the new Peak 25 system.

13 We are looking at this system as
14 comprehensive as we possibly can. We have a task
15 force, not only comprised of members of the state
16 police, but also members of other state agencies so
17 that we can be very comprehensive in our overall
18 view of communication; whether it's within the
19 state police; whether it's within PennDOT,
20 Department of Corrections, PEMA. We're looking at
21 being comprehensive in addressing the current state
22 of our radio system.

23 It is a challenge for us to do that.
24 But my sense is, from speaking with individuals in
25 the Administration, that they are committed to

1 ensuring that all state employees who need access
2 to the radio system have that, but particularly
3 with the state police because it does boils down to
4 an officer safety issue.

5 Lieutenant Colonel Steven Bucar is our
6 Deputy Commissioner of Staff, and the radio project
7 really falls within his area of responsibility. If
8 I might add, he and his staff are doing a very good
9 job of coordinating that.

10 Lieutenant Colonel, you might want to
11 share some of your thoughts there.

12 LT. COLONEL BUCAR: Yes, sir. My staff
13 has looked at the infrastructure that was built
14 over the past 10, 15 years. Some changes need to
15 be made to allow this radio network to be an open
16 standard so that agencies can purchase radios off
17 the shelf, and those radios will work on this
18 network.

19 Currently, the network is limited to
20 proprietary software radios that have reached their
21 service life. And with small adjustments to the
22 system that's been built, the infrastructure that
23 was built over the past 15 years, the towers, the
24 microwave network, all of that is compatible with
25 the adjustments to a P25 system.

1 So, essentially, we have to replace the
2 radio; the radios in -- in -- the repeaters in the
3 cars, the repeaters at the base of the towers so
4 they'll accept the P25 open standard radios, and
5 that radio network should be very robust after
6 those changes are made.

7 CHAIRMAN SAINATO: All right. Thank
8 you, Commissioner. I'm glad to hear it. It seems
9 like you have everything under control. That's
10 all.

11 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

12 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Before we get
13 the next question, I'd like to recognize some
14 members of the General Assembly that have joined
15 us. They're not on the committee, but they are
16 interested in the state police issues, and that is
17 Representative Saccone, Representative Dom Costa,
18 Representative Jozwiak, Representative Gillen, and
19 Representative Regan. Thank you for joining us.

20 The next question will be asked by
21 Representative Jim Marshall.

22 REPRESENTATIVE MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr.
23 Chairman.

24 Thank you, Commissioner, for being here
25 today and for your service to our Commonwealth. I

1 have a few short questions for you.

2 Last week I had the pleasure of
3 recognizing a trooper on his retirement, and I went
4 to the barracks to visit with him and to have a
5 tour of the barracks. My question is, it seems
6 that there's a large number of your force that may
7 be nearing retirement age. Will there be enough
8 cadets? Is there enough revenue in your budget to
9 have a cadet class keep up with your retirements?

10 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Thank you,
11 Representative. It's clear that the attrition rate
12 for the Pennsylvania State Police continues to be a
13 challenge. However, we are fortunate, in that,
14 Governor Wolf understands that challenge and has
15 committed to, systematically, ensuring that the
16 state police have cadet classes going through our
17 academy.

18 However, the unknown variable with
19 respect to our complement has to do with trying to
20 get our arms around the number of our members that
21 anticipate retirement. Retirement is a very
22 personal decision, as I'm sure we all know. And
23 with that being the unknown variable, we've tried
24 to be out in front of this challenge regarding our
25 complement.

1 As such, Governor Wolf has shared with
2 us--that is, the state police--that there will be a
3 minimum of three, a maximum of four, cadet classes
4 in the next fiscal year. That will elevate the
5 state police to what we call the public safety line
6 when it comes to the number of troops.

7 As all of the Representatives know, our
8 complement, enlisted complement department, is
9 4,719. It is our desire to stay somewhere in the
10 area of 4,500. We considered that, as an
11 organization, as our public safety line, in that,
12 it's important for us to have that number of
13 troopers to take care of our day-in and day-out,
14 very seriously -- very serious public safety duties
15 and responsibilities around the state.

16 So, I think that with the unknown
17 variable of retirements, on the opposite side of
18 that, we do have the commitment for somewhere in
19 the neighborhood of 350 cadets over the next fiscal
20 year; that, if that equation stays like we think it
21 should, that should keep us above that 4,500 line
22 in terms of enlisted members, and that will allow
23 us to meet our duties and responsibilities.

24 Would we like to be closer to 4,719?
25 Absolutely. But we recognize that the unknown

1 variable of the number of people retiring is
2 speculative at this point.

3 REPRESENTATIVE MARSHALL: Thank you. A
4 question about the vehicles that you use. I
5 understand you use American-made product from
6 American auto makers. Are there enough options?
7 Are there enough companies making units that meet
8 your standards? Do you have any concerns acquiring
9 vehicles?

10 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: We have migrated
11 to Ford as our manufacturer. One of the reasons
12 why we, in essence, did that is because, Ford makes
13 an SUV, which we've acquired, that's all-wheel
14 drive that really has met the department's needs in
15 terms of operational abilities in inclement
16 weather.

17 Our fleet, if you will, is about 3,200
18 vehicles, and we generally believe that with the
19 combination of SUVs and sedans, particularly for
20 our uniform members, is fine at this point. We're
21 very pleased. I believe the rank and file is very
22 pleased with the department moving to more
23 all-wheel drive vehicles.

24 REPRESENTATIVE MARSHALL: Thank you.
25 One of the troopers I spoke with placed a high

1 value on specialty vehicles, in particular,
2 motorcycle in the Pittsburgh region. Due to
3 congestion, he found that motorcycle had abilities
4 that other vehicles didn't in getting through
5 traffic.

6 Do you place high values on speciality
7 equipment, and are there motorcycle replacements in
8 your budget?

9 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Clearly,
10 motorcycles will provide you with, perhaps, maybe
11 greater access in certain areas. However, for
12 routine or day-to-day patrols, oftentimes, it's a
13 little challenging because, what we've tried to do
14 is ensure that a trooper's vehicle is truly his or
15 her office; that they can do everything from the
16 confines of that motor vehicle. You don't have
17 that capability, obviously, when troopers are on
18 motorcycles.

19 We do have a number of motorcycles that
20 we use periodically in certain areas of the state,
21 when and where -- when and where necessary.

22 REPRESENTATIVE MARSHALL: Thank you,
23 Commissioner. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,
25 Representative. Chairman Paul Costa.

1 CHAIRMAN P. COSTA: Thank you, Chairman
2 Adolph.

3 Thank you all for being here. As the
4 previous speakers have said, we really do
5 appreciate the work that you do for our
6 Commonwealth in protecting our citizens. And I'm
7 sure I speak for the rest of our colleagues; they
8 will all tell you the same thing, so after saying
9 that.

10 As Chairman Adolph told you, I am the
11 Democratic Chair of the Liquor Committee, so my
12 question will be focused on the LCE. So my
13 question is, Commissioner, what is the complement
14 -- Excuse me. What is the current complement of
15 the LCE agents that you have today?

16 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: I appreciate that
17 question. There are approximately 165 liquor
18 enforcement officers within the Bureau of Liquor
19 Control Enforcement.

20 I might also add that we have 17
21 enlisted members of the Pennsylvania State Police
22 also as part of that contingent of LCE officers
23 statewide. So, you look at 165 plus 17, that's our
24 complement.

25 CHAIRMAN P. COSTA: What is -- What

1 would you like? I mean, you mentioned earlier when
2 you addressed Representative Marshall's questions,
3 what would you like your complement to be for the
4 agents?

5 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Well, we --

6 CHAIRMAN P. COSTA: The reason why I ask
7 is, and I'm sure you'll probably hear from some of
8 our colleagues in Philadelphia, for years we've
9 heard from our colleagues that are hearing from
10 their constituents about complaints about what we
11 classify as stop and goes in the Philadelphia area.
12 And hoping that with more agents, you could be more
13 proactive instead of reactive. So, if you had your
14 wish, what would that number be so you could
15 hopefully satisfy our colleagues?

16 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: I certainly think
17 that the closer we got that number to 200, that
18 would really help us. Right now we have a liquor
19 control enforcement officers cadet class on hold at
20 this point, and we would like to follow through
21 with that liquor enforcement officers class. The
22 last class we had was probably -- we graduated a
23 class of 14, I believe, in -- probably would have
24 been in January of this year.

25 What we've done to try to enhance our

1 liquor control initiatives, particularly in the
2 City of Pittsburgh and in the City of Philadelphia
3 is, do a little partnering with those two police
4 departments so that we have a coordinated effort in
5 areas such as nuance licensed establishments, or in
6 my neighborhood we kind of refer to some of those
7 locations as speakeasies, quite frankly.

8 So, we recognize there's a challenge in
9 that area, but we are willing to reach out to law
10 enforcement agencies in the City of Pittsburgh and
11 in the City of Philadelphia to try to have a little
12 more presence as it relates to nuanced
13 establishments.

14 CHAIRMAN P. COSTA: Thank you very much.

15 And, Chairman Adolph, thank you again
16 for allowing me to participate in this hearing.

17 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: You're more
18 than welcome. Thank you.

19 Representative Curt Sonney.

20 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: Thank you, Mr.
21 Chairman.

