

1 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
2 COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

3 * * * *

4 Budget Hearing
5 Department of Military & Veterans Affairs Committee

6 * * * *

7 Appropriations Committee

8 Main Capitol Building
9 Majority Caucus Room 140
10 Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

11 Wednesday, February 19, 2020

12 --oOo--

13 MAJORITY MEMBERS PRESENT:

14 Honorable George Dunbar, Acting Majority Chairman
15 Honorable Rosemary Brown
16 Honorable Lynda Schlegel-Culver
17 Honorable Sheryl Delozier
18 Honorable Jonathan Fritz
19 Honorable Matt Gabler
20 Honorable Keith Greiner
21 Honorable Seth Grove
22 Honorable Marcia Hahn
23 Honorable Doyle Heffley
24 Honorable Lee James
25 Honorable John Lawrence
Honorable Jason Ortitay
Honorable Clint Owlett
Honorable Chris Quinn
Honorable Greg Rothman
Honorable James Struzzi
Honorable Jesse Topper
Honorable Jeff Wheeland
Honorable Ryan Warner
Honorable Martina White

1300 Garrison Drive, York, PA 17404
717.764.7801

Key Reporters

keyreporters@comcast.net

1 MINORITY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

2 Honorable Matt Bradford, Minority Chairman
3 Honorable Donna Bullock
4 Honorable Morgan Cephas
5 Honorable Carolyn Comitta
6 Honorable Austin Davis
7 Honorable Maria Donatucci
8 Honorable Elizabeth Fiedler
9 Honorable Marty Flynn
10 Honorable Edward Gainey
11 Honorable Patty Kim
12 Honorable Stephen Kinsey
13 Honorable Leanne Krueger
14 Honorable Stephen McCarter
15 Honorable Benjamin Sanchez
16 Honorable Peter Schweyer

10

11 NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

12 Honorable Chris Sainato, Majority Veterans Affairs
& Emergency Preparedness Committee Chairman
13 Honorable Cris Dush
14 Honorable Curt Sonney
15 Honorable Tom Mehaffie
16 Honorable Frank Farry
17 Honorable Frank Ryan
18 Honorable Mark Gillen
19 Honorable Joe Ciresi
20 Honorable Joe Webster
21 Honorable Brian Simms
22 Honorable Joe Hohenstein
23 Honorable Pam DeLissio
24 Honorable Kevin Boyle
25 Honorable Chris Sainato
Honorable Ed Neilson
Honorable Patrick Harkins
Honorable Gerald Mullery
Honorable Carol Hill-Evans

22

23

24

25

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

STAFF ATTENDANCE:

David Donley
Majority Executive Director

Ritchie LaFaver
Deputy Executive Director

Ann Baloga
Minority Executive Director

Tara Trees
Minority Chief Counsel

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

INDEX OF TESTIFIERS

TESTIFIERS

DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY & VETERANS AFFAIRS

Major General Anthony Carrelli, Adjutant General

Major General Eric Weller
Deputy Adjutant General, Veterans Affairs

Brigadier General Mark Schindler
Deputy Adjutant General, Army

Brigadier General Mike Regan
Deputy Adjutant General, Air

Brigadier General Stephen Radulski,
Director, Keystone State Challenge Academy

Mark Ferraro
Deputy, Facilities & Engineering

Patty Derry
Deputy of Administration

SUBMITTED WRITTEN TESTIMONY

(See other submitted testimony and handouts
online.)

REQUEST FOR PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

PAGE LINE PAGE LINE PAGE LINE

(None)

1 ACTING MAJORITY CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: Thank
2 you all. It being past 1, we're going to get
3 started. Hopefully, we'll be joined by everybody
4 else who are coming through the door.

5 Before we get started, maybe, General,
6 if you want to introduce everybody, that would be
7 helpful.

8 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Okay. Let's
9 just start down on the line. Mike, we'll start
10 with you on the end.

11 BRIG. GEN. REGAN: Brigadier General
12 Mike Regan, Deputy Adjutant General, Air.

13 BRIG. GEN. SCHLINDER: Brigadier General
14 Mark Schlinder, Deputy Adjutant General for Army.

15 MAJOR GENERAL WELLER: Major General
16 Eric Weller, Office of Veterans Affairs.

17 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Major
18 General Tony Carrelli, the Adjunct General.

19 MR. FERRARO: Mark Ferraro, Deputy for
20 Facilities and Engineering.

21 MS. DERRY: Patty Derry, Deputy for
22 Administration.

23 BRIG. GEN. RADULSKI: Brigadier General
24 Stephen Radulski, Director of Keystone State
25 Challenge Academy.

1 ACTING MAJORITY CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: Thank
2 you all. As you can tell, I am not Chairman
3 Saylor. Chairman Saylor is a bit under the weather
4 today, so I will be standing in for him.

5 For anyone who's gonna be testifying in
6 the hearing, if you will please stand and raise
7 your right hand so we can swear you in.

8 (All testifiers were sworn en masse).

9 ACTING MAJORITY CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: So
10 sworn. Please have a seat.

11 In the interest of time, we're not going
12 to have any opening statements, unless you thought
13 you needed to say anything, Major General.

