

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 149 Session of
2002

INTRODUCED BY GREENLEAF, COSTA, LEMMOND, BOSCOLA, EARLL,
HELFRICK, KUKOVICH, O'PAKE, SCHWARTZ, M. WHITE, MELLOW, DENT,
ERICKSON, FUMO, HOLL, HUGHES, LOGAN, MOWERY, MURPHY, STACK,
TARTAGLIONE, THOMPSON, D. WHITE, C. WILLIAMS, KITCHEN AND
WOZNIAK, JANUARY 10, 2002

REFERRED TO JUDICIARY, JANUARY 10, 2002

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Joint State Government Commission to establish a
2 bipartisan task force with an advisory committee to study and
3 make recommendations regarding the geriatric, seriously ill
4 and lifer populations in Pennsylvania State correctional
5 institutions.

6 WHEREAS, In State correctional institutions as of September
7 2001 there were 1,892 inmates 55 years of age or older,
8 comprising 5% of the total inmate population of 37,407; and

9 WHEREAS, In State correctional institutions as of September
10 2001 there were 3,718 inmates serving life sentences, comprising
11 10% of the total inmate population; and

12 WHEREAS, Of the total lifer population as of September 2001,
13 415 inmates, or 11%, were 55 years of age or older; and

14 WHEREAS, In Pennsylvania, life imprisonment means life in
15 prison without consideration for parole; and

16 WHEREAS, As of September 2001, 892 inmates in State
17 correctional institutions convicted of second degree murder are
18 serving life sentences even though their culpability may not be

1 the same as someone who committed a deliberate and intentional
2 first degree murder; and

3 WHEREAS, The lifer population in State correctional
4 institutions continues to grow, with 2,291 ten years ago, 2,973
5 five years ago and 3,718 as of September 2001; and

6 WHEREAS, The lifer population continues to age, with 55% of
7 the lifer population between 35 to 54 years of age, and has
8 little hope for pardon or commutation of sentence; and

9 WHEREAS, Many inmates suffer from serious long-term mental or
10 physical illnesses which require costly care; and

11 WHEREAS, The average cost of housing an inmate at SCI-Laurel
12 Highlands, the State correctional institution charged with
13 caring for older and infirm inmates, is currently \$65,985 per
14 year per inmate; and

15 WHEREAS, Because of age, illness or rehabilitation, many
16 inmates, including some lifers, no longer pose a threat to
17 society and are being held in State correctional institutions at
18 considerable expense to taxpayers; and

19 WHEREAS, The General Assembly should consider alternatives
20 for addressing the geriatric, seriously ill and lifer
21 populations in State correctional institutions; therefore be it

22 RESOLVED (the House of Representatives concurring), That the
23 General Assembly direct the Joint State Government Commission to
24 establish a bipartisan task force consisting of two members
25 appointed by the President pro tempore of the Senate, two
26 members appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate, two
27 members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives
28 and two members appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of
29 Representatives; and be it further

30 RESOLVED, That the task force create an advisory committee

1 composed of representatives of the Department of Corrections,
2 the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole, criminal justice
3 experts and additional members as the task force deems
4 appropriate; and be it further

5 RESOLVED, That the task force study the geriatric, seriously
6 ill and lifer populations in Pennsylvania State correctional
7 institutions, review how other states deal with these
8 populations and make recommendations to the General Assembly.