22 Commissioner, good to see you. I want
23 to follow up again on that statewide radio system.
24 I believe that you're asking for an appropriation
25 of about 11 and a half million dollars this year

1 and only about a hundred thousand dollars -- a
2 little more than a hundred thousand would be used
3 towards the current system.

4 So what would you be using the other 11
5 and a half million dollars, as far as what would
6 you expect to accomplish with that money as you
7 transition to a new system?

8 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Well, my initial
9 thoughts on that, without having our itemized
10 information in front of me, is that, we would use
11 that money for radio equipment, be it hand-held or
12 be it fixed in our vehicles to transition to the
13 P25 technology.

14 I don't know if Lieutenant Colonel Bucar
15 has anything that he might want to add to that.

16 LT. COLONEL BUCAR: Yes, sir.
17 Throughout the past few years, due to the
18 challenges associated with the current network,
19 we've recognized there are places in the state
20 where the radios drop out and we lose coverage.

21 In order to have a backup, we've had to
22 rely on our legacy VHF system that existed
23 exclusively for the state police over the years.
24 We've invested money in buying VHF radios to put
25 into patrol cars in addition to the proprietary

1 radio that's involved in the network now.

2 Primarily, the revamping of that system
3 is a long-term project, and the initial
4 expenditures would be invested in installing
5 repeaters into the trunks of the patrol cars and
6 replacing the proprietary hand-held portables that
7 will reach the end of their service life here
8 within the next year or so.

9 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: The other thing,
10 if I may add, Representative, is, there's real
11 challenge in Pennsylvania because of the topography
12 that comprises the state with regard to radio
13 communications.

14 There are a whole host of challenges
15 with towers and making sure we have towers properly
16 located in those areas of the Commonwealth where
17 there are some consistent communication challenges
18 by way of radio. So, that money I think is
19 designed to ensure that we minimize those areas in
20 the state where communication is challenged.

21 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: Obviously, I
22 understand the need for a back-up system. So what
23 would be the back-up system when you transition?
24 The current system? In other words, are you going
25 to have the current system and a new system both

1 simultaneously running?

2 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: No. My
3 understanding --

4 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: What's going to
5 give you the backup?

6 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: My understanding
7 is, when we migrate to the P25 system, it's going
8 to -- it's going to address those communication
9 challenges that we currently have right now.

10 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: Do you have any
11 idea what the total cost of this might be?

12 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Well, I think it
13 would be -- I mean, we do have some preliminary
14 numbers when it comes to the project cost and
15 upgrades of our systems to the P25 compliant. And
16 the upgrades in our vehicles, we're probably
17 looking in the area of somewhere between 90 and
18 \$95 million.

19 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: And once it is
20 established, then do you believe that in the long
21 run -- that it will be cheaper in the long run, and
22 the fact that any changes just simply buying
23 another radio will automatically adapt to it?

24 In other words, I think one of your
25 comments were that, basically, an off-the-shelf

1 radio would work on the system, which, I would
2 imagine, does not happen today; is that correct?

3 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Correct.

4 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: So how many
5 years do you think this is going to take?

6 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Steve, you have a
7 thought on that?

8 LT. COLONEL BUCAR: Sir, we project the
9 entire project would take about five years. Part
10 of that would involve an initial pilot to ensure
11 that the changes that are anticipated work before
12 we would run it statewide.

13 But my staff and the experts who are
14 looking at this are of the opinion that once we
15 replace proprietary software and transition to a
16 P25 standard, that the existing infrastructure will
17 cure all of the issues that have been present over
18 the past 10 years.

19 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: And if I may also
20 add, there will be other state agencies that will
21 be able to utilize this Peak 25 system with a much
22 scaled-down radio that will meet their needs.

23 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: Thank you.

24 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,

1 Representative. Representative Kinsey.

2 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Thank you, Mr.
3 Chairman.

4 Again, I want to welcome, Commissioner,
5 Deputy Commissioners and Mr. Director.

6 Commissioner, earlier you talked about --
7 Actually, I want to go back to the statewide public
8 radio system for a second. I know you've talked
9 about it extensively during this hearing.

10 When you talk about the public radio
11 system, I think I heard you talk about safety
12 issues. Can you sort of just go back over that
13 again? We're talking about safety issues for the
14 law enforcement men and women of the state?

15 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Yes, we are.
16 Obviously, the men and women of the Pennsylvania
17 State Police are committed to public safety, and we
18 are a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week operation.

19 And as I like to say, typically when the
20 public reaches out to members of the state police,
21 they usually have an issue or a challenge that's
22 going on in their lives. We want to ensure that no
23 matter where troopers are dispatched to, that they
24 have the ability to communicate and be as safe as
25 possible.

1 And, oftentimes, that radio for a
2 trooper in a remote area is his or her life line.
3 And it's extremely important to me as the
4 Commissioner to ensure that troopers are able to
5 communicate efficiently and effectively to get
6 their job done day in and day out.

7 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Great. Well,
8 thank you for that.

9 Along the line for public safety, I want
10 to sort of roll into, are troopers currently
11 wearing body cameras? And if they are, can you
12 tell us what percentage of the state troopers might
13 be utilizing those?

14 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Currently, the
15 troopers are not wearing body cameras.

16 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Is there a plan
17 in the future for that to be utilized, or is that
18 right now just not something that the department is
19 looking at?

20 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: We've done some
21 preliminary work; some preliminary studies on body
22 cameras. We've been in touch with members of the
23 legislature regarding some of the challenges
24 surrounding that from a state perspective.

25 Principally, it would require a review

1 of the current wire-tap statute to ensure that
2 troopers are not in violation of the wire-tap
3 statute because of their use of body cameras in
4 private residence. So, there are some ancillary
5 things surrounding why the state police are not
6 moving in that direction.

7 There is a cost factor associated with
8 body cameras. Hardware cost, clearly, for all
9 uniform members is significant; probably a better
10 part of 2 and a half million dollars. And, of
11 source, the storage of the video is a significant
12 cost as well.

13 So, my sense is that, there will be some
14 legislative action with respect to the wire-tap
15 provisions. I support law enforcement using
16 enhanced technologies, and I believe body cameras
17 is one such technology whose time is here.

18 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: I appreciate you
19 sharing that, Commissioner. I've actually been in
20 discussion with other members of the legislature in
21 regards to looking at legislation for state police
22 to utilize body cameras. So, I'm quite sure that
23 we'll be in touch with your department to have
24 further discussions. So thank you very much for
25 that.

1 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

3 It's been brought to my attention that we have some
4 additional members of the General Assembly:
5 Representative Stephens and Representative Mark
6 Keller. Welcome.

7 Next question will be offered by
8 Representative Mike Vereb.

9 REPRESENTATIVE VEREB: Thank you,
10 Commissioner. Good afternoon. Director Brown, I
11 want to make sure they know you're here, in the
12 back there. Welcome.

13 I think that you know, Commissioner,
14 when we first talked, that there's a lot of support
15 in this building for the state police, local
16 police, and you're hearing today a lot of concern
17 about the radio system, so I'm going to hit on some
18 radio issues. But I want to be clear that this
19 radio system has gone on longer than some people's
20 careers at the state police, and hundreds of
21 millions of dollars have been thrown out the
22 window.

23 And if you recall, or if you've been
24 briefed on the transition out of, being director of
25 the Administration and let the state police deal

1 with this issue, happened in the last
2 Administration which I think was a good move. But
3 I go all the way back to these radio rooms that
4 were built, consolidation efforts were made, and
5 these radio rooms were built, one in my district,
6 and now they're closed, and different groups of the
7 state police occupy these buildings now, and it was
8 a colossal waste of money.

9 So, regardless of who was Governor -- I
10 don't know if it was Rendell or Ridge. I just know
11 it wasn't during my time here. So, my questions on
12 the radio system are going to more focus on kind of
13 where we are now in the RFP process, and where are
14 we in terms of timing, in terms of, will it end up
15 being this same vendor that ends up getting the
16 award? Do we know that yet? How far along are we?

17 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: According to the
18 information that I have here, on May 5th of 2015,
19 we had a request for a proposal for the P25 system
20 in conjunction with our land-mobile radio project.

21 So my sense is that, within the state
22 police, we have a group of subject matter experts
23 led by Major Diane Stackhouse, who is really the
24 resident expert for the department when it comes to
25 the radio system. I'm very pleased that her

1 undertaking and review of this very important
2 project to date. She is working in concert with
3 other subject matter experts from other agencies in
4 state government.

5 It is very -- It is critical that we
6 take a comprehensive approach in terms of our
7 strategy with respect to the statewide radio
8 system. I can't emphasize enough, and I've said it
9 several times, how important this is to members of
10 the state police from an officer's safety
11 perspective.

12 We have a fundamental responsibility to
13 citizens and to the House and the Senate to get
14 this right. That's what we're committed to. I
15 think we've taken a very creative approach to
16 making sure we have all the stakeholders at the
17 table to look systematically at a comprehensive
18 system that will not only meet the needs and
19 requirements of the Pennsylvania State Police, but
20 other Commonwealth agencies.

21 REPRESENTATIVE VEREB: I don't question
22 that. I guess my question's more, I guess
23 technical and the timeline nature. There's no
24 question you're going to try to put the right
25 system in the field, and we want to be able to

1 support that. But I just walked through a little
2 bit of political history of previous mistakes.

3 But, where -- kind of where are we? The
4 RFP, is it out? How many participants are there;
5 do we know? I just don't know where we are in that
6 process. Is there -- For the new system, is it out
7 in the field?

