

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Members of the House of Representatives

FROM: Representative Patrick Harkins

DATE: July 20, 2012

SUBJECT: Legislation Providing for the Issuance of Electronic Incapacitation Devices to Park Rangers

In the near future, I will be introducing legislation that would require the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to provide certain park rangers with the option of carrying an electronic incapacitation device, such as a Taser.

The 120 state parks in the Commonwealth stretch from Philadelphia to Erie County and encompass more than 300,000 acres of our state. With the recent decline in the economy, more and more people are turning to these parks for recreational opportunities. Although the overwhelming majority of these visitors are law-abiding citizens, park rangers are still kept busy enforcing park rules and other state laws. While these enforcement actions often involve minor incidents, a small number of these actions are more serious in nature.

Certain park rangers are authorized to carry firearms to deal with the more serious encounters. However, unlike many of their counterparts in law enforcement, these rangers do not carry electronic incapacitation devices. They have not been granted this ability by DCNR, even though numerous studies have demonstrated that these devices are valuable non-lethal alternatives to firearms since the mere sight of these weapons are often enough to deter an individual from engaging in a physical confrontation with a law enforcement officer. By requiring DCNR to provide the option of carrying an electronic incapacitation device to their park rangers, and training them to safely and effectively use these devices, we will be providing these law enforcement officers with another tool to better protect themselves and the public.

If you would like to co-sponsor this legislation, please contact Terra Heilman at theilman@pahouse.net.