14 ADJUNCT GENERAL CARRELLI: No.

15 ACTING MAJORITY CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: Then
16 we'll just move right on to questioning, and we
17 will start with Representative James.

18 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: Thank you,
19 Mr. Chairman.

20 Gentlemen, and lady, I'm over here on
21 your right.

22 So, I wanted to start with the budget
23 item that seems to stand out the most, as it is a
24 over seven -- over 700 percent increase, and that's
25 in the area of maintenance -- armory maintenance

1 and repair. That's a 1.9 million-dollar increase
2 compared to the previous fiscal year.

3 I wonder if you -- if the proper person
4 could address that situation, explain the purpose
5 of the funds, and -- Well, do that, please.

6 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.
7 And I can understand your concern.

8 If you look throughout the history, if
9 you could actually look back over a decade ago,
10 you'll see similar numbers. And, essentially, with
11 the event of the Stryker into the Pennsylvania
12 inventory, we got a great deal of money to do new
13 facilities. And as a result of that, we repurposed
14 a lot of old facilities. And as we divested old
15 facilities, we sold those. So, with the
16 legislative approval, we were able to sell those
17 facilities. Money from those sales went into the
18 state armory fund.

19 So, over the last decade, we were
20 primarily able to support that fund with sales. We
21 are to the point now where we just have one armory
22 left currently for sale and the sales are done.
23 So, at this point, we are going to need the state
24 Legislature to again resume appropriating money
25 into that fund to support those costs.

1 I'll let Mr. Ferraro discuss what we do
2 with those funds. But, you'll notice over the past
3 number of years, we've asked for very little in
4 that fund and that's because of those sales of
5 armories which are coming to an end, and that's why
6 we're asking for it now. And Mark will tell you
7 about what that money goes to.

8 MR. FERRARO: Yes, sir. Thank you for
9 the question.

10 As you're well aware, we have a very
11 robust real estate portfolio with all the readiness
12 centers that we manage, plus Fort Indiantown Gap.
13 On average, we spend about \$18.5 million in
14 building, maintenance and repair, only. That's not
15 talking the capital projects and other construction
16 things we do.

17 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: How many
18 facilities is that, please?

19 MR. FERRARO: Sir, believe it or not, if
20 you count Fort Indiantown Gap, we're a little over
21 900 facilities.

22 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: Thank you.

23 MR. FERRARO: Outside of Fort Indiantown
24 Gap, it's 84 readiness centers.

25 So, as I said, it's about 18.5 million

1 in building, maintenance and repair. Of that, we
2 have a state share of 16.2 percent, for a total of
3 about \$3 million a year, that we must match the
4 federal funding that we get to maintain our
5 facilities.

6 Fort Indiantown Gap, the majority of the
7 facilities at Fort Indiantown Gap are a hundred
8 percent federally reimbursed, but our readiness
9 centers that are outside of Fort Indiantown Gap are
10 only reimbursed at the 50/50 rate.

11 The average age of our facilities is
12 53 years old. Therefore, the maintenance of those
13 facilities is very high and the upkeep is high. We
14 have facilities as old as being built in the
15 1920's, and our newest facility, the unit is
16 actually moving in this weekend in York.

17 To be able to maintain the facilities in
18 the condition that we need to maintain the
19 readiness of our military forces, and to be able to
20 match the federal dollars because the Federal
21 Government will not spend the money if we cannot
22 match it, then we need that increase in the
23 maintenance budget to maintain those facilities.

24 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: You did a good
25 job of anticipating part of the rest of my

1 questions. I have one more for you.

2 What sort of operations actually take
3 place at these facilities, so people understand?

4 MR. FERRARO: Yes, sir. It will vary
5 depending upon what the purpose of the facility is.
6 And then the purpose of the facility, as we code
7 that facility, will dictate the funding.

8 So, for example, at Fort Indiantown Gap,
9 the reason why most of the facilities are a hundred
10 percent federally reimbursed is because they have a
11 direct correlation to the federal mission that the
12 National Guard has in relation to their training
13 and readiness, so they reimburse at the hundred
14 percent rate.

15 Aviation facilities, all aviation
16 facilities, all maintenance facilities, and all
17 training site facilities at Fort Indiantown Gap are
18 reimbursed at the hundred percent rate. All
19 maintenance facilities outside of Fort Indiantown
20 Gap are reimbursed at the hundred percent rate,
21 which we have 18 maintenance facilities throughout
22 the Commonwealth.

23 Our readiness centers, on the other
24 hand, where the soldiers go to gather on a weekend
25 before they may come up to Fort Indiantown Gap for

1 training, or mainly in the winter months they
2 assemble there to do administrative tasks, those
3 readiness centers are traditionally reimbursed at
4 the 50/50 rate because of the dual status of the
5 National Guard, so the state will pick up 50;
6 they'll pick up 50.

7 We also have simulations out at our
8 readiness centers so that the soldiers don't have
9 to travel to Fort Indiantown Gap, whether it's
10 rifle simulators, tank simulators, aircraft
11 simulators, so that they can train right there at
12 their home station armory instead of spending time
13 on the road. That travel time which takes away
14 from their training, they can spend at the
15 readiness center doing simulation training as well.