8 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: The RFP is out.

9 Steve, do you have any more detailed
10 information on that?

11 LT. COLONEL BUCAR: The RFP went out.
12 There were bids. The selected vendor has not been
13 made yet. One of the bidders filed a protest, so
14 we have to work through that, that process before
15 we can move forward.

16 REPRESENTATIVE VEREB: Colonel, is that
17 protest, is that something that was in the RFP that
18 they're protesting?

19 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: As I understand
20 it, yes. There have been some procedural issues
21 that has resulted in a protest here with one of the
22 vendors. We're trying to work our way through that
23 with counsel.

24 REPRESENTATIVE VEREB: Okay. I've heard
25 that they were protests, but I didn't know if they

1 were from the old system, the new system, or
2 wherever we are. How many -- how many protests,
3 and have they all been filed by the same, I'm going
4 to call them applicant or respondent, whatever the
5 proper term is to the RFP. Do you know how many
6 protests have been filed?

7 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Yeah. My
8 understanding there's just been one,
9 Representative.

10 REPRESENTATIVE VEREB: Just one? Okay.
11 I'm sorry. I thought --

12 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Yes.

13 REPRESENTATIVE VEREB: And is that -- Is
14 that protest, are they currently a vendor in the
15 Commonwealth? Are they currently doing any other
16 work in the Commonwealth for us?

17 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: My understanding
18 is that they had previously been a vendor in state
19 government.

20 REPRESENTATIVE VEREB: Do you think that
21 that protest is going to slow it down
22 significantly? I realize there's legal issues to
23 respond to a protest. But, what's it going to do
24 to our timeline?

25 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: I think it's a

1 little difficult for us to get our arms around
2 that, just due to the nature of the legal
3 ramifications and the -- the legal wranglings that
4 go into those protests. They can be lengthy, so
5 I'm not really sure how lengthy that process will
6 be.

7 REPRESENTATIVE VEREB: Okay. And I
8 would think you're not going to answer the
9 question, but I just feel that urge to ask it
10 anyway. But I'm hoping that the vendor that has
11 handed us this bag of garbage that we currently hope
12 will protect officers, I would hope that they're
13 not a finalist, and I would hope that the current
14 system's use would be held against them. Do you
15 know what the -- Don't answer because I know you're
16 not going to. I just had to ramble on there for a
17 minute.

18 Two things. One, Major Martin's move
19 over to the lab is a big loss to us in the
20 legislature. He had a good rapport. I know the
21 rest of his team is going to do a great job.
22 There's not a man with greater integrity than the
23 Major, so congratulations on going over to the
24 crime lab.

25 Secondly, I think the cadet scandal was

1 -- I think you've managed, to the best of your
2 ability, the entire agency. Where are we? I'm
3 assuming that those who have resigned, or whatever
4 the technical term is, resigned, stepped aside, how
5 far away -- Do we have to start over? Do we have
6 another class following that up, or is there a
7 class locked up in the budget?

8 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: The situation at
9 our state police academy has troubled all members
10 of the Pennsylvania State Police, to include the
11 enlisted, and I might add retired. I can't tell
12 you how many retired members that I've heard from
13 who are very concerned about the situation
14 currently playing out at the Pennsylvania State
15 Police Academy.

16 However, what I shared with the retirees
17 and all our enlisted members is, this investigation
18 was self-initiated by the Pennsylvania State
19 Police. We chose to investigate this matter
20 because, number 1, it spoke to the integrity and
21 honor and, basically, the core values of state
22 police, number 1. And 2, it was the right thing to
23 do.

24 As I have said, we will be methodical in
25 our investigative efforts to ensure that anyone

1 that graduates from the state police academy as a
2 trooper will possess those core values that the
3 department has a hundred plus years of emulating of
4 honor and trust worthiness and integrity.

5 As to where we are today, the
6 investigation I won't go into any details because
7 it is an ongoing investigation. But we are very
8 comfortable in the fact that we have all the
9 resources that we need to ensure that we will have
10 some closure to this investigation at our academy.

11 Right now, that particular class, Class
12 144, is scheduled to graduate on March 18th. To
13 date, we've had a number of individuals who have
14 resigned from the academy as a result of the
15 investigation. And it would appear, at this point,
16 that we still have about 60 plus members in the 144
17 class that are scheduled and on course to graduate
18 on March.

19 Now, we started with 160 members of that
20 class. But my point is, not all of those members
21 were involved -- that left the academy were
22 involved in the allegations associated with
23 cheating. Some individuals, somewhere in the
24 neighbor of approximately 20, left on their own
25 volition because they found out that police work

1 was not for them.

2 So I guess how I would like to wrap this
3 up is, we're talking about cadets. These are not
4 troopers. You don't become a trooper until you
5 graduate. Obviously, you know that,
6 Representative. And although it's troubling, I'm
7 comforted by the fact that we have all the
8 resources that we need and are utilizing them to
9 ensure that everyone that graduates on March 18th
10 will be of the highest ethical standard in keeping
11 with the long tradition of members of the
12 Pennsylvania State Police.

13 REPRESENTATIVE VEREB: And I want to be
14 clear, I do think you did a pretty good job. It's
15 something I'm not sure if it's ever happened
16 before, at least to that magnitude. So, I thank
17 you for that update.

18 In closing, Mr. Chairman, the body
19 camera system, to especially my colleagues, it's in
20 our laps. It's in our laps now. We need -- Do we
21 need to change the wire-tap act? Or, there's no
22 reason for a police officer to put cameras on to
23 then, therefore, potentially violate our wire tap
24 act.

25 The second thing is, we have to address

1 the Right-to-Know law. For every time somebody
2 gets stopped, people are gonna -- your neighbor is
3 gonna be on the right to know on the video of you
4 being stopped for running a stop sign, or doing
5 whatever people do when they drive.

6 So, that ball of body cameras is in our
7 lap. My hope is that, we cannot not wallpaper this
8 thing with all kind of other issues and get the
9 issues done. If we want our cops to have body
10 cameras on the streets lawfully, then we have work
11 to do. Thank you.

12 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,
13 Representative. Representative Bullock.

14 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you,
15 Chairman.

16 Good afternoon. In your opening
17 remarks, you mentioned a lot of recent events
18 across our country in regards to police community
19 relations, particularly in a lot of our major
20 cities. With that, it's important to make sure
21 that our law enforcement personnel reflects the
22 communities that they serve.

23 Could you share with me your numbers in
24 regards to women and minority hiring amongst your
25 department?

1 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Yes. Currently,
2 and this is as of February of this year, the
3 percentage of our complement that comprise
4 minorities are approximately 6 percent. That is
5 unacceptable from my perspective. I believe we
6 will and must do a better job at community outreach
7 in our communities.

8 What I have shared with my staff is, the
9 state police must have a comprehensive recruiting
10 initiative that targets qualified minorities in
11 urban, rural, and suburban communities, and we're
12 in the process of self-examination of how the state
13 police recruit.

14 Lieutenant Colonel Lisa Christie is the
15 principal contact person to champion how we are
16 proceeding in the area of recruiting. I will be a
17 very active participant in that process as well.

18 As far as females comprising of the
19 state police, we're at about 5.7 percent of our
20 complement is made up of women.

21 So, I hope that kind of answers your
22 question, Representative. We do have a breakdown
23 with respect to Hispanics and Pacific islanders and
24 Asians as well.

25 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: That won't be

1 necessary. You can submit that to the Chair.

2 Do you have a breakdown in regards to
3 rank as far as how many -- what are your percentage
4 of minorities and women in leadership positions in
5 your department?

6 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Sure. We
7 certainly do have -- we certainly do have numbers.
8 What I would like to do, just so that --

9 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: You can share
10 that as well to the Chairman.

11 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Well, Lieutenant
12 Lisa Christie can share that information. We have
13 it right here for you.

14 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Okay.

15 LT. COLONEL CHRISTIE: We don't have it
16 broken -- Excuse me. We don't have the numbers
17 broken down by percentages, but we do by numbers.

18 In the rank of trooper, minority members
19 consist of 213; white females, 188;

20 Under corporal, it would be minorities,
21 40 members; white females, 30;

22 Sergeant, minority members 7; white
23 females, 6;

24 Lieutenant, minority members 4; white
25 females, 5;

1 Captain, minority members 3; white
2 females, 1;

3 And for majors, no minority members, and
4 one white female.

5 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: And you're
6 lieutenant colonel, correct?

7 REPRESENTATIVE CHRISTIANA: And I'm
8 lieutenant colonel, correct.

9 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: So, I want to
10 get a little deeper into, particularly, your woman
11 hiring. In 2014, the Justice Department filed a
12 federal lawsuit against the Pennsylvania State
13 Police saying that its physical fitness test
14 discriminated against women, in particular. The
15 suit claimed that the tests were used to screen and
16 select applicants for entry-level positions
17 basically amounted to a pattern of discrimination.

18 Can you tell me the status of this
19 lawsuit and where we are now?

20 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: I'll comment
21 first, and then transition over to Lieutenant
22 Colonel Christie.

23 We are, obviously, aware of the Justice
24 Department action. It's currently within our chief
25 counsel's office who are addressing it from a legal

1 perspective. There are a number of standards that
2 are at issue that we've challenged in terms of the
3 Justice Department's perspective and the state
4 police perspective on the Justice Department's
5 perspective regarding that issue. There's some
6 very relevant issues there that we're in the
7 process of working through.

