

**Testimony of Les Neri, President, Fraternal Order of Police, PA State Lodge
Before Pennsylvania House State Government Committee -- June 2, 2015**

Good morning. My name is Les Neri. I am proud to serve as the elected President of the Fraternal Order of Police, Pennsylvania State Lodge, which represents approximately 40,000 active and retired law enforcement officers and their families throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Before my election as President of the FOP I was proud to serve as a Police Officer and Detective for more than 26 years in Tredyffrin Township in Chester County before my retirement in 2008.

On behalf of the members of the Fraternal Order of Police and their families, I would like to extend my thanks to the members of this Committee for your thoughtful consideration of retirement issues affecting our membership, and for your longstanding support of Pennsylvania's law enforcement officers.

I appear before this Committee today to **oppose** Senate Bill 1, which forces new Commonwealth employees into a defined contribution savings plan, and diminishes pensions for current employees by reducing pensionable salaries and by forcing members to contribute almost 50% more to maintain even that reduced level of benefits. The bill is not only inappropriate for members of law enforcement, but also likely unconstitutional by virtue of the cuts to current worker benefits.

Senate Bill 1 threatens the retirement security of all members of the State Employees Retirement System, including 4,225 State Police troopers and an additional 1,000 Commonwealth law enforcement officers **not** employed by the State Police who are the

- * Probation Officers and Parole Officers working for the Board of Probation and Parole.
- * Wildlife and Waterways Conservation Officers working for the Pennsylvania Game and Fish Commissions.
- * Liquor Control Enforcement Officers working for the Pennsylvania State Police.
- * Narcotics Investigation Officers working for the Office of the Attorney General.
- * Port Authority Police Officers working for the Delaware River Port Authority.
- * Capitol Police Officers who protect the Pennsylvania General Assembly.
- * Park Rangers working for the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and
- * Campus Police Officers working at state colleges and universities.

Together, these law enforcement officers represent virtually every aspect of the Commonwealth's criminal justice system. In 2010, they were subject to significant SERS pension reductions that are projected to save the Commonwealth billions of dollars. Now, these Commonwealth law enforcement officers again stand to be directly and inappropriately harmed by the proposed cuts contained in SB 1.

The Pennsylvania FOP opposes any disruption to the longstanding defined-benefit pension system for any SERS members, uniformed or civilian. But we believe that SB 1's reduced pension scheme is particularly harmful to law enforcement officers, due to the shorter working lives of those officers and the need for meaningful service-connected death and disability pension protections. In short, SB 1 is unfair to law enforcement personnel who risk their lives to protect Pennsylvanians each day.

Because it will inflict real and lasting harm on Commonwealth law enforcement officers and their families, the Fraternal Order of Police, Pennsylvania State Lodge, opposes Senate Bill 1.

In closing, let me again thank the Committee members for your continued support of Pennsylvania's law enforcement officers. We look forward to continuing to work with the Committee on this and other issues in order to provide for safer communities and safer citizens throughout our Commonwealth. I would be happy to answer any questions on my testimony. Thank you.