16 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: Thank you very
17 much. My time has expired. But I appreciate your
18 answers.

19 MR. FERRARO: Thanks, sir.

20 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: Go Army.

21 ACTING MAJORITY CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: Thank
22 you, Representative James.

23 I want to note that we've been joined by
24 members not on the Appropriations Committee:
25 Representative Ryan, Representative Gillen,

1 Representative Farry, and the Minority Chairman of
2 Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness,
3 Representative Sainato. And Joe Webster, I'm
4 sorry. Thank you.

5 And next up will be Representative
6 Krueger.

7 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER: Thank you,
8 Mr. Chairman.

9 Thank you so much, gentlemen, for
10 joining us here today. As the daughter of a
11 Vietnam veteran who served in Vietnam in the Navy,
12 I'm so grateful for the services that you provide
13 for your constituents. And I've been lucky to work
14 with your staff over the past four years to make
15 sure the veterans in my district get every benefit
16 that they desire. I thank each of you for your
17 service and for being here today.

18 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Thank you,
19 ma'am.

20 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER: I have a
21 question regarding the line item for veterans
22 outreach services, and I'm looking at page 46 of
23 the budget that you shared with us. It looks like
24 the allocation of state funds is going down in this
25 budget year.

1 Can you talk about what that reduction
2 is due to?

3 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: So, I
4 believe you're referencing the 250,000 that was
5 added last year that was not continued this year.
6 As you noticed, the bottom line on the budget that
7 I had to constrain to is 159.6. And in 159.6, you
8 have my budget, which I am telling you that is the
9 most effective way for me to spend that money.

10 Is outreach important? Absolutely it
11 is. And I've been on the record for a number of
12 years talking about the value of that outreach
13 program, the amount of money it brings into the
14 Commonwealth as far as veterans' benefits to
15 individual veterans. Every veteran that we sign up
16 derives a benefit from that.

17 And we do -- We looked at a federal
18 study. We do -- We are under-serviced in
19 Pennsylvania, so we do need more veterans. I'm on
20 the record saying that I need to get more of those
21 veteran service officers on the street in
22 Pennsylvania.

23 I think the other important thing is,
24 most of the money that goes to that outreach is --
25 is in the way of salaries. And it's important for

1 us to keep that -- that money valued. So on the
2 last two years as I approached this Committee, I've
3 asked for cost-of-living increases for that money.

4 So, I stand by that today. It is
5 extremely important. It is a program that we need
6 to continue and we need to expand. But,
7 unfortunately, with 159.6, I could not fit it in --
8 in -- in this year's budget. The rest of it is
9 being maintained.

10 But I do not want to put any less
11 emphasis on the importance of that program. It's
12 extremely important, and -- and I wish I had more
13 room for it because I would put it in there.

14 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER: I appreciate
15 that you're under tight budget constraints.

16 Can you explain to us what portion of
17 the veterans service outreach line goes to your
18 direct employees, the folks you just mentioned,
19 versus grants to outside organizations?

20 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: The Act 66
21 line in total goes to six of our veteran service
22 organizations that participate in that program.
23 They get every dollar of that money.

24 We do some veteran service officers that
25 are inside of the Department of Military and

1 Veterans Affairs. They are paid out of our,
2 essentially, our complement dollars within our own
3 budget. So that Act 66 money goes -- is split. We
4 use a formula to split amongst the six
5 participating services now.

6 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER: I want to ask
7 just a follow-up on those veteran service officers
8 who are paid directly through your complement,
9 because I found them to be incredibly valuable.
10 I've partnered with them. They've come to my
11 district. They've come to events. They helped the
12 90-plus-year olds, worked with two veterans to find
13 a benefit he didn't know existed when they were in
14 my district in Aston a few years ago.

15 How many of those folks do you currently
16 have on staff?

17 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Ma'am, I
18 believe on the -- on the veterans things, and I'll
19 look over to General Weller, I believe.

20 In that program we have about 60. And
21 in the counties, the counties also maintain veteran
22 service officers. They have somewhere along the
23 lines of, you know, 140-ish amongst the counties,
24 and we have a handful at DMVA. But most of those
25 are working veterans' programs. Their function is

1 not to actually go on the street and sign up
2 veterans, although they could do that because they
3 are qualified to do that.

4 So, a round number, total state number
5 is around 200 in Pennsylvania. So, as you can
6 imagine, with nearly 800,000 veterans, those 200
7 veteran service officers really have the
8 responsibility, each one of them almost is looking
9 at trying to sign up 4,000, if you -- if you just
10 do the math. So it's a daunting task.

11 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER: So, again, I
12 want to say, my office has had direct contact with
13 the veteran service officers directly employed by
14 the state and folks employed by the county.

15 By far, your staff have been the most
16 knowledgeable and have been most able to help folks
17 cut through the red tape. Please keep them in
18 place. My district in Delaware County desperately
19 needs them. And I'd love to see an increase at --

20 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Thank you,
21 ma'am. I appreciate that comment.

