
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 976 Session of
2013

INTRODUCED BY FLECK, BENNINGHOFF, BROOKS, D. COSTA, GIBBONS,
GINGRICH, GOODMAN, HALUSKA, HARKINS, C. HARRIS, HESS,
W. KELLER, KORTZ, MATZIE, MILLARD, MURT, READSHAW, REED,
SWANGER AND TAYLOR, MARCH 12, 2013

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND INDUSTRY, MARCH 12, 2013

AN ACT

1 Establishing a bill of rights for correctional officers during
2 certain investigations by the Department of Corrections;
3 authorizing certain civil suits by correctional officers; and
4 providing for impact of collective bargaining agreements and
5 for summary suspensions.

6 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
7 hereby enacts as follows:

8 Section 1. Short title.

9 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Correctional
10 Officers Bill of Rights Act.

11 Section 2. Legislative intent.

12 It is the intent of the General Assembly to provide standards
13 to protect the rights of correctional officers during certain
14 investigations by the Department of Corrections.

15 Section 3. Definitions.

16 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
17 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
18 context clearly indicates otherwise:

1 "Correctional officer." An individual employed as a
2 correctional officer by the Department of Corrections and given
3 the care, custody and control of inmates.

4 "Department." The Department of Corrections of the
5 Commonwealth.

6 Section 4. Rights of correctional officers.

7 (a) General rule.--If a correctional officer is under
8 investigation and subject to interrogation by the department,
9 the following standards shall apply:

10 (1) The interrogation shall be conducted after not less
11 than 24 hours' notice and shall occur when the correctional
12 officer is on duty, unless the seriousness of the
13 investigation is such that an immediate investigation is
14 necessary. The correctional officer may not be terminated
15 from employment or disciplined for any work missed because of
16 the interrogation.

17 (2) The interrogation shall take place at one of the
18 following locations:

19 (i) The office of the investigating officer.

20 (ii) The office of the correctional facility
21 conducting the investigation.

22 (iii) An office within a building owned or leased by
23 the department.

24 (iv) Such other location as is necessary to protect
25 the safety or identity of the correctional officer.

26 (3) At the beginning of the interrogation, the
27 correctional officer under interrogation shall be informed of
28 the name and rank of the correctional officer in charge of
29 the interrogation and the names and ranks of any correctional
30 personnel that will be present.

1 (4) The correctional officer under interrogation shall
2 be informed in writing of the nature of the complaint and
3 provided with the name or names of the complainant not less
4 than 24 hours prior to the interrogation.

5 (5) If an anonymous or unsworn complaint is made against
6 a correctional officer and no corroborative evidence is
7 obtained within the applicable statute of limitations for the
8 analogous criminal offense, the complaint shall be classified
9 as unfounded and shall be completely expunged from any
10 personnel file of the correctional officer maintained by the
11 department.

12 (6) The interrogation shall allow for personal
13 necessities and for rest periods as are reasonably necessary.

14 (7) The correctional officer under interrogation may not
15 be offered promises of reward or threatened in connection
16 with the investigation.

17 (8) The complete interrogation shall be recorded,
18 including any recess periods. A copy of the record shall be
19 made available to the correctional officer or the
20 correctional officer's counsel or representative, upon
21 request, without cost.

22 (9) If the correctional officer is under arrest at the
23 time of the interrogation, the correctional officer shall be
24 completely informed of the correctional officer's
25 constitutional rights and all rights under the law prior to
26 the commencement of the interrogation.

27 (10) The correctional officer under interrogation shall
28 have the right to be represented by counsel or other
29 representative. To the extent that the correctional officer
30 is represented for purposes of collective bargaining by a

1 collective bargaining representative pursuant to State law,
2 the correctional officer shall also have the right to have an
3 agent from the exclusive collective bargaining representative
4 present.

5 (11) Prompt action shall be required as follows:

6 (i) Except as provided under subparagraph (ii), when
7 a complaint is made against a correctional officer more
8 than 90 days after the applicable statute of limitations
9 has expired for the civil wrong alleged, the complaint
10 shall be classified as unfounded and shall be completely
11 expunged from any personnel file of the correctional
12 officer maintained by the department.

13 (ii) Notwithstanding paragraph (i), no complaint
14 that alleges conduct that would constitute a misdemeanor
15 or felony offense, if proven, may be classified as
16 unfounded or expunged as a stale complaint until the
17 applicable statute of limitations expires as prescribed
18 under 42 Pa.C.S. Ch. 55 Subch. C (relating to criminal
19 proceedings).

20 (12) No correctional officer may be compelled to submit
21 to a polygraph examination. No disciplinary action or other
22 recrimination may be taken against a correctional officer for
23 refusing to submit to a polygraph examination. No testimony
24 or evidence may be admissible at a subsequent hearing, trial
25 or proceeding, judicial or administrative, to the effect that
26 the correctional officer refused to take a polygraph
27 examination.

28 (13) No correctional officer may be subjected to or
29 threatened with adverse employment action as a result of the
30 exercise of the rights accorded to correctional officers

1 under this act.

2 (14) No correctional officer may be required to disclose
3 greater information as to property, income, assets, source of
4 income, debts or personal or domestic expenditures, including
5 those of any member of the correctional officer's family or
6 household, than the principal elected officials of the
7 department are required to disclose, unless the information
8 is obtained under proper legal procedures.

9 (b) Routine, informed or unplanned interrogation or
10 contact.--This section shall not apply to any interrogation of a
11 correctional officer in the normal course of duty, counseling,
12 instruction, informal verbal admonishment or other routine or
13 unplanned contact with a supervisor or any other officer.

14 Section 5. Civil suits by correctional officers.

15 A correctional officer shall have a cause of action against a
16 person for damages suffered as a result of a complaint filed
17 against the correctional officer by that person that is found to
18 be any of the following:

19 (1) Without merit and frivolous.

20 (2) Without merit and made in bad faith.

21 Section 6. Impact of collective bargaining agreements.

22 Nothing in this act may be construed to diminish the
23 obligation of the department to comply with a collective
24 bargaining agreement that provides greater rights and coverage
25 to correctional officers than the rights and coverage provided
26 by this act. The rights and coverage under this act may not be
27 diminished by any collective bargaining agreement.

28 Section 7. Summary suspensions.

29 (a) Emergency suspension.--Emergency suspension of a
30 correctional officer may be imposed by the department if the

1 particular and unique circumstances of the situation dictate
2 that the action is necessary to protect the public interest or
3 the effective functioning of the department. A correctional
4 officer who is subjected to emergency suspension may be relieved
5 of duty, provided that the correctional officer receives all
6 ordinary pay and benefits as if the correctional officer were
7 not suspended.

8 (b) Criminal charges.--A correctional officer against whom a
9 criminal proceeding involving a misdemeanor or felony offense
10 has been instituted may be suspended without pay pending
11 disposition of the criminal charges. Medical benefits and
12 insurance to which a correctional officer and spouse and
13 dependents are entitled by virtue of employment may not be
14 suspended until conviction or separation of the correctional
15 officer from the department. If the correctional officer is
16 acquitted of the criminal charges, the correctional officer
17 shall be reinstated and reimbursed for all salary and benefits
18 that have not been paid during the suspension period.

19 Section 8. Effective date.

20 This act shall take effect in 60 days.