8 Lieutenant Colonel Christie.

9 LT. COLONEL CHRISTIE: Yes. It is
10 ongoing. The department has taken the position
11 that we do not discriminate. We believe that the
12 statistics utilized by the Department of Justice
13 are inaccurate and incorrect.

14 I personally have been at the physical
15 readiness testing. And I can speak, I would say,
16 the majority, if not all the female members on our
17 department, that the physical readiness test is a
18 necessary component and it is not discriminatory,
19 and we do not want to see it go away.

20 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: I respect your
21 position. I ask that you take a little closer look
22 at that when you consider that your numbers are
23 particularly low with women.

24 What are the other obstacles? If it's
25 not the physical fitness test, what obstacles do

1 you see standing in the way of women becoming
2 troopers?

3 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: That's a very
4 good question. And from my perspective, the
5 department, the state police can do a much better
6 job at actively recruiting women and minorities.
7 We have not done a very good job, in my assessment,
8 of that. And I'm committed to ensuring that we do
9 a better job in that area; so much to say that, we
10 have really revamped our recruiting initiative
11 within the department. We now have 16 recruiters,
12 men and women of the department, who are dedicated
13 to actively recruiting.

14 We've also created an equality and
15 inclusion office, with the direct report to
16 Lieutenant Colonel Christie, that encompasses
17 recruiting. The recruiting within the state police
18 never had a dedicated budget. We now have a budget
19 that is specifically tailored and crafted to
20 recruiting. So there are some proactive things
21 that we haven't done in the past that we are
22 currently in the process of doing.

23 This is a matter of the state police
24 doing what's necessary to prepare the department
25 for 21st Century policing. And I am committed to

1 ensuring that we focus on, in a very serious and
2 methodical way, focus on the areas of recruiting of
3 minorities and women for the department. And this
4 isn't something we think we're going to accomplish.
5 This is something that will happen.

6 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you. I
7 would like to definitely extend the invitation for
8 your department to come out to my district to do
9 some recruitment. We will host a job fair,
10 hopefully, in a few months. I'd like to extend an
11 invitation, and we'll reach out to your department
12 to help you in that effort.

13 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Fantastic. Thank
14 you.

15 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you.

16 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.
17 Representative Sue Helm.

18 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: Thank you, Mr.
19 Chairman.

20 And Commissioner and panel, just thank
21 you for everything you do for the people of
22 Pennsylvania. We appreciate it.

23 Your testimony highlights the additional
24 coverage and responses of the Pennsylvania State
25 Police must provide, such as providing additional

1 security and planning as part of the 2015, or
2 September papal visit, and the upcoming Democratic
3 National Convention in Philadelphia later this
4 year.

5 Was the Commonwealth reimbursed for the
6 services provided by the state police in
7 conjunction with the papal visit? If so, how much
8 and by whom? And will the Commonwealth be
9 reimbursed for the service provided by the state
10 police in connection with the Democratic National
11 Convention? And if so, how much and by whom?

12 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: The first part of
13 your question, Representative, no. The
14 Pennsylvania State Police was not reimbursed for
15 the monies expended in furtherance of safety and
16 security of the papal visit. And we do not
17 anticipate being reimbursed for our personnel
18 commitment for the upcoming Democratic National
19 Convention in the City of Philadelphia.

20 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: I'm curious.
21 About how much do you think it's going to cost to
22 cover? How much did it cost, and how much will it
23 cost?

24 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: We do have some
25 numbers for the papal visit. This was one of the

1 largest security details that I've been associated
2 with over a 30-plus year career.

3 However, I must preface any of my
4 comments by saying that, it was conducted -- The
5 safety protocol was in place. It was exceptionally
6 executed. There were no noteworthy incidents
7 associated with the papal visit here in the
8 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. And it was a really
9 coordinated effort between federal, state and local
10 law enforcement, I might add.

11 In terms of cost for the Pennsylvania
12 State Police, we have information that indicates it
13 was in the range of 3 and a half million dollars.

14 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: Well, he did do a
15 good job. I know that you also handled the
16 Republican National Convention a few years ago,
17 which I was there --

18 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Yes.

19 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: -- and you did a
20 wonderful job there, so thank you.

21 I also have another question. What is
22 the state police doing in response to continued
23 concerns about reckless driving and other road
24 incidents like road rage, violence and carjacking?
25 Like, residents are concerned when they hear such

1 incidents, like in January 2014, the homicide that
2 occurred on Interstate 81 in Franklin County, and
3 other similar incidents around the country.

4 I was just wondering what you were
5 doing.

6 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Obviously, the
7 principal mission of the department--that is, the
8 state police--is to ensure that the traveling
9 public on our highways and interstates do so
10 safely. So, our patrol function and traffic law
11 enforcement is an essential component of the state
12 police duties and responsibilities; one that we
13 take extremely serious, because it is the uniform
14 officer in the marked car that is the back bone and
15 the image of the Pennsylvania State Police.

16 So, from that perspective, we have a
17 whole host of strategies that we utilize throughout
18 the Commonwealth, be it dedicated patrols, be it
19 DUI enforcement. We have uniform officers that are
20 highly-trained individuals in the area of drug law
21 enforcement. With our SHIELD teams, they are
22 highly trained individuals who know what to look
23 for as commercial vehicles and private vehicles
24 traverse our highways that may be carrying
25 narcotics.

1 We also have motor carrier safety
2 trained individuals who really work with commercial
3 vehicles, making sure that they are compliant with
4 inspections and those kinds of things. So, when it
5 comes to highway safety, that's one of our
6 principal areas of interest.

7 However, I know that our current Deputy
8 Commissioner of Operations is focused on highway
9 patrol 24 hours a day, so I'd like to see if Major
10 Horgas has any comments that might add to some of
11 my comments. Major.

12 MAJOR HORGAS: Yes. We have various
13 programs focused on aggressive drivers. And, as
14 the colonel said, as far as MCSAP, the Bureau of
15 Patrol is going to be initiating a pilot program in
16 Troop H, where the MCSAP inspectors will be focused
17 more on the drivers of commercial vehicles as
18 opposed to just stopping them and checking the
19 vehicles over for any mechanical problems.

20 Throughout the United States, it's been
21 shown that with the commercial vehicles, the
22 drivers are the ones that involved in a lot of the
23 crashes. That's primarily where the at-fault for a
24 lot of the crashes as opposed to mechanical issues.

25 Now, you mentioned the I-81 homicide.

1 That was a quite lengthy investigation. It came
2 out with a very, very good result. The members of
3 Troop H, Bureau of Criminal Investigation, various
4 other local police agencies, the Federal Bureau of
5 Investigation, West Virginia police departments,
6 the state police, everyone grouped together there.
7 They never gave up on that investigation, and it
8 came out with a great outcome.

9 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: The other thing
10 I'd like to share with you regarding highway safety
11 is, our judicial use of radar; be it from the road
12 level, or we also have the ability to do speed
13 enforcement from the air as well. So we look very
14 comprehensively and take it extremely serious our
15 need to ensure that the motor republic can do so
16 with a high degree of expectation of safety.

17 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: Thank you.

18 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,
19 Representative. Representative Dean.

20 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: Good afternoon,
21 Commissioner Blocker and colleagues. Welcome. And
22 I thank you, too, for your fine work. I have one
23 quick question, and then another I'd like to get a
24 little more detail on.

25 The quick question is: I know you had

1 an animal cruelty liaison position. I think it is
2 currently vacant, and I'm wondering what the plan
3 is to re-fill that position?

4 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: I asked
5 Lieutenant Colonel Christie if, in fact, we've had
6 such a position. As I'm sure many of the
7 Representatives know, I spent 30 years as a member
8 of the Pennsylvania State Police, retiring in 2005,
9 and, obviously, coming back in 2010, so there was a
10 10-year gap there. I don't remember us having such
11 a position prior to 2005.

12 It's been mentioned to me that we
13 previously had such a program in place. You're
14 right, it's no longer in place. And, quite
15 frankly, I haven't had an opportunity to assess
16 whether there is currently a need for such a
17 position.

18 Clearly, we like to look very critically
19 at all of our positions to make sure that we are
20 maximizing the department's goals and objectives
21 when it comes to public safety.

22 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: And I know your
23 plate is quite full, but I hope you can look into
24 that. And welcome back after your retirement.
25 We're lucky to get you back.

1 My second area of questioning has to do
2 with background checks for the purchase of weapons;
3 the Pennsylvania Instant Check System, PICS, how it
4 works in coordination with the national system
5 known as NICS. I know from your written testimony
6 that, in 2015, PICS conducted nearly a million
7 background checks and referred to you more than
8 4,600 cases.

9 So, I'm wondering. Can you tell me
10 about the background check system; how it's
11 working; the referrals enforcement of those
12 background checks?

13 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Certainly. The
14 Pennsylvania Instant Check System is designed to
15 ensure that individuals who are looking to purchase
16 firearms are eligible to purchase firearms, in
17 that, there's no criminal history or records there.

18 I'm extremely, and I think we, as
19 Pennsylvanians, are extremely fortunate that the
20 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is what we call a
21 point-of-contact state, where our standards for gun
22 ownerships are more enhanced than the National
23 Instant Check System. Pennsylvania is one of 13
24 states that is a point-of-contact state. In terms
25 of not only do we access criminal history, but we

1 can look at other areas as well. Protection from
2 abuse and some of those other areas that would,
3 perhaps, preclude someone from approval.