22 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER: Thank you.

23 ACTING MAJORITY CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: Thank
24 you, Representative.

25 We're also joined by Representative

1 Carol Hill-Evans.

2 Next question will come from
3 Representative Topper.

4 REPRESENTATIVE TOPPER: Good afternoon.
5 Thank to each one of you. General, good to see you
6 again.

7 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Good to see
8 you, sir.

9 REPRESENTATIVE TOPPER: Like to talk a
10 little bit about Act 51 we established in 2018,
11 which is the Youth Challenge Program. We see in
12 this year's budget almost a 50 percent increase,
13 but I think there's some federal dollars involved.

14 Could you kind of explain the difference
15 in what we have between state and federal?

16 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.
17 I'll give you a brief overview, and then I'll hand
18 it over to Steve Radulski, our director, who we
19 hired this past year. He's in charge of our Youth
20 Challenge Program.

21 But, essentially, you see they ask there
22 -- And most of the program now, so he's the only
23 employee currently employed under that -- under
24 that line item, although we are undergoing
25 interviews to -- to start hiring staff.

1 Most of the money at this point is going
2 to construction, so we have a construction plan.
3 We have the design in place, and we started
4 construction. And as -- as we continue this road
5 to starting our first class in about two years,
6 most of the upfront money is gonna be all
7 construction. And then that's going to wane over
8 this next two years, and the cost of staffing will
9 increase over the next two years as we get the
10 staff in place, and then, essentially, two years
11 from now. What we're estimating is, the state
12 share of this is going to be about \$2 million a
13 year to maintain this program.

14 The federal match, it's a 3-to-1 match.
15 So, the Federal Government is gonna match 6 million
16 against that, so it will be 8 million total
17 program, of which state responsibility will be two
18 in the out-years.

19 But what you're seeing now is a request,
20 which is being federally matched three times that
21 amount. And that's all the planned construction at
22 this point. Now I'll let --

23 REPRESENTATIVE TOPPER: Which is a
24 pretty good benefit for us when you're talking
25 about a 3-to-1 match --

1 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.

2 REPRESENTATIVE TOPPER: -- for this kind
3 of program.

4 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: And
5 normally, our Department would not be in an
6 education program. But it's really very hard to
7 pass up a 3-to-1 federal match, which is done
8 through the National Guard Bureau nationally, and
9 that's the way we were able to get this program to
10 Pennsylvania through the National Guard. That's
11 why it is the NVA.

12 REPRESENTATIVE TOPPER: Just kind of an
13 overview, maybe of the program, General, where
14 you're at, and what you'd like us to hear about how
15 that program is getting kicked off and running
16 would be helpful.

17 BRIGADIER GEN. RADULSKI: Sure,
18 absolutely. Thank you.

19 So, the program started back in 1993.
20 There's over 40 programs in over 30 different
21 states, Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico, and really
22 geared toward the 16-, 18-year-old student who's
23 not finding success in high school, been
24 potentially dropping out. And so, the program is
25 designed as a method by which to reclaim those

1 lives and put them in a military-like environment
2 for a 22-week period focused on eight core
3 components that range everything from academic
4 success, to physical fitness, to how to deal with
5 stress.

6 There are great benefits. We've had
7 over 166,000 across the nation since 1993 that have
8 gone through their program. By coming out with a
9 diploma or an equivalency degree, coming out of
10 there, what you're going to get then is people who
11 are young adults who are contributing members of
12 society, either go back to their high school where
13 they came from to complete their education, or go
14 in the military, potentially, or go into the
15 workforce or college. And so, really, it's trying
16 to get them back on the path.

17 As a teacher of 22 years, I saw many
18 students who just -- it wasn't working for them.
19 And so, this is an alternative educational program
20 that we have been in collaboration with
21 Pennsylvania Department of Education to try to
22 figure out what is the path forward to get the
23 educational model established, and then in early
24 '22, 2022, open it up. But --

25 REPRESENTATIVE TOPPER: When we open it

1 up in 2022, what -- the first class size are you
2 projecting how many you think?

3 BRIGADIER GEN. RADULSKI: So right now
4 with the funding that we get and the renovations
5 that we do to the buildings, we can go to a max
6 capacity of 120 students per class. There's two
7 classes per year starting in January and then in
8 July. So that would be 200 minimum the initial
9 year, up to 240.

10 We look to expand beyond that and go per
11 class up to 150 or 160 probably by the summer of
12 2023. But that first year of a lesser class size
13 enables us to work out all the -- all the
14 challenges of establishing -- make things -- make
15 sure things are going well, and then look to expand
16 as more buildings come on line and are renovated.

17 REPRESENTATIVE TOPPER: I think it's a
18 great partnership to have with the Department of
19 Education. I love the fact that we have been able
20 to kind of parlay this into some pretty significant
21 federal dollars for it. I think this is a huge
22 advantage for some of our students.

23 I know that first class -- I mean, even
24 at 120, I think that's a great number to start with
25 because I know we're gonna want to continue to see

1 that grow. So, thank you everybody for that update
2 on that program.

