
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 703 Session of
2021

INTRODUCED BY PARKER, HILL-EVANS, HOWARD, KINKEAD, KINSEY, LEE,
SANCHEZ AND SCHLOSSBERG, MARCH 1, 2021

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, MARCH 1, 2021

AN ACT

1 Providing for the Commonwealth Advisory Board on Geographic
2 Names; and imposing duties on the Commonwealth Advisory Board
3 on Geographic Names.

4 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
5 hereby enacts as follows:

6 Section 1. Short title.

7 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Commonwealth
8 Advisory Board on Geographic Names Act.

9 Section 2. Legislative intent.

10 The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

11 (1) Certain geographic location names in this
12 Commonwealth are offensive and insulting to this
13 Commonwealth's residents, history and heritage.

14 (2) These geographic location names should be replaced
15 by names that better reflect this Commonwealth's residents,
16 history and heritage without resorting to harmful or
17 offensive stereotypes, names, words or phrases.

18 (3) The United States Board on Geographic Names, the

1 Federal agency which determines official geographic location
2 name changes, is a reactive body and does not initiate name
3 proposals, only accepting proposals from Federal, State,
4 local and tribal agencies, as well as from local
5 organizations and private citizens.

6 (4) The process that the Federal Government follows to
7 make official changes to geographic location names is
8 burdensome, complicated and lengthy.

9 (5) The establishment of the Commonwealth Advisory Board
10 on Geographic Names to address certain geographic location
11 names in this Commonwealth will be beneficial in identifying
12 offensive and insulting geographic location names and
13 assisting the Commonwealth and local governments, as well as
14 local organizations and private citizens, in the burdensome
15 process of proposing changes to geographic location names in
16 this Commonwealth.

17 Section 3. Definitions.

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

21 "Board." The Commonwealth Advisory Board on Geographic
22 Names.

23 "Department." The Department of Conservation and Natural
24 Resources of the Commonwealth.

25 Section 4. Commonwealth Advisory Board on Geographic Names.

26 (a) Establishment.--The Commonwealth Advisory Board on
27 Geographic Names is established within the department.

28 (b) Powers and duties.--The board shall have the following
29 powers and duties:

30 (1) Facilitate discussion among its membership to

1 consider issues related to geographic location names.

2 (2) Make recommendations to the appropriate Federal,
3 State and local agencies.

4 (3) Assist the Commonwealth and local governments,
5 including local organizations and private citizens, in the
6 process of proposing changes to geographic location names.

7 (c) Members.--The board shall be composed of the following
8 members:

9 (1) The secretary of the department or the secretary's
10 designee.

11 (2) The Secretary of Environmental Protection or the
12 secretary's designee.

13 (3) The Secretary of Transportation or the secretary's
14 designee.

15 (4) One member of the Senate appointed by the President
16 pro tempore of the Senate.

17 (5) One member of the Senate appointed by the Majority
18 Leader of the Senate.

19 (6) One member of the Senate appointed by the Minority
20 Leader of the Senate.

21 (7) One member of the House of Representatives appointed
22 by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

23 (8) One member of the House of Representatives appointed
24 by the Majority Leader of the House of Representatives.

25 (9) One member of the House of Representatives appointed
26 by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives.

27 (10) A representative from the Historical Society of
28 Pennsylvania, appointed by the Governor.

29 (11) A representative from the Pennsylvania State
30 Archives, appointed by the Governor.

1 (d) Chairs.--The board shall elect a chair and vice chair
2 from among its membership.

3 (e) Term.--Except members under subsection (c)(1), (2) and
4 (3), all members of the board shall serve a term of three years
5 and may serve on the board until a successor is appointed.

6 (f) Compensation.--Members of the board shall receive no
7 compensation for service on the board but shall be reimbursed
8 for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties under
9 this act.

10 (g) Staff support.--The department shall provide staff
11 support to the board.

12 Section 5. Duties of board.

13 The board shall do all of the following:

14 (1) Meet at least once a year to consider issues related
15 to geographic location names and make recommendations to the
16 appropriate Federal, State and local agencies for proposed
17 geographic location name changes.

18 (2) Develop a process to assist the Commonwealth and
19 local governments, including local organizations and private
20 citizens of this Commonwealth, in the process of proposing
21 changes to a geographic location name.

22 (3) Develop educational materials and outreach
23 opportunities for the department to make available regarding
24 the purpose and mission of the board.

25 (4) Issue an annual report detailing recommendations or
26 actions made by the board. The annual report shall be
27 submitted to the chair and minority chair of the State
28 Government Committee of the Senate and the chair and minority
29 chair of the State Government Committee of the House of
30 Representatives by December 1, 2021, and by December 1 of

1 each year thereafter.

2 Section 6. Effective date.

3 This act shall take effect in 90 days.