

**Pennsylvania State Police Testimony**

**Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
House Transportation Committee**

**Public Hearing:  
House Bill 197  
House Bill 352  
House Bill 748  
April 20, 2009**

**Presented by:  
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Vehicle Crash and Driver Safety Section Commander  
Bureau of Patrol**

Good morning. I am Lieutenant Jeffrey B. Hopkins, Commander of the Vehicle Crash and Driver Safety Section of the Bureau of Patrol for the Pennsylvania State Police. On behalf of Colonel Frank E. Pawlowski, the Commissioner of the Pennsylvania State Police, I would like to thank you for the invitation to provide testimony at this hearing concerning increased penalties for hit and run crashes involving a injuries and fatalities.

In the Commonwealth, driving a vehicle is a privilege - and with privilege comes responsibility. Each of the bills (HB 197/HB 352/HB 748) proposed here will have the effect on all drivers that ensures they are held responsible for their actions if they are involved in a motor vehicle crash which injures or kills another person.

People generally leave the scene of a crash to avoid apprehension and the penalties for other offenses they may have committed, with the prior knowledge that a police officer's arrival is imminent. They make a conscious choice to avoid taking responsibility for their actions. The other offenses that they may have committed could have serious repercussions, but nothing is as serious as the preservation of life. Penalties for offenses should be imposed which convey to everyone that their duty – not only as a motorist, but as a citizen of humanity – is to remain at the scene of a crash and render whatever aid they

can and summon any assistance that they can in order to preserve life or mitigate injuries.

In 2008, the Pennsylvania State Police investigated 7,635 hit-and-run accidents. 544 of these accidents resulted in death or serious bodily injury. When penalties are too lax, there is little incentive for anyone to take responsibility for their own actions. Through the judicious application of enhanced penalties, people will be compelled to be responsible for their own actions, and will think twice before choosing to put their own desires ahead of the needs of others.

In conclusion, on behalf of Colonel Pawlowski and the entire Pennsylvania State Police, I again want to thank you for the opportunity to address your Committee. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.