3 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 ACTING MAJORITY CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: Thank
5 you, Representative.

6 Next will be Representative Sanchez.

7 REPRESENTATIVE SANCHEZ: Thank you,
8 Mr. Chairman.

9 Thank you, General, and the entire
10 command staff for being here today. And thank you
11 for the great work you do in your Department. Some
12 really fine stuff here, and I'm always impressed.

13 I have a question for you based in water
14 quality, which is a topic very important to the
15 entire state and country, but particularly in my
16 area, which is the southeastern part of the state,
17 Montgomery County.

18 And I'm sure you're aware of the
19 situation with PFAS as it's commonly known, the
20 per- and polyfluoralkyl chemicals present in the
21 aqueous firefighting foam often in military
22 installations; very effective in putting out fires,
23 but has a big problem, insofar as, it almost never
24 goes away and has been leaching into the
25 groundwater and affecting the water supply.

1 Does the Department have any kind of
2 comprehensive plan in place or, you know, the
3 kernels of a plan to maybe address this issue?

4 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.
5 We work in -- And the Governor has this task force
6 on water quality which we participate in as well.

7 But also, within the Department of
8 Defense, there is -- there's major discussion areas
9 about that. You can't go -- I just came from
10 national meetings of all the Adjutant Generals, and
11 a Department of Defense official spent about 45
12 minutes talking about PFAS/PFOA. It is a national
13 emergency and a national problem.

14 There are still places around the
15 country that are still using the foam, which, by
16 federal legislation has been outlawed in another
17 year and a half to two years. And they just
18 honestly don't have another system of foam
19 developed yet that's going to replace it.

20 But, you know, it's kind of a double-
21 edge sword. When we first found it in Horsham --
22 And, by the way, I served in Horsham for 12 or
23 14 years. I was there, I drank the water. My home
24 is in Montgomery Township, so I -- I'm very
25 familiar. And we just recently -- And I'll turn

1 this over to General Regan who has the particulars.

2 So, we have been continuing to advocate
3 with the National Guard, the Air Force, which is
4 now the owner of that installation, to be able to
5 do the cleanup efforts and things. Recently, we
6 were able to get money released to help us in that
7 effort.

8 So, I'll turn it over to General Regan
9 to talk about the exact -- what's going on on the
10 ground there at Horsham.

11 REPRESENTATIVE SANCHEZ: And I commend
12 you for that. Well done.

13 BRIGADIER GEN. REGAN: First, thank you
14 very much for the question. Much like the General,
15 I spent 25 years stationed at Horsham and have a
16 vested interest in doing the right stuff there. I
17 can tell you that since 2014, when we became aware
18 of the contamination there in concert with NGB and
19 the Department of Navy and Air Force, we have spent
20 in excess of \$30 million remediating both on the
21 base and in the surrounding communities.

22 Most recently, the topic that bubbled up
23 to the top is Warminster Township's very legitimate
24 concerns relative to stormwater runoff and ground
25 water contamination. NGB just gave \$2.6 million to

1 rectify that in concert with the township. We have
2 done a tremendous amount of outreach since 2014 in
3 that area, because Horsham is certainly one of the
4 first spots that we, in the National Guard here in
5 Pennsylvania, became aware of that impacted us
6 directly.

7 As General Carrelli mentioned,
8 nationwide it's becoming a significant issue. It
9 finally got attention in the NDAA that was signed
10 this past year. Several tens of millions of
11 dollars being allocated specifically to test water
12 in the surrounding communities and to remediate
13 those levels that are in excess of current
14 guidelines.

15 I hope that helps to give you a little
16 bit of an update on where we are with respect to
17 Horsham.

18 REPRESENTATIVE SANCHEZ: Indeed. And
19 thank you for that insight.

20 As far as the rest of the state, and I
21 know the General mentioned it, presumably, the
22 chemical won't be used anymore -- or is not being
23 used in Pennsylvania. If it's outlawed, or are we
24 still in that?

25 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes. Sir,

1 there are -- there's a restriction from NDAA to bar
2 further purchase starting, I believe, next year,
3 and then -- and then another year after that bars
4 the further use of it. So the Department of
5 Defense is scrambling. And it's not just a
6 Department of Defense issue. There are many others
7 civilian firefighting agencies that have used
8 similar foam at major airports all throughout the
9 country.

10 We have found -- You know, as we
11 continue to test across Pennsylvania, we've found a
12 number of other sites that have been contaminated
13 where there's no military presence. So it's -- I
14 don't want to give the impression it's just a
15 military problem. This is also a problem --
16 problem out in private industry as well.

17 REPRESENTATIVE SANCHEZ: Thank you for
18 that point, too. I didn't mean to lay it strictly
19 on the military when it's present in so many other
20 areas.

21 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: And, you
22 know, a lot of the solutions we have been able to
23 arrive at has been DoD focused, but there's other
24 problems we need to work because not every -- not
25 every solution is going to be a military one. Some

1 of these locations don't have a military nexus, and
2 we still need to do something about it. So, it's a
3 -- it's a great concern.

4 REPRESENTATIVE SANCHEZ: Thank you so
5 much, General. Appreciate the insight and the
6 personal focus on it. Thank you.

