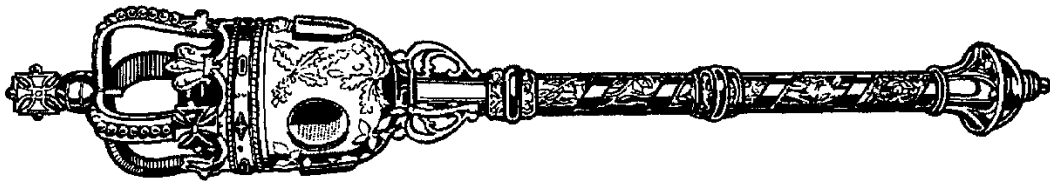


*Report of the
House Appropriations
Subcommittee*

on

Public Safety



House Bill 1500

February 6, 2005

**Respectfully Submitted by the House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Public Safety:**

Beverly J. Sherwood, Chairman

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REPORT OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE

on

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

This Session once again began with a different set of challenges facing both the full Committee and the Public Safety Subcommittee. Mr. Chairman, while the state's fiscal climate has improved over that of recent Sessions, you recognized that the Committee would need to build a budget that addressed some of the most pressing needs of the Commonwealth including transportation, the sales tax acceleration issue, and the cleanup of the Chesapeake Bay.

Nonetheless, you made it clear that as the Subcommittees identified specific issues to address, you and the other Subcommittee chairmen would resolve to identify resources to address the most pressing problems. Based on the budget review by the Public Safety Subcommittee, it became clear that there were issues in the area of Public Safety that required immediate attention. To do its part, the Subcommittee was in agreement that to the extent possible, the most important public safety needs should be addressed with the resources available. As a result, all available strategies to generate resources were utilized. However, these strategies were always implemented consistent with the Subcommittee's primary objective: keeping Virginia a safe place to live and work.

Mr. Chairman, I am very pleased to be able to report on a number of recommended actions that, due to the support of you and other Subcommittee Chairmen in identifying resources, will enable us to address these needs.

One issue that the entire Public Safety Subcommittee recognized needed immediate attention was the state's forensic laboratory. As you know, the Division of Forensic Science has been recognized as

one of the preeminent forensic laboratories in the county. Yet, this success has translated into workload increases from the criminal justice system that has impacted the ability of existing staff to process the requests in a timely manner. The Subcommittee recommends a number of amendments totaling \$4.5 million for the Division of Forensic Science.

To address the public safety issues impacted by the forensic laboratory, the Subcommittee recommends accelerating the hiring of the new professional scientific staff included in the introduced budget. Furthermore, the Subcommittee is recommending additional professional staff positions to address the Division's growing caseloads. Finally, the Subcommittee is presenting for your approval an amendment that will restore funding for the Institute of Forensic Science, which is the pipeline for new scientists who do the important work of the lab. These actions should have an immediate impact – the length of time defendants wait for a trial should be reduced which will save taxpayers money and ensure that the right to a speedy trial is protected.

The Subcommittee also supports the necessary operational reforms at the Division of Forensic Science. This Committee reported House Bill 2216 which makes the Division a separate department under the Secretary of Public Safety instead of a division within another agency. This will allow the forensic science laboratory to focus on the work it does best to support the criminal justice system. To that end, the Subcommittee has recommended language amendments designed to ensure that the transition to a separate agency has no impact on the processing of evidence at the laboratory.

It also became clear during our review that the compensation structure of the state's forensic laboratory needed to be enhanced in order for the lab to retain existing scientists and recruit for the new positions included in this budget. These positions require highly specialized staff with extensive training and certification requirements. In addition, the field of forensic science is becoming highly competitive as demand is almost greater than the availability of appropriately trained scientists.

To address this, the Subcommittee is recommending for your approval budget amendments to address salary compression and starting salaries for professional scientists at the state's forensic laboratory. This will ensure that the Division of Forensic Science can keep their current workforce salaries competitive while recruiting the experienced scientists they will need. I would also like to thank Delegate Putney and the Capital Outlay Subcommittee for including in their amendment funding for a new forensic laboratory in Northern Virginia.

The Subcommittee's ongoing review and analysis of agencies and programs under its purview also indicated that there were issues related to local law enforcement that needed to be addressed. Specifically, it was identified that additional funding would be required to fully fund the law enforcement staffing requirements for sheriffs' offices. Based on this information, Mr. Chairman, the Subcommittee is recommending an amendment that would fully fund the 1:1500 law enforcement deputy-to-population ratio, ensuring that required levels of law enforcement services continue in our localities across Virginia.

Building on the desire we all have to keep our communities safe, the Subcommittee is recommending an innovative pilot project that involves the Department of Juvenile and Justice and the City of Richmond. It came to our attention that truancy is a consistent problem in the City and that the City also has a number of school-aged juveniles who are considered high-risk to become engaged in criminal activity. As a result, we are recommending a pilot program with the City of Richmond to combat truancy which should lead to a decline in the number of juveniles considered at risk for criminal activity.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the Subcommittee is recommending amendments that support the Department of Military Affairs, traffic enforcement activities on Interstate 81, and on ongoing project management for the Statewide Agencies Radio System (STARS).

Mr. Chairman, we also applaud your efforts to identify sufficient resources for the Committee to meet other high priority objectives such as salary increases, since the Public Safety area of state government employs a large number of employees.

Mr. Chairman and fellow Committee members, I will ask staff to take you through our detailed recommendations, and then I hope it will be your pleasure to adopt our subcommittee report.

House Bill 1500

Amendment

2004-06 BIENNIAL TOTAL

General <u>Fund</u>	Nongeneral <u>Fund</u>	<u>FTE</u>
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Compensation Board

Jail Cost Recovery Methodology	Language
Delayed Jail Expansion Completion	(1,700,000)
Law Enforcement Deputies: 1:1500 Standard	192,402
Reimbursement for DOC Pilot Program	Language
Defer Per Diem Increase Pending Reforecast	(1,566,744)

Department Of Corrections, Central Activities

Intake Priority for State Inmates In Local Jails	Language
Evaluate New Facility Proposals	Language
Day Reporting Center Location	Language
Return to Custody Pilot Implementation	Language
Virginia Peninsula Regional Jail Study	Language
Pamunkey Regional Jail Study	Language
Roanoke County-Salem City Jail Study	Language
Franklin County Jail Study	Language
Nongeneral Fund Positions	
Prison Chaplain Services	200,000
Woodrum Impact: HB 1737	66,671
Woodrum Impact: HB 2248	43,177
Woodrum Impact: HB 2564	351,875
Woodrum Impact: HB 2688	181,421

(5.00)

Department Of Criminal Justice Services

Division of Forensic Sciences MOU	Language
Professional Scientist Salary Compression	2,513,141
Virginia Institute of Forensic Science	906,000
Division of Forensic Sciences Achievement Prog	300,000
Accelerate Hiring of Forensic Scientists	126,033
Forensic Scientists to Address Backlog	752,536

15.00

Department Of Juvenile Justice

Truancy Pilot Program	675,000
Crossroads Community Youth Home Study	Language
Correctional Center Utilization Plan	Language

Department Of Military Affairs

Recruitment Incentive Program	100,000	
Challenge Youth Program	240,000	360,000

Department Of State Police

Aviation Operations Report	Language
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Interstate 81 Enforcement Activities	110,000		
Central Appropriations			
STARS Project Management	250,000		
Total Public Safety	<u>3,291,512</u>	<u>560,000</u>	<u>10.00</u>