4 In terms of the NICS system--that's the
5 national system--and the PICS system; with the NICS
6 system a gun can be transferred within three days,
7 even if a determination cannot be made; whether the
8 system might be down or something like that, that
9 gun can be sold within three days.

10 Within the PICS system, we have 15 days
11 to do the necessary research. And if PICS cannot
12 approve the transaction within 15 days, the
13 transfers of the firearm does not occur. So, I
14 think that bodes well for the Commonwealth.

15 We also refer a lot of PICS, what we
16 call PICS referrals for prosecution. In 2015, we
17 referred 4,661 cases for review by prosecutors.
18 2,292 were prosecuted, leading to a thousand 25
19 convictions, and about a thousand 92 of those
20 prosecutions were declined by respective district
21 attorneys.

22 I sincerely believe that the PICS system
23 is working in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and
24 the state police is committed to ensuring that
25 firearms that are sold in Pennsylvania are sold

1 under the proviso that the individual purchasing it
2 is qualified to purchase it.

3 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: I really agree
4 with you. And, I'm a member of a caucus called PA
5 Safe Caucus, so there's a group of legislators
6 interested in doing whatever we can legislatively
7 or societally to reduce gun violence. We all know
8 that gun violence claims 33,000 lives a year.
9 Sadly, two-thirds of that is suicides.

10 And I agree. I think the Pennsylvania
11 system is impressive and a stand-out in the nation.
12 Having said that, I'm wondering if you would have
13 an opinion on what I consider a hole in the safety
14 net. The background safety net is a very
15 comprehensive safety net, but in Pennsylvania,
16 there is an exception, and that is the private sale
17 of what are called long guns.

18 We have legislation that's been proposed
19 year after year--it's House Bill 1010--that would
20 close that loophole and remove the private sale of
21 long guns from the waiver of mandating a background
22 check. We have bipartisan support for that. I
23 know polls show people want what are called
24 universal background checks.

25 And I'm wondering if you and your

1 department have an opinion on closing that
2 loophole.

3 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Representative,
4 I'm sure you understand the department's position
5 here, in that, we don't -- We're not legislators.
6 Our position is, we enforce the law that's duly
7 structured by the legislature. I've always found
8 that that has worked well for the Pennsylvania
9 State Police.

10 This is a matter that I'm sure will be
11 thoroughly debated within the various houses here
12 at the Capitol. And I am confident that the
13 elected officials in Pennsylvania will put their
14 arms around this issue and do what's in the best
15 interest of the people of the Commonwealth.

16 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: I think you're
17 absolutely right. So I thank you for all the work
18 you're doing. I thank you for following up on the
19 referrals for those who have been declined, and I
20 wish you the best on your budget request.

21 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Thank you.

22 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.
23 Representative Karen Boback.

24 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Thank you, Mr.
25 Chairman.

1 The state police unit that is often
2 involved and called upon in specific situations is
3 the special emergency response team, as well as the
4 hazardous device and explosive sections lab
5 response team. I understand that there are
6 increased demands and incidents to which they are
7 responding. In fact, my records show that it's
8 almost tripled the number from five years ago to
9 over 300 incidents. I'm assuming this also takes
10 into account meth labs, and you do the
11 investigation of meth labs.

12 Well, the question is, how many
13 personnel overall are dedicated to these special
14 operation teams? And can you explain these units
15 for us, please, and for our viewing audience, how
16 are they funded and supported, especially since
17 there are no specific line items for the specialty
18 areas?

19 So, first of all, what exactly are they;
20 what do they handle, and then how are they being
21 funded?

22 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Certainly. The
23 components that you've highlighted are special
24 emergency response team. I'll take those first.

25 These are highly-trained, specialized

1 individuals who respond to critical incidents
2 anywhere in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
3 These are individuals that have a high degree of
4 training, particularly when it comes to their
5 overall tactical skills and ability. They are
6 supported by negotiators, and they work in concert
7 with our troop members.

8 Many of the members of our special
9 emergency response team work out of the various
10 troop locations, and the bureau is responsible for
11 coordinating the response for team members
12 statewide. So they're a highly-trained unit that
13 is designed to address very serious matters that
14 require a high degree of tactical skill and
15 ability.

16 They are supported in their efforts by
17 our aviation assets, as well as other assets as
18 necessary, to include from the local troop. Our
19 clandestine lab is designed to ensure that we have
20 highly-trained members of the department that are
21 able to respond to very volatile clandestine labs
22 that may crop up anywhere in the Commonwealth.

23 When I say volatile, I really do mean
24 volatile. There's a lot of chemical components
25 associated with meth labs. We're averaging, I

1 believe it was last year, about 300 meth labs, and
2 that has increased significantly over the last five
3 years.

4 Clearly, methamphetamine is a --
5 continues, I should say, to be a concern in law
6 enforcement, in general, in the Commonwealth of
7 Pennsylvania. We find that these -- not only are
8 these large labs becoming an issue, but it's the
9 small, what we call one-pot labs, that are
10 challenging from a chemical perspective that
11 requires highly-trained individuals to ensure that
12 these labs are, and these areas where these labs
13 are, cleaned up so they don't become a hazard to
14 the public.

15 We have a number of other special units.
16 You mentioned our hazardous device unit. They
17 respond to any area where there is a hazard device,
18 so that these are highly-trained individuals so
19 that there's no accident there. If there are
20 grenades laying around or dynamite laying around,
21 you just don't want anybody to go in and pick those
22 items up. You want to make sure you have
23 highly-trained individuals there who understand the
24 parameters of their work, so that, not only are
25 they safe, the individual trooper, but they're

1 providing a modicum of safety to community
2 residents in those areas.

3 So, from a full-service police
4 department, like the Pennsylvania State Police is,
5 with jurisdictions in all 67 counties, we believe
6 that we have a responsibility not only in our
7 primary jurisdiction, but we have a responsibility
8 to assist other local departments who might have
9 challenging things that crop up in their area of
10 responsibility.

11 Local law enforcement know that they
12 have a resource in the state police to address
13 those kinds of concerns, whether it's with
14 utilization of our special emergency response team,
15 our aviation assets, our clandestine laboratory
16 assets, we are available for being -- working with
17 our local law enforcement partners.

18 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Thank you. And
19 the funding, it comes out of the one line item
20 since you don't have specific --

21 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Correct. It
22 comes out of one line item.

23 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Thank you,
24 Colonel. Thank all of you for all you do for us.

25 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,
2 Representative. Representative Daley.

3 REPRESENTATIVE M. DALEY: Thank you, Mr.
4 Chairman.

5 And, Commissioner Blocker, and your
6 team, welcome to all of you. Thank you for being
7 here today. I just wanted to also mention -- or
8 acknowledge the work that you did during the papal
9 visit, because, having visited there and spent a
10 day in Philadelphia, it was really remarkable how
11 well all the law enforcement units worked together
12 and the great security you provided, so thank you
13 very much for that.

14 Before I ask my question, I should
15 probably just give you a heads-up that I represent
16 seven municipalities in southeastern Pennsylvania,
17 Montgomery County, that all have local police
18 departments. So it may give you an idea of where
19 I'm coming with my question.

20 I'm interested in knowing how many local
21 law enforcement agencies have dropped their police
22 departments over the past year, and how has that
23 impacted the workload of the state police?

24 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: We do have some
25 preliminary data on that, Representative. The

1 Pennsylvania State Police provides either full- or
2 part-time law enforcement services for
3 approximately 1,700 municipalities in the
4 Commonwealth. There are approximately 2,500
5 municipalities in Pennsylvania.

6 And the -- The number of municipalities
7 that had full-time police departments, typically
8 what we find is, they move from full-time police
9 departments to part-time police departments. And
10 we find that municipalities that have part-time
11 police departments move to where they want the
12 state police to assume responsibilities for those
13 municipalities.

14 Currently, in 2016, state police
15 provides full-time responsibility for 1,287
16 municipalities. That's full-time service.
17 Part-time services, it's 411 municipalities. State
18 police provides law enforcement services for about
19 one in every four Pennsylvanians.

20 I don't know if that drills down enough
21 for you or not, Representative. If it doesn't, we
22 can certainly get back in touch with you with any
23 specifics that you might have.

24 REPRESENTATIVE M. DALEY: Are the
25 municipalities, do they pay anything into the

1 Pennsylvania State Police? I'm guessing that there
2 isn't any payment by the municipalities to the
3 state for that coverage?

4 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: That is correct.
5 Legislatively, we have a mandate that if a
6 municipality does not have a police department,
7 that the Pennsylvania State Police assumes
8 responsibility for providing those policing
9 services.

10 REPRESENTATIVE M. DALEY: I attended at
11 least the beginning of the transportation hearing.
12 I'm not on the Transportation Committee, but I was
13 interested in the topic because it was talking
14 about the funding of the Pennsylvania State Police
15 through the Motor License Fund. And it was very
16 clear that the state police and the Department of
17 Transportation understand the value of the state
18 police in providing safety along the highways.

19 But, it also was pretty clear that when
20 we look at the numbers of what the state police are
21 being funded by and what it looks like in the
22 future out of Motor License, that it's a very large
23 number.

24 I was encouraged that Chairman John
25 Taylor has proposed resolution to do a cost study

1 of what it -- I believe what it would cost to
2 provide police coverage for the highways, rather
3 than looking at what it costs to provide police
4 coverage to the municipalities.