7 ACTING MAJORITY CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: Thank
8 you, Representative.

9 It's good to hear, because I know
10 Representative Stevens has worked long and hard in
11 our caucus to bring awareness to the PFAS problem,
12 so that's all good to hear.

13 Next up will be Representative Lawrence.

14 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Thank you,
15 Mr. Chairman.

16 Ms. Derry and gentlemen, I appreciate
17 you making time to be here today. Certainly
18 appreciate all your service to both the
19 Commonwealth and the nation.

20 I'd like to ask a question with regard
21 to the property tax abatement program for a hundred
22 percent disabled veterans. Just by way of
23 background, an exception in the Constitution's
24 uniform taxation clause provides for an exemption
25 from payment for property taxes levied on the

1 principal resident of an honorably discharged U.S.
2 veteran who's a hundred percent permanently
3 disabled, amputee, blind, or paraplegic, and it's
4 determined that the veteran is in need of the tax
5 exemption.

6 A constituent recently contacted me
7 regarding a provision in Title 51 added by the
8 Senate in 2006 that established an income limit on
9 the property tax waiver program. My constituent
10 believes that the current law, which establishes a
11 fixed statewide income limit for eligibility is
12 unfair, and that doesn't take into account the
13 difference in cost of living across the state, and
14 it doesn't fully respect the sacrifice made by our
15 100 percent fully-disabled veterans.

16 Others I've spoken with think that the
17 current threshold should be maybe doubled or
18 tripled.

19 I'd really like to gather your feedback
20 on this issue. Given that this is a constitutional
21 provision, are you okay with the current parameters
22 of the program as it stands, or do you feel the
23 Legislature should take a look at it; maybe make
24 changes, including, perhaps, increasing the income
25 threshold for eligibility as it relates to our

1 100 percent disabled veterans and property taxes?

2 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.

3 So, the original purpose of the program
4 was, essentially, there were a number of veterans
5 that were a hundred percent disabled permanent that
6 have low-income means, and because of the rising
7 cost of their property tax, some of those veterans
8 were losing -- in danger of losing their home. So
9 this program was enacted to essentially be able to
10 aid them and be able to keep their home.

11 So, for -- Some of the -- So that's why
12 the financial need is in there. And there's a
13 number of veterans that will come to me and say,
14 well, we think every veteran should have that.
15 I'll say, that would be great, but what would that
16 cost and what would -- This is a cost that we're
17 laying on those individual townships that are doing
18 without that -- that tax base.

19 So, there's a balance here between doing
20 a program that would honor all of our veterans for
21 their service. And granted, all -- nearly 800,000
22 of our veterans, they all earned our appreciation.
23 They all earned our support, but a number of the
24 programs that we do are aimed at those that are
25 less fortunate and those that are suffering. And

1 that's what this program was originally designed
2 for.

3 There's a number of ongoing legislative
4 proposals that are out there that changed -- change
5 the program or supplement the program. One of them
6 is a prorated. A number of veterans have come to
7 me and say, well, I have a 65 percent disability
8 rating and I get nothing, and I'm low income and I
9 should have something.

10 Well, you know, honestly, yeah, a
11 prorated program would be nice to have. And in the
12 interest of fairness, that does -- that does sound
13 like it would be more fair. But, the program, as
14 designed, was to go after the hundred percenters
15 with low income to prevent them from losing their
16 house.

17 How do we calculate that number? Okay.
18 So that's a number arrived at. It's 90-some
19 thousand dollars. It's the entire household
20 income, and that's to keep it so that it's veterans
21 in financial need. That's really the purpose of
22 that number.

23 Now, is that a fair number across all
24 the counties in Pennsylvania? Well, probably not
25 because that -- You know, \$90,000 in county X is

1 not the same as cost of living as in county Y.
2 But, if we have 67 different numbers, or if we're
3 going by each township's cost of living, then the
4 program becomes much harder to manage, and then
5 we're going to have to hire a larger staff to
6 manage the program to go through all the
7 calculations, and now we're paying additional
8 administrative fees to administer the program.

9 So, you're giving us money or the
10 townships are giving up money to administer the
11 program; whereas, right now that money is going
12 directly to those veterans in need. So it's a
13 balance of that.

14 So, if you want to talk hypothetical, is
15 it more fair to do it this way? Yes, it is more
16 fair, but it's less practical. So we have to
17 balance those needs.

18 I certainly am willing to take a look
19 and get raw data as to people that are in that
20 income level because, some veterans have been able
21 to show me some cases of a hundred percent disabled
22 veterans that have serious issues and their income
23 is just above that threshold. But much of that
24 income is spent on just trying to take care of that
25 veteran.

1 So yes, I think you'll be able to find
2 some cases here and there.

3 There's also raised the question of,
4 much of that income is through a disability from
5 the rating. Should that disability income be
6 counted in that?

7 So those are things that I think we're
8 willing to look at, and -- But -- But it's all a
9 measure of how complicated do you want to make the
10 program and how difficult it is that you want to
11 make it manage. I think we need to be able to do
12 this program as it is intended, and -- and no
13 veteran should lose their house because they're
14 disabled, and their real estate taxes went so high
15 that we're gonna take their house away. That's the
16 original intent, and we need to preserve that
17 tenant.

