

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 344 Session of
2010

INTRODUCED BY GREENLEAF, RAFFERTY, O'PAKE, WASHINGTON,
TARTAGLIONE, FONTANA, LEACH, ALLOWAY AND WILLIAMS,
MAY 13, 2010

REFERRED TO JUDICIARY, MAY 13, 2010

A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Joint State Government Commission to establish a
2 criminal justice advisory committee to study the issues
3 raised by *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and any other relevant
4 issues regarding the criminal justice system in Philadelphia
5 to develop solutions for problems that are identified and to
6 make a report to the Senate with recommendations.

7 WHEREAS, From December 13 through December 16, 2009, *The*
8 *Philadelphia Inquirer* published a series of articles entitled
9 "Justice: Delayed, Dismissed, Denied," describing a criminal
10 justice system in disarray; and

11 WHEREAS, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that "For three
12 consecutive years, Philadelphia has had the highest violent
13 crime rate among the nation's 10 largest cities" but, with the
14 exception of murder cases, "Philadelphia conviction rates trail
15 the nation's in rape, robbery, and serious assault cases"; and

16 Whereas, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that
17 "Philadelphia defendants are thumbing their noses at the city's
18 judges and victims, given a free pass by the system's
19 ineffective bail program - and skipping court in huge numbers";

1 and

2 WHEREAS, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that "Witness
3 intimidation pervades the Philadelphia criminal courts,
4 increasingly extracting a heavy toll in no-show witnesses,
5 recanted testimony - and collapsed cases"; and

6 WHEREAS, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that many cases
7 fall apart in Municipal Court, "Of robbery and aggravated
8 assault cases filed in 2006 and 2007 in Municipal Court, about
9 half were immediately tossed or withdrawn - and never went to
10 Common Pleas Court, where felonies are decided"; and

11 WHEREAS, On April 19, 2010, as a follow-up to *The*
12 *Philadelphia Inquirer's* series, the Senate Judiciary Committee
13 held a public hearing in Philadelphia to receive testimony
14 relating to the Philadelphia criminal justice system; and

15 WHEREAS, Witnesses told committee members that they would
16 welcome a forum that would include all stakeholders in which
17 they could discuss Philadelphia's criminal justice system with
18 the other stakeholders and develop solutions; and

19 WHEREAS, The Joint State Government Commission has a history
20 of success in bringing together all stakeholders on a particular
21 issue and developing a consensus on how best to move forward in
22 resolving the issue; and

23 WHEREAS, Study of the criminal justice system in Philadelphia
24 would not only benefit Philadelphia, but the lessons learned and
25 recommendations made could benefit the criminal justice systems
26 in counties throughout Pennsylvania; therefore be it

27 RESOLVED, That the Senate direct the Joint State Government
28 Commission to establish a criminal justice advisory committee to
29 study the issues raised by *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and any
30 other relevant issues regarding the criminal justice system in

1 Philadelphia and to develop solutions for the problems that are
2 identified; and be it further

3 RESOLVED, That the advisory committee be comprised of
4 approximately 30 members and include persons representing all
5 relevant aspects of and participants in the criminal justice
6 system in Philadelphia, including, but not limited to, law
7 enforcement, prosecutors, criminal defense attorneys, the
8 judiciary, crime victims and witnesses, probation and
9 corrections; and be it further

10 RESOLVED, That the advisory committee may receive input from
11 academia, private and public organizations involved in criminal
12 justice issues, other criminal justice experts and the general
13 public; and be it further

14 RESOLVED, That the advisory committee make a report to the
15 Senate with recommendations no later than 18 months from the
16 date that this resolution is adopted.