5 Does that seem like a more straight
6 forward way towards getting some kind of handle on
7 the cost?

8 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Well, I certainly
9 think that there are a number of methodologies that
10 can be utilized to highlight the whole budgetary
11 concern, if you will. As an agency, we've taken a
12 position that we have a budget, projected budget,
13 over a fiscal-year period. We understand that
14 funding the state police budget is something that
15 the legislature is certainly well-equipped and
16 prepared to address from the systematic
17 perspective. I think the numbers speak for
18 themselves.

19 I certainly understand and appreciate
20 Secretary -- PennDOT's Secretary Leslie Richards'
21 position here. I know she appreciates and
22 understands my position with respect to the Motor
23 License Fund and how that Motor License Fund has
24 evolved for both of our agencies over the last
25 couple of years. I'm sure there will be further

1 legislative discussion regarding both PennDOT and
2 the state police budget going forward.

3 REPRESENTATIVE M. DALEY: And I
4 appreciate your comments, because I do understand
5 that it's not your responsibility to determine what
6 sources of funds fund your operation. And it was
7 pretty clear that Secretary Richards also
8 understood that.

9 It was an interesting hearing. I was
10 glad I was able to be there. But it does raise
11 questions when I know the municipalities that I
12 represent are paying for their own police
13 departments, and it's a significant piece of their
14 budget. So, that would mean that those of us who
15 have local police departments are paying for the
16 state police, as well as for their own local
17 departments. And I'm not questioning you on that.
18 That is not -- I'm just making that as a statement.

19 So I do appreciate you all being here
20 today, and thank you for your responses.

21 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Thank you.

22 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.
23 Representative Duane Milne.

24 REPRESENTATIVE MILNE: Thank you, Mr.
25 Chairman.

1 Colonel Blocker, first and I think
2 foremost, I want to thank you and your team and all
3 the troopers in your ranks for the tremendous
4 service that you provide the Commonwealth. I think
5 all the citizens of this state I think incur a debt
6 of gratitude of honor, professionalism and degree
7 of service you provide our citizens.

8 So thank you to everybody on your team
9 for the tremendous work you do for the
10 Commonwealth. I think it's a great benefit.

11 I want to take this conversation to a
12 global level and put a little bit of homeland
13 security implications, perhaps, we are doing here
14 domestically here in the state. Certainly, ever
15 since 9/11, we know that the home security paradigm
16 has quickly emerged in this nation and all
17 respective states, and we've quickly all had to
18 adapt protocols and processes to try to respond to
19 every merging and more dangerous threats.

20 So I wonder if you could maybe first
21 speak just in macro-level terms about where we are
22 as a state in terms of homeland security; perhaps,
23 general operations, staffing, budgeting, to just
24 maybe give the citizens a great sense of assurance
25 that we are certainly well-positioned to handle any

1 pending threats to the Commonwealth.

2 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Thank you,
3 Representative. Nothing pleases me more than to
4 say categorically that Pennsylvania is, in my
5 opinion, suited perfectly to address in a very
6 comprehensive manner, threats, be they nationally
7 or internationally, that would threaten the
8 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

9 I work in concert with my counterpart,
10 Director Marcus Brown, from the Governor's Office
11 of Homeland Security. We are co-located at the
12 state police headquarters, Elmerton Avenue in
13 Harrisburg. There's a lot of communication between
14 our respective offices. So, I think that Director
15 Brown brings the information and has that presence
16 from looking at the threats to our country from a
17 national perspective, and we benefit from that here
18 in Pennsylvania. That's number 1.

19 Secondly, though, I can't tell you how
20 significant, and I would argue critical, that
21 information is regarding global or national
22 threats. In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, we
23 have what we call the Pennsylvania Crime
24 Intelligence Center. It is the preeminent
25 intelligence center, or what we refer to as the

1 fusion center in the country. What it does is, it
2 brings subject matter experts, in all areas,
3 together under one roof to strategize and to
4 address emerging or trending threats to the
5 Commonwealth. Last year, the
6 Pennsylvania Crime Intelligence Center was voted
7 fusion center or intelligence center of the year.
8 There are 78 intelligence -- similarly-situated
9 intelligence or fusion centers in the Commonwealth
10 of Pennsylvania. The fusion center within the
11 Pennsylvania State Police was number 1.

12 We had two analysts that also received
13 awards associated with their very dedicated and
14 diligent work in ensuring that intelligence,
15 cultivation and sharing is priority number 1.

16 We also have a number of products,
17 reports, that we send out on a monthly, weekly, and
18 sometimes a daily basis to our law enforcement
19 partners in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. We
20 also have something really significant here, and
21 that's our critical infrastructure. Those
22 individuals, be they electrical companies or bus
23 and train businesses, they're part of that critical
24 infrastructure that we work with in PaCIC, in that
25 fusion center, and we share information regarding

1 the State of Pennsylvania; the climate of
2 Pennsylvania from a whole host of context.

3 So, I believe that we are stepping on
4 all of the right bases when it comes to
5 collaborative effort with federal, state and local
6 law enforcement in our fusion center, and that it's
7 just not a law enforcement centric initiative. I'm
8 talking about PaCIC. We do reach out to our
9 critical infrastructure partners: Bus companies,
10 train companies, electrical companies. That's a
11 critical part of, that sharing of information, and
12 it's two way. Some's law enforcement sensitive;
13 others is not law enforcement sensitive.

14 But to answer your question
15 specifically, I'm very -- I'm comfort knowing that
16 the Pennsylvania State Police and its law
17 enforcement partners to include the Department of
18 Homeland Security. We really have our ear low to
19 the ground when it comes to ensuring that our work
20 is designed, principally, to ensure the safety of
21 all Pennsylvanians.

22 REPRESENTATIVE MILNE: Great. I much
23 appreciate hearing that response. And I hope that
24 does provide citizens across the Commonwealth some
25 additional reinforcement in their mind that if we

1 were on the front lines of defense, in terms of
2 being ready for any possible threats that are on
3 the horizon.

4 And just to drill down on a budget
5 matter related to this, as you quite aptly note,
6 homeland security is a federal/state joint function
7 in many respects. I did look at your budget
8 request, and among other items on there, there's an
9 amount totally roughly about \$7 million in federal
10 appropriations, i.e., from the federal Congress
11 transmitted to the state here. Could you share
12 with us what the outcomes of those appropriations
13 will be and what the purposes are?

14 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: We could
15 certainly share that information with you.
16 However, I would like to defer that question to our
17 director of our fiscal -- our staff services
18 division, Marc Infantino.

19 MR. INFANTINO: Yes. That number you
20 were quoting is not specifically for the homeland
21 security office. That's a catch-all category that
22 we accumulate a number of federal appropriations
23 into, and that's the name of it.

24 So, the office specifically is funded --
25 Director Marcus Brown is funded out of our state

1 police budget, and his staff is funded by a small
2 federal appropriation, which is not 7 million. I
3 don't have the exact number. We can get that for
4 you once I find it. But we can get you that
5 information, what encompasses that category of
6 homeland security.

7 REPRESENTATIVE MILNE: Thank you very
8 much. You could certainly transfer that to the
9 Chairman of the committee.

10 Again, Commissioner Blocker, thank you,
11 thank your team, and thank you to all the troopers
12 in your formation for the outstanding service you
13 provide to this Commonwealth.

14 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Thank you, sir.

15 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.
16 Representative Schweyer.

17 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Thank you,
18 Chairman.

19 And good afternoon, Colonel. Colonel, I
20 will tell you that, like many of us up here, I have
21 a retired -- he's retired now, a trooper in the
22 family, my wife's uncle, served the Pennsylvania
23 State Police proudly. What I specifically asked
24 him in advance of today what he thought, he had
25 very good things to say about you.

1 And like most retired troopers, he has a
2 little bit of an opinion every now and again. He
3 would tell me if he disagreed. So, kudos to you on
4 having an outstanding reputation, and thank you for
5 all you and your entire team do for the citizens of
6 Commonwealth.

7 I'd like to revisit the conversation
8 that we had before with Representative Dean
9 regarding the cost of the background checks to the
10 consumers, as well as the overall cost to the state
11 police. I see that, and I'm not asking leading
12 questions here. I just want to make sure I have my
13 facts correct.

14 Sir, it looks as if you're asking for a
15 significant increase in appropriations on gun
16 checks this year from the state General Fund, is
17 that correct, and to the tune of over almost 200
18 percent increase. That's not because we're
19 expecting a 200 percent increase in gun sale next
20 year. I'm assuming that's correct, right?

21 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Correct.

22 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Okay. I serve
23 on the Legislative Budget and Finance Commission.
24 Your numbers have reported to them that it looks
25 like there's going to be close to a 3-million-

1 dollar gap in revenues versus expenses from what is
2 gathered at the point of sale, which is a grand
3 total of \$5, if I'm not mistaken, between the PICS
4 and the POC surcharge versus what the actual cost
5 is for a background check; is that about right?

6 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Well, you have \$5
7 which is what -- they have compensation, what we
8 receive, correct. Then there's that back-in cost
9 of, if I understand your question, what would be
10 that dollar figure that would make it revenue
11 neutral?

12 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Yeah. What's
13 the break-even number?

14 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Right. We
15 believe that break-even number is approximately
16 \$11 --

17 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Okay.

