



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
HARRISBURG

THE GOVERNOR

November 21, 2016

TO THE HONORABLE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA:

Pursuant to Article IV, Section 15 of the Pennsylvania Constitution, I am returning herewith, without my approval, House Bill 1538, Printer's Number 4125.

Government works best when trust and openness exist between citizens and their government. I cannot agree to sign this bill, because it will enshrine into law a policy to withhold important information from the public.

The legislation as drafted would prevent the disclosure of a police officer's name in a situation where an officer takes the life of an unarmed person. These situations in particular—when law enforcement uses deadly force—demand utmost transparency, otherwise a harmful mistrust will grow between police officers and the communities they protect and serve. Transparency and accountability are required of all public employees, but this bill ignores the reality that a police officer is a public employee.

This bill's provisions will supersede any conflicting local police department policies, even though local police departments are better equipped to decide what information is appropriate to release to the public. Finally, this legislation would allow for the prosecution of anyone who violates the ban on releasing the name of a police officer who uses deadly force. This criminalization of what should be a routine release of public information is not in the public interest.

I am deeply concerned for the safety of the Commonwealth's police officers, but this legislation does not necessarily provide greater protection to law enforcement while it seriously inhibits public access to information.

For the reasons set forth above, I must withhold my signature from House Bill 1538, Printer's Number 4125.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Wolf".

TOM WOLF
Governor