

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,
WOZNIAK AND A. WILLIAMS, JANUARY 10, 2002

AS REPORTED FROM COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY, HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES, AS AMENDED, JUNE 4, 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~~ CERTAIN SEGMENTS OF THE PRISON <—
5 POPULATION in Pennsylvania State correctional 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~~ NUMBER OF INMATES <—
13 SERVING LIFE SENTENCES as of September 2001, 415 inmates, or
14 11%, were 55 years of age or older; and

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

17 WHEREAS, As of September 2001, 892 inmates in State

1 correctional institutions convicted of second degree murder are
2 serving life sentences even though their culpability may not be
3 the same as someone who committed a deliberate and intentional
4 first degree murder; and

5 WHEREAS, ~~The lifer population~~ NUMBER OF INMATES SERVING LIFE ~~←~~
6 SENTENCES in State correctional institutions continues to grow,
7 with 2,291 ten years ago, 2,973 five years ago and 3,718 as of
8 September 2001; and

9 ~~WHEREAS, The lifer population continues to age, with 55% of~~ ~~←~~
10 ~~the lifer population between 35 to 54 years of age, and has~~

11 WHEREAS, THE SEGMENT OF THE PRISON POPULATION SERVING LIFE ~~←~~
12 SENTENCES CONTINUES TO AGE; 55% OF THAT POPULATION IS BETWEEN 35
13 AND 54 YEARS OF AGE AND HAS little hope for pardon or
14 commutation of sentence; and

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

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

21 WHEREAS, Because of age, illness or rehabilitation, many
22 inmates, including some ~~lifers~~ SERVING LIFE SENTENCES, no longer ~~←~~
23 pose a threat to society and are being held in State
24 correctional institutions at considerable expense to taxpayers;
25 and

26 WHEREAS, The General Assembly should consider alternatives
27 for addressing the geriatric, ~~seriously ill and lifer~~ AND ~~←~~
28 SERIOUSLY ILL populations in State correctional institutions AND ~~←~~
29 SHOULD IDENTIFY PROBLEMS AND SPECIAL ISSUES RELATED TO SUCH
30 INMATES, WHETHER SUCH PROBLEMS AND ISSUES ARE PRESENT NOW OR ARE

1 ANTICIPATED TO ARISE; therefore be it

2 RESOLVED (the House of Representatives concurring), That the
3 General Assembly direct the Joint State Government Commission to
4 establish a bipartisan task force consisting of two members
5 appointed by the President pro tempore of the Senate, two
6 members appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate, two
7 members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives
8 and two members appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of
9 Representatives; and be it further

10 RESOLVED, That the task force create an advisory committee
11 composed of representatives of the Department of Corrections,
12 THE DEPARTMENT OF AGING, the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and <—
13 Parole AND THE OFFICE OF VICTIM ADVOCATE, the Pennsylvania <—
14 Prison Society, THE PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION ON CRIME AND <—
15 DELINQUENCY, THE PENNSYLVANIA DISTRICT ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION,
16 MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATES, criminal justice experts and additional
17 members as the task force deems appropriate; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That the task force study the geriatric, ~~seriously~~ <—
19 ~~ill and lifer~~ AND SERIOUSLY ILL populations in Pennsylvania <—
20 State correctional institutions, review how other states deal
21 with these populations and make recommendations to the General
22 Assembly.