18 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: -- at this point.

19 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Okay. So
20 people who are choosing to purchase a firearm,
21 which is their absolute right to do so--certainly
22 nobody's questioning that--are paying \$5, or at
23 least \$5 is being transmitted to the Pennsylvania
24 State Police.

25 The actual cost of that background check

1 is \$11. And so, therefore, more than half of the
2 overall cost of that background check is being
3 subsidized either through General Fund dollars or
4 potentially through our gas tax.

5 Is that a fair assertion?

6 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Correct.

7 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Okay. So I go
8 to the pump, and I'm paying for either state police
9 services or roads and bridges. But, in fact, a
10 portion of that is going to subsidize firearms --
11 background checks on firearms?

12 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Well, I certainly
13 think you could make that connection. But what I'd
14 like to do is get Marc Infantino's --

15 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Yeah, please.

16 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: -- comments on
17 that.

18 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: I'm not trying
19 to sensationalize it. I'm just trying to make sure
20 I know how we're covering these expenses.

21 MR. INFANTINO: Yeah, it wouldn't be at
22 the pump because it has nothing to do with the
23 Motor License Fund.

24 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: General Fund?

25 MR. INFANTINO: Hundred percent General

1 Fund subsidy.

2 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: That's
3 helpful, but we're still -- And that's significant
4 to me. I will say that it still seems as if we're
5 subsidizing this what is, ultimately, was designed
6 to be basically a user fee for people who are
7 purchasing firearms. We're subsidizing that
8 through other means, and I'm not quite sure I think
9 that's the most appropriate way to do it,
10 especially considering how much money we're drawing
11 out of other funds to pay for your overall
12 expenses.

13 Now, on the flip side, from the consumer
14 perspective -- And I simply don't know the answer
15 to this and, perhaps, either another member or we
16 can get this information down the road. When a
17 person were to go purchase a firearm, is that
18 dealer required to only charge the \$5, or could
19 they tack on an additional fee for servicing that?

20 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: As I understand
21 it, that gun dealer can tack on additional fees if
22 he or she chooses to.

23 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: And there's no
24 limit to that. So a firearms dealer,
25 theoretically, could charge \$25 for background

1 checks, even though only \$5 is being transmitted to
2 us. And yet, to the purchaser of said firearm,
3 they might just think it's a \$25 Obama tax, or
4 something ridiculous like that, right?

5 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Correct.

6 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Okay. Cool.
7 Or Wolf tax. I'm sorry. I'm making Chairman Costa
8 over here giggle.

9 Well, thank you so much. It seems like
10 the system is, number 1, inefficient to the state
11 police in covering your expenses. It also seems
12 like it's patently unfair to the consumers who want
13 to make sure that the dollars that are being --
14 that they're being charged are actually being used
15 for their intended purpose and not a hidden fee or
16 charge that the dealer is just pocketing at that
17 point in time. I appreciate it so much. Thank
18 you.

19 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.
21 Representative Seth Grove.

22 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Thank you, Mr.
23 Chairman.

24 Good afternoon. Thank you so much for
25 joining us. Thank you for your service to the

1 Commonwealth. And please pass our regards on to
2 your fellow law enforcement officers.

3 First question, how much do you plan on
4 spending on recruitment activities this upcoming
5 year?

6 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: As I indicated
7 earlier, we've created a budget for our recruiting
8 purposes. We initially start out with
9 approximately \$200,000.

10 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay. I do want
11 to jump into PICS. Under Governor Corbett's
12 Administration--I forget the year--it's been a long
13 issue with the NICS system accepting our mental
14 health background checks. My understanding is,
15 under Governor Corbett's Administration, those
16 mental health background checks have been accepted
17 by the FBI, by NICS, so they are utilizing our data
18 moving forward for NICS background checks for other
19 states; is that correct?

20 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: I could certainly
21 get back to you. I am not of the opinion that that
22 is currently the state of affairs, but I may not
23 have current data on that.

24 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay. That would
25 be great. And if you could provide a list of the

1 differences of what you check on the PICS system
2 and what NICS would check for Pennsylvania
3 residents, I'd appreciate that.

4 I want to ask you about the conviction
5 rates. You ran through some very quick data, and I
6 didn't get a lot of it. Would you mind running
7 through the individuals that were stopped from
8 getting firearms, those convicted, those data
9 numbers you went through?

10 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Sure. If I
11 understand you correctly, I think the information
12 you're referring to is, that as a result of PICS
13 checks, we referred 4,661 individuals to
14 prosecutors in the counties. As of now, 2,292 were
15 prosecuted. Of that number, 1,025 were convicted,
16 and 1,092 prosecution was denied by the district
17 attorneys.

18 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay. Thank you
19 very much. Your agency had submitted some Act 146
20 waivers: July 28th, October 1st, September 14th,
21 October 13th and July 29th. Out of them, there
22 were four municipal police training -- municipal
23 police training grants, general government
24 operations, liquor control enforcements, patrol
25 vehicles and another one for a GGO line item.

1 Can you give us a status update on those
2 waivers? Some had account balances when they were
3 submitted; others did not. So, if we could provide
4 a starting point, where they're at now; and if you
5 have reconciled those Act 146 waivers with the
6 funding that came in from the enacted budget.

7 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Sure. I'm going
8 to ask Marc Infantino to handle that for us.

9 MR. INFANTINO: Yes, we can get you --
10 We'll get you specific details. I can tell you,
11 like the patrol car monies is pretty used up. We
12 had to do that because delivery of the patrol cars
13 had to be effective before October 31st. With
14 delays, it didn't happen. So, that's pretty much
15 expended.

16 For the GGO waivers, we had to -- we're
17 moving money around, moving money back. So we'll
18 have to get you those figures. Same with liquor
19 enforcement, and some of the other things there, we
20 can get those details for you. So you want to know
21 the balances --

22 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Yeah, current
23 balances.

24 MR. INFANTINO: -- what we started out
25 and what we ended up with?

1 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Yeah. There's
2 one specific one. It was \$3.182 million for the
3 implementation of a records management system.

4 MR. INFANTINO: Yeah.

5 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Most 146 waivers
6 are kind of like your patrol vehicles. You have
7 contracts due. This is a new program, new
8 implementation of IT?

9 MR. INFANTINO: Yes. I'll throw it back
10 to the colonel.

11 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Yes. The
12 Pennsylvania State Police is embarking on a state-
13 of-the-art records management system. Since the
14 inception of the department, we've really captured
15 data using pen and paper. Obviously, that is not
16 keeping with my commitment to ensure that the
17 department is prepared for 21st Century policing.
18 So, a records management system is really going to
19 revolutionize how the Pennsylvania State Police
20 manages itself going forward with respect to all
21 facets from that initial phone call or information
22 that goes into the system through the entire
23 reporting system.

24 I'm very encouraged by our METH system.
25 We've piloted it in one station. We've since

1 piloted it in a troop, and it is prepared to be
2 rolled out department-wide probably within the
3 coming year. It's really going to change the
4 dynamics in terms of how we handle the most
5 simplistic incidents to the most serious incidents
6 as well. All electronically, all with troopers,
7 you'll access to the communications in his or her
8 vehicle. So, the RMS, the records management
9 system, is an integral part of 21st Century
10 policing with respect to the department.

11 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: I wouldn't argue
12 those points. The issue with Act 147 (sic), and
13 the issue isn't with state police. It's actually
14 -- The issue with the Budget Office is the use of
15 Act 146 waivers to begin with. I don't believe the
16 Budget Office should have approved this waiver for
17 a new expense going into the fiscal year,
18 especially when we didn't have a budget. There's
19 other departments that this happened.

20 And again, I don't disagree with exactly
21 what you're saying. The issue is with the Budget
22 Office use of Act 146 waivers. I will bring this
23 to the attention of the Budget Office.

24 I do appreciate -- And you're the first
25 entity actually working on reconciling your

1 appropriations. So I gave your finance guy
2 complete credit and kudos for some very good fiscal
3 management on your end. So, thank you very much.

4 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.
5 Representative Maria Donatucci.

6 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: Thank you,
7 Mr. Chairman.

8 And welcome, Commissioner Blocker,
9 Deputy Commissioners and Director. Thank you for
10 the good job you do.

11 I think everyone here would agree that
12 law enforcement is an emotionally and physically
13 dangerous job, there are long hours, rotating
14 shifts and lots of stressful situations. Officers
15 see the effects of violence, drugs, accidents and
16 other matters of life and death. Study show all of
17 this can take a heavy toll on their personal lives,
18 sometimes resulting in PTSD, depression, alcoholism
19 and domestic abuse, to name a few.

20 What is the state police doing to combat
21 domestic violence and mental health issues,
22 including PTSD among the ranks?

23 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Clearly,
24 Representative, the men and women of the
25 Pennsylvania State Police are of the utmost

1 importance to myself and the very capable deputies
2 that I have here with me today. We do have an
3 initiative in place that is an outreach if
4 officers, if troopers require any assistance.

5 What I'd like to do at this point is to
6 maybe turn it over to Lieutenant Colonel Christie,
7 who is our Deputy Commissioner of Administration
8 and Professional Responsibility, for further
9 comment, and then I'll come back to you.

10 LT. COLONEL CHRISTIE: Yes. Since the
11 1980s, the department has recognized the need to
12 assist our members. We have the members assistance
13 program that falls under my command. It's a
14 confidential program for our members to seek
15 assistance, not only for themselves, but for their
16 families also dealing with difficult times. They
17 respond to critical incidents. So any time that
18 there is a shooting or a serious critical incident,
19 our members assistance program responds to those
20 incidents.

