

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 238 Session of
2013

INTRODUCED BY KITCHEN, COSTA, GREENLEAF, ARGALL, WILLIAMS,
SCHWANK, FONTANA, FARNESE, HUGHES, STACK AND TARTAGLIONE,
OCTOBER 17, 2013

REFERRED TO JUDICIARY, OCTOBER 17, 2013

A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Joint State Government Commission to establish an
2 advisory committee to conduct a study on the inefficiencies
3 of the criminal justice system in this Commonwealth.

4 WHEREAS, The United States has one of the highest
5 incarceration rates of all industrialized nations in the world;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, Between 1980 and 2012, the population of
8 incarcerated offenders in this Commonwealth increased; and

9 WHEREAS, The number of offenders in this Commonwealth under
10 the supervision of a State or county entity has also increased
11 during the same period; and

12 WHEREAS, During this period, significant resources were
13 utilized for the enactment, implementation and enforcement of
14 mandatory minimum sentences for a variety of criminal offenses;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, The General Assembly has recently taken significant
17 steps to address the issues of prison overcrowding, high
18 incarceration rates and the financial strain resulting from

1 those issues by enacting proactive legislation; and

2 WHEREAS, It is important for the General Assembly to continue
3 to review and propose improvements to the criminal justice
4 system that will provide for public safety, victim services,
5 reductions in recidivism, successful re-entry into society by
6 offenders and responsible spending by the Commonwealth and its
7 political subdivisions; therefore be it

8 RESOLVED, That the Senate direct the Joint State Government
9 Commission to establish an advisory committee of approximately
10 30 members consisting of public officials and experts to conduct
11 a balanced report, encompassing a wide range of backgrounds and
12 viewpoints, on all of the following issues:

13 (1) Criminal prosecutions and defense.

14 (2) Judicial administration and sentencing.

15 (3) Offender supervision and offender reentry.

16 (4) Victim services;

17 and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That the advisory committee conduct a report with a
19 thorough and comprehensive analysis of the following:

20 (1) Alternatives to the prosecution and incarceration of
21 low-level, nonviolent crimes.

22 (2) Enhancing re-entry programs that result in the
23 reintegration of offenders into society and result in reduced
24 recidivism.

25 (3) Achieving uniformity in criminal charging,
26 prosecution and sentencing to avoid and eliminate disparities
27 between jurisdictions in this Commonwealth.

28 (4) Sentencing reform to eliminate unnecessary mandatory
29 minimum sentences that prohibit or prevent the use of
30 alternative sentencing or rehabilitation strategies.

1 (5) Prioritizing prosecutions by State and local
2 officials to focus on the most serious crimes, such as
3 violent crimes.

4 (6) Directing resources from all levels of law
5 enforcement that enhance community-oriented policing to
6 assist vulnerable populations and victim input, including
7 coordinating with public, private and parochial schools.

8 (7) Proposed reforms of the criminal justice system made
9 to the House Judiciary Committee and Senate Judiciary
10 Committee, recent State laws pertaining to the criminal
11 justice system and sentencing guidelines as adopted by the
12 Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing.

13 (8) Proposed reforms and best practices from other
14 states regarding the inefficiencies of the criminal justice
15 system;

16 and be it further

17 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission
18 establish a process by which interested members of the public
19 can make suggestions and have input; and be it further

20 RESOLVED, That the report include any recommendations to
21 propose or amend any law, regulation or policy to reduce
22 reliance on mandatory minimum sentences, address recidivism and
23 promote rehabilitation and successful re-entry in a cost-
24 effective manner; and be it further

25 RESOLVED, That the report of the Joint State Government
26 Commission be sent to the Judiciary Committee and the Public
27 Health and Welfare Committee of the Senate no later than December
28 31, 2014.