

**PENNSYLVANIA STATE TROOPERS ASSOCIATION
3625 Vartan Way, Harrisburg, Pa. 17110**

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**Contact: Bruce A. Edwards, President
800-541-9934**

PA State Troopers Association: Setting the record straight

Harrisburg – Pennsylvania State Troopers Association (PSTA) President Bruce A. Edwards today harshly criticized a misleading press release issued by the Rendell Administration Monday accusing the PSTA of delaying a plan to put more state troopers on active patrol.

On hiring more troopers:

“For two years, the PSTA has fought with the Rendell administration over hiring more state troopers to improve Pennsylvanians’ safety. In the 2004-05 state budget, the PSTA worked with legislative leaders to include funding in the budget to hire 90 new troopers, but the administration refused to do so. The PSTA fought again during the 2005-06 state budget for funds to hire 180 more troopers. Frankly, it was the administration’s insistence on civilianization that has unnecessarily delayed the hiring of all 180 new troopers.”

On civilianization:

“State Police Col. Jeffrey Miller’s claims that PSTA has refused to meet with the administration to discuss civilianization is either intentionally misleading or the Colonel has a very short memory. Despite claims by the administration, the PSTA has already met twice with the administration to discuss civilianization, and has a history of working with previous administrations on this issue. We met with administration on Aug. 9 and invited Colonel Miller to meet with our Board of Directors on Aug. 17 to discuss civilianization.

“Since 1996, hundreds of duties have been transferred to other departments or civilians with the cooperation of the PSTA, freeing up troopers to do patrol, criminal and other police-related duties, as noted in the 2001 report by the state Legislative Budget and Finance Committee. In doing so, 163 Troopers have now returned to full-time law enforcement activities.

“We simply disagree with this administration’s attempts to maximize our department’s efficiency. Their ‘non-negotiable’ plan would force troopers, who have helped to solve thousands of cases, out of highly-specialized positions, such as ballistics, documents, and latent print examiners, and put a radar gun in their hands. These troopers are solving some of the most heinous crimes committed in the commonwealth.

“The PSTA focus is on the lack of office assistance. We believe that by directing resources in this area we can return the equivalent of over 206 troopers to patrol duty. Far more then achieved through the administration plan, and do so without jeopardizing successful prosecution of criminals.

“There are 15 troop stations across the state, which do not have an office assistant. Most other stations have only one. Could you imagine any business with 40 to 60 employees with only one, or worse, no office assistants? As a result, more and more highly-trained troopers are being wasted on greeting visitors, answering phones and filing work. If they hire sufficient front desk and administrative support civilians, at much less cost to the Commonwealth then hiring highly skilled forensics experts, we believe our department would regain some of the operational efficiencies we have lost under this administration.”

On PSTA grievances and arbitration holding up civilianization negotiations:

“In reviewing Col. Miller’s comments, it’s disappointing that he doesn’t think it important enough to back the PSTA in resolving several grievances related to the health benefits troopers and their families receive. For months, the administration has stonewalled the PSTA in resolving issues from the recent contract awarded to troopers – issues that could be solved immediately with one hearing. That has left troopers and their families spending thousands of dollars out of pocket on healthcare that they cannot afford.

“It would seem that the obvious choice would be to expedite this matter and not delay it at the expense of hard-working troopers. Instead, hearings for these grievances have been deliberately stretched out over a period of months by the administration, at a greatly increased legal cost paid by Pennsylvania taxpayers to the administration’s hired law firm Ballard Spahr, the former employer of Gov. Rendell.”

On the Rendell administration’s flip-flop on hiring troopers:

“As late as May, a spokesperson for Gov. Ed Rendell labeled the PSTA’s claim that more troopers were needed as ‘propaganda.’ Then, just hours before a budget deal was completed, the administration had language inserted into the budget that paved the way to hire troopers in order to begin patrolling the interstate highways in Philadelphia.

“By agreeing to take over patrol duties in the city, Gov. Rendell is saving Philadelphia millions of dollars while costing the state an additional \$6.3 million annually. It’s very interesting how the administration fought for more than a year against hiring 90 new troopers then only agreed to hire more troopers when Philadelphia needed financial assistance. But none of this is surprising considering this is the first governor in the history of the state who refused to hire more troopers when given the funds and authority to do so (2004-05 state budget).”