21 In 2015, we had over 11,000 interactions
22 with our members assistance program, so that means
23 at least over 11,000 contacts between them and our
24 members assistance. We have several full-time
25 members assistance individuals on staff, and we

1 have part-time members assistance throughout the
2 Commonwealth for assistance in this program. They
3 go to training, and we also have a chaplaincy
4 program, where we bring chaplains in from across
5 the state that have volunteering, and we provide
6 them training also to assist our members and their
7 families.

8 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: I thought it was
9 important that the Lieutenant Colonel share with
10 you some of those specifics, particularly when it
11 talks about something as important as trying to
12 ensure that we have a mechanism of outreach to the
13 men and women of the department in the event that
14 they reach out individually or may be referred or
15 some type of assistance that, hopefully, will
16 improve their quality of life as individuals, as
17 well as members of the Pennsylvania State Police.

18 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: Thank you.
19 And again, thank you for the good job you do.

20 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.
21 Representative Gary Day.

22 REPRESENTATIVE DAY: Thank you, Mr.
23 Chairman.

24 Colonel, thank you for being here and
25 putting up with all of our questions. We

1 appreciate it. I want you to know that your team
2 is always very responsive to my office when we call
3 and have questions, and actually reach out to me
4 often through the years.

5 One of the things that's important to me
6 is school safety, and it's utmost important to
7 Pennsylvanians. In recent years, PSP has reported
8 a backlog of school district requests. This is in
9 the past; not this past 12 months; but in the past
10 years, after we had a couple events.

11 In 2013, I was honored to chair a House
12 committee on school safety. These requests from
13 school districts come into PSP to review the school
14 buildings and active shooter plans, to which, then,
15 you guys provide your expertise on building safety,
16 you know, physical ground safety, as well as review
17 the action plans of the personnel. Then you give
18 input there.

19 So, I just wanted to kind of lead the
20 question a little bit. Where are we now? Is the
21 backlog -- Are we up to date on that? Are our
22 schools still waiting for us to help them?

23 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: I'm so glad that
24 you raise that question, Representative, because we
25 have diligently, as an agency, reached out to --

1 we're in the process, I should say, reaching out to
2 all the school districts in the Commonwealth in
3 conjunction with homeland security. Some of those
4 what we call protective service advisors that are
5 in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and we've
6 recently met to discuss that very issue.

7 There is a need to have greater
8 collaboration regarding what we call RVAT
9 assessments of our school buildings in the
10 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. What I'd like to do
11 is -- Major William Horgas, who is our Deputy
12 Commissioner of Operations, is really being the
13 focal point for ensuring that we have the necessary
14 resources in place to address what you just
15 highlighted as the backlog that we have. But, more
16 importantly, looking at how we will handle these
17 kinds of RVAT surveys going forward.

18 REPRESENTATIVE DAY: Can I interrupt for
19 one minute, just to help our Chairman work
20 diligently to stay within time. My questions were
21 meant to be short questions for a high fly-by on
22 where we are. I don't want to cut you short, but I
23 want to try to help our Chairman get back on time.
24 I have one other short question after this. So I
25 appreciate you helping me. Thank you.

1 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Sure.

2 MAJOR HORGAS: Mr. Brevity is what they
3 call me.

4 At any rate, sir, the Colonel and I
5 discussed, that's one of our goals this year, is to
6 get those assessments completed. The RVAT, the
7 people in our domestic security office, Bureau of
8 Criminal Investigation, it's a limited staff.
9 They've been trained with the special training out
10 of Glynco, Georgia. We came up with the possible
11 solution of training our community service officers
12 and the troops, the 15 troops. That's what's going
13 to take place. They're going to receive that
14 training to get that backlog done. And also, they
15 are going to receive training to provide to the
16 school on active shooter.

17 REPRESENTATIVE DAY: Thank you very much
18 for those answers. If you could just provide at a
19 later date to our Chairman just where we are; the
20 data on that where we are. If you have a
21 quantifiable number, just so I have in the back of
22 my head from year to year, as you come before us,
23 you know, you like to see some kind of progress,
24 and I appreciate your answer.

25 On heroin, Colonel, you mentioned that

1 we can't arrest our way out of the heroin problem.
2 It's an important issue. In my district, many
3 people -- I have a rural district and a suburban
4 district, and many people would think that maybe we
5 don't have as much of a problem. But, as you know,
6 this is an epidemic that's touching everyone; all
7 different walks of life across the Commonwealth of
8 Pennsylvania.

9 You mentioned education prevention are
10 the key and a multi-faceted approach. I think
11 they're important words. That's why I'm repeating
12 them. You also said you've developed presentations
13 for communities. My office will be in touch with
14 the PSP to try to get you to come out to one of our
15 meetings we're going to be setting up in the next
16 couple of months.

17 And I just want to join your voice and
18 say, I remember when I was younger, my dad always
19 -- he gave me my confidence, I think, and he always
20 said, you can do anything you want to do; anything
21 you set your mind to, one of those things. And it
22 always stuck with me.

23 But then one day he said to me -- He
24 basically said, you're smart. You're smart enough.
25 I think he was fibbing a little bit, because you

1 get older and you start to realize you're not as
2 smart as you thought you were, but he wanted to put
3 confidence in me.

4 Then one day he said to me, there's one
5 thing you can't do and that's lie. He wanted to
6 make the point to me, stay away from that. That's
7 a pitfall in dealing with people and having good
8 character.

9 That's the message I think about with
10 heroin, is that, we have to get a message out there
11 that tells kids, you can't handle this. You can't
12 handle heroin. You have to stay away from it.
13 That's the prevention end.

14 My question is short, 30,000-foot level.
15 How far can you go on the prevention side? Do you
16 think there's other agencies that are more equipped
17 to handle the prevention side and who should team
18 with us, and who are those agencies if you believe
19 that's true?

20 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Sure. Clearly,
21 heroin, opioid challenge, as I like to refer to it,
22 here in the Commonwealth is real. I think there's
23 greater room for collaboration or partnering with a
24 number of entities. I personally like working at
25 the county level. I think there's great utility in

1 that, working at the county level, as well as, from
2 that state level with county representatives,
3 targeting schools and other locales in the
4 respective counties.

5 You know, I simply believe that
6 addiction is real, and I'm speaking for someone
7 that spent a lot of time in drug law enforcement as
8 a young trooper; then involved in the management
9 side of things, being a director of the state's
10 Bureau of Drug Law Enforcement.

11 It is a real challenge. One size
12 doesn't fit all. It's going to take a real
13 collaborative effort; parents, school
14 administrators, law enforcement I think is a part
15 of that as well, but it's not an impossible task.
16 We just have to sit down and make sure we have the
17 right people at the table.

18 And I believe you're right. We could
19 make an inroad into this. If we have to start in
20 the schools, that's probably a good place to start.

21 REPRESENTATIVE DAY: Thank you, Colonel.
22 I'd like to thank you for your time today, and
23 thank both of my chairmen. Thanks.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.
25 Representative Warren Kampf.

1 REPRESENTATIVE KAMPF: Commissioner, I
2 understand there is a DNA sampling and processing
3 backlog. Can you give me an idea of what the
4 magnitude of that is? Do you have any strategies
5 for dealing with it? And what is the funding
6 source for doing the sampling and processing?

7 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: We do have a --
8 To get right to your question, we do have a --
9 Currently, we have a backlog in the state police
10 with respect to DNA analysis. Serology has over a
11 thousand-case backlog, and DNA has over 800
12 backlog; samples for DNA analysis.

13 There's a multi-faceted reason why
14 that's the case line. A lot of it is personnel
15 driven, or in some cases, lack thereof. What we
16 try to do is we -- What the current state is, we
17 try to turn DNA sample around. It usually takes
18 about, on average for us, about 190 days. That's
19 not acceptable. We need to do a better job in that
20 area.

21 I think one of the things that will help
22 is additional laboratory personnel. But probably
23 more importantly is the anticipated new DNA lab in
24 western Pennsylvania. We currently have monies
25 appropriated for design of a new DNA lab in the

1 Greensburg area. I think that's going to do a lot
2 of -- particularly if we have increased staff,
3 that's going to do an awful lot to diminish that
4 backlog that we are currently experiencing.

5 Right now our DNA function is kind of
6 spread out throughout the Commonwealth. I think
7 with the new comprehensive state-of-the-art DNA lab
8 in western Pennsylvania, we're going to be able to
9 leverage our personnel resources to ensure that we
10 cut significantly into that current backlog.

11 REPRESENTATIVE KAMPF: Thank you,
12 Commissioner.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

14 Commissioner, I want to thank you and
15 your staff for coming before our committee today.
16 We appreciate it, and keep up the good work, and we
17 certainly do appreciate your service to the
18 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

19 COMMISSIONER BLOCKER: Thank you very
20 much, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of all the men and
21 women of Pennsylvania State Police, who get up
22 every day with the singleness of mind and purpose
23 to serve the public, and all visitors of the
24 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, we appreciate the
25 opportunity to be with you this afternoon.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

2 For the members' information, the
3 committee will reconvene at 3:15 for the Department
4 of Transportation. Thank you.

5 (At 3:10 p.m., the budget hearing
6 concluded).

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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