18 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: I greatly
19 appreciate your comments, and thank you.

20 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.

21 REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE: Thank you,
22 Mr. Chairman.

23 ACTING MAJORITY CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: Thank
24 you, Representative.

25 Next will be Representative Kim.

1 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: Chairman Dunbar, I
2 appreciate your invitation up here and your
3 hospitality. You're making it very difficult to
4 miss Representative Saylor right now. If Chairman
5 Saylor is watching, I'm kidding. We hope you get
6 better, and we hope to see you tomorrow, okay?

7 Gentlemen, thank you so much for being
8 here and thank you for your service.

9 My questions center around the veterans
10 court. In Dauphin County where I represent, I hear
11 a lot of good things about the veterans courts; how
12 it is an alternative to the criminal justice
13 department or system. It diverts them and gives
14 them treatment to, again, avoid the criminal
15 justice system.

16 Do you have any status on how those
17 courts are doing, in general? It's a three-part
18 question. How close does your Department work with
19 these courts? And then, finally, do these courts
20 need more resources to do the job that they're
21 doing?

22 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, ma'am.
23 I appreciate that question.

24 Veterans courts is a very, very hot
25 topic right now. We were able to add five more

1 courts in Pennsylvania this past year, so we're up
2 to 25.

3 Theoretically, you say we should have
4 all 67. I don't think that's a practical number.
5 We have a few counties that have a very low
6 population of veterans. Some of the north central
7 counties have 500, 600 total veterans in their
8 county, so they're probably not going to have the
9 true foot to justify the expense. And there is an
10 expense for the county.

11 We also offer these alternatives. Some
12 counties have done some specialty courts. They
13 might have a drug court or a DUI court, and they
14 can do a -- It's not a full-up veterans courts, but
15 it is a specialty court that caters to veterans.
16 So that is another alternative to be able to work
17 if they're not doing a full-up.

18 But any county that has a substantial
19 veterans population, we are urging to create a
20 veterans court. And as a Department, we've been
21 able to -- Just five weeks ago I was in a county
22 talking to the county judge. The public defender
23 was there. The district attorney was there. The
24 chief of police was there. Some of them are
25 veterans themselves.

1 The county judge's main concern about
2 setting up that court in their county is the
3 expense to the county, and the expense of the extra
4 person or two that's gonna have to administrate to
5 -- to run the cases through and keep the
6 administrative -- Then, of course, they were
7 worried about concerns about the volunteers and how
8 we're gonna do that.

9 We look at our role and the Department
10 as alleviating all those other concerns. I can't
11 help that judge hire a person. They're gonna have
12 to do that. But, essentially, almost everything
13 else we can do. We can help. We'll be that
14 county's partner to help them.

15 They're going to need veteran mentors to
16 assign to these veterans that are part of the
17 veterans court. And these mentors are gonna walk
18 through this entire process with them. They're
19 going to be their mentor; they're gonna be their
20 help.

21 And if they need addiction program
22 services, we can provide those services. We'll get
23 those referrals. We'll get that veteran registered
24 if they're not already registered. We'll connect
25 them with the federal V.A. We'll get them mental

1 health counseling. We'll get them addiction
2 programs. We'll get them these other services that
3 they need.

4 And that's our commitment to that county
5 is, we will help you do the rest of that. So, by
6 you creating this veterans court, you're getting
7 all of us as your partner. So, that stuff will not
8 have to be at county's expense. We will be able to
9 do that, and we'll go into each one of these
10 counties. We already have a good veterans network
11 through out the Commonwealth. We'll get you the
12 volunteers that you need to help you get through
13 that.

14 So that is our commitment to each one of
15 these counties that's considering a veterans court.

16 I urge each one of you that are in a
17 county that doesn't have a veterans court, and you
18 have a substantial number of veterans, please reach
19 out to us. We would love to come and talk to your
20 courts. We'd love to talk to your district
21 attorneys.

22 You know, it's a phenomenal program.
23 You talk about statistics. 93 percent of our
24 veterans that successfully complete this course are
25 never seen again in the court system. You don't

1 have that kind of success rate in any other phrase
2 of our correctional rehabilitation.

3 So, it is a fantastic proven program,
4 and I think it's well worth our time. We want to
5 spread this. You know, we need to double the
6 number that we have right now, certainly.

7 Thank you for the question.

8 ACTING MAJORITY CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: Thank
9 you, Representative. And I can echo your
10 sentiments. I know in Westmoreland County, Judge
11 Krieger who is a veteran of the Navy and did a few
12 tours of duty up here as well, has started a
13 veterans court there, and it's been very
14 successful.

15 Next up will be Representative Fritz.

16 REPRESENTATIVE FRITZ: Thank you,
17 Mr. Chairman.

18 General Carrelli, my friend, pleased to
19 see you and your esteemed colleagues. Thank you
20 for being with us today, and thank you for your
21 noble mission and efforts.

