

Schuylkill County Sheriff Joseph Groody, President
Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association

Testimony – Pennsylvania House Urban Affairs Committee
Public Hearing on House Bill 1896

Chairwoman Brown, Chairman Sturla, and members of the committee. I'm Schuylkill County Sheriff Groody. I've had the pleasure of representing the citizens of Schuylkill County as their Sheriff for fourteen years. And it is also my honor to be here in front of you today representing Sheriffs from across the Commonwealth as the President of the Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association.

The Office of Sheriff in Pennsylvania is a constitutional office. Each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties has a Sheriff. Almost every one of our Sheriffs are elected into office. And like you, we are accountable directly to the citizens that elected us to office as Sheriff.

As you know, Pennsylvania is a very diverse state. We have eight classifications of counties based on population, with a 1st class county needing to have over 1.5 million residents and our 8th class counties having less than 20,000 residents. So as you'd imagine, our Sheriffs' Offices might also be somewhat different in size. But our responsibilities all remain relatively the same.

We're here today to discuss House Bill 1896, a bill that has the ability to enact a one-size-fits-all solution across Pennsylvania, by removing the responsibility of a sheriffs' sale from the Office of Sheriff in every county.

In my humble opinion, it should be the recommendation of a Sheriff as to how he or she elects to best protect county residents on this important matter. Some of our Sheriffs' Offices have elected to utilize outside vendors to assist with their virtual sheriffs' sales, but it has been their choice to do so. As you'll hear presentation from some of my colleagues, the COVID-19 pandemic was one of the reasons that led many of our counties to move toward the use of outside vendors to assist with virtual sheriffs' sale auctions. On behalf of the membership of the Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association, I've been asked to relay that Sheriff's should not be removed from the decision-making process in determining how sheriffs' sales should be handled in their counties.

Thank you for your willingness to listen to our opposition with House Bill 1896 as currently drafted. I'd now like to turn to Montgomery County Sheriff Sean Kilkenny who has spearheaded the Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association's efforts to codify the use of virtual sheriffs' sale auctions in the Commonwealth.