22 I'd like to pick back up on the theme,
23 if I may, of service officers. I'll start by
24 mentioning that they have been a tremendous asset
25 to our office and engaging our constituents. So it

1 begs the question, do we have a shortage of veteran
2 service officers, and how do we identify and
3 recruit those service officers?

4 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: So I think
5 -- You know, if you look at -- If you look at how
6 veterans service officers are employed, we have
7 essentially the two groups within the Commonwealth
8 currently. You have the ones that are employed
9 through the counties, and if you're trying to
10 release --

11 You know, that's a -- obviously, a
12 county responsibility. But if you want to anchor
13 that more, then we would need to be able to give
14 the county some assistance in order to do that.

15 The other way we have of doing that is
16 through our Act 66 program, the veterans outreach
17 program. That's giving those monies to the six
18 currently participating veterans service
19 organizations to do that.

20 Over the past year, General Weller's
21 team has done a fantastic job of developing,
22 essentially, a map of Pennsylvania showing where
23 our veterans are and where all the veterans service
24 offices are.

25 Obviously, every county has them, but

1 some of our counties are pretty large, and the
2 location of them doesn't necessarily serve the
3 entire county that well. And that's where we use
4 some of these veteran service organizations to fill
5 in those blanks. But, even with that, we have some
6 blank areas that are underserved areas, so we are
7 looking -- And I do want to advocate in the future
8 to get more, because we do need to fill out some
9 underserved areas to make sure that we're
10 bringing --

11 You know, there's some fantastic return
12 on the outreach program. You look at how many
13 people were able to sign up every year, and those
14 veterans' benefits that those veterans are now
15 receiving, that's money that comes into the
16 Commonwealth. You know, it doesn't come into the
17 state budget, but it comes into the Commonwealth's
18 citizens' hands. It's 27, 28, \$30 million a year,
19 and I think over the lifetime of this program we
20 did some calculations. It's in the billions of --
21 of -- of money that has come back to Pennsylvania
22 because we were able to register veterans that
23 weren't receiving the benefits that they earned.

24 REPRESENTATIVE FRITZ: Well, thank you.
25 I will mention that we do dovetail very, very well

1 with our county veterans assisted folks.

2 So, it's like transition. Can you
3 kindly mention for us how many veterans do we
4 service in Pennsylvania?

5 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: So, we have,
6 you know, just under 800,000 veterans in
7 Pennsylvania. We have, through the federal -- the
8 federal V.A. numbers, there's about a third of them
9 are registered. So, they are receiving some sort
10 of benefits from the -- from the Federal
11 Government.

12 I would say a smaller -- certainly a
13 smaller fraction of them even know there's a state
14 V.A. I go and talk to many organizations and say,
15 are you in our veterans' registry? And they say
16 no, I'm registered. I went to my county director,
17 I'm registered. I said no. Do you understand
18 there's federal benefits and there's state
19 benefits?

20 So, that's -- that's still part of our
21 outreach. We still need to advertise throughout
22 the Commonwealth that there is a state V.A. as well
23 as a federal V.A. That is not as well-known as
24 we'd like it to be.

25 For the other two-thirds that are not

1 registered, it's amazing how many people in
2 Pennsylvania have earned benefits that are leaving
3 those benefits on the table.

4 I can tell you a story. Last Veterans
5 Day I was on PCN, a call-in program for veterans.
6 They were calling in asking all kinds of veterans'
7 benefits questions. There was a Vietnam veteran
8 that had called in a question. And he asked me --
9 He told me he was very upset with the Veterans
10 Administration, because he had been out of the --
11 he had service-connected injuries. He had been out
12 of the military for a couple of decades, and the
13 V.A. has never called him. And he's upset that the
14 V.A. has never called him.

15 I'm like, okay. That's -- That's some
16 of the mentality out there is, we have veterans
17 that have served and they're sitting in their homes
18 waiting for the V.A. to call. Well, guess what?
19 The V.A. is not going to call. We have to get to
20 those veterans, and we have to get them registered,
21 and then we'll connect them with their benefits.
22 So that's part of our responsibility. We have to
23 get out and we got to get the word out.

24 As much as we are doing that now,
25 there's still veterans that believe that, you know,

1 they're sitting by the phone waiting for us to call
2 them. So, we've got to do more.

3 REPRESENTATIVE FRITZ: Okay, gentlemen.
4 Thank you very much.

5 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.

6 REPRESENTATIVE FRITZ: Thank you,
7 Mr. Chairman.

8 ACTING MAJORITY CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: Thank
9 you, Representative.

10 Next will be Representative Schweyer.

11 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Thank you, Mr.
12 Chairman.

13 Major General, first and foremost, thank
14 you for absolutely everything you do, and your
15 entire staff, obviously. One of my previous
16 service on the Veterans Affairs and Emergency
17 Preparedness Service Committee, we had a number of
18 opportunities to talk about --

19 One particular topic that I still,
20 unfortunately, think gets more -- more chatter and
21 not enough action from all of us, the General
22 Assembly included, and that's the issue of veterans
23 suicide. We have talked about it at every budget
24 hearing that we've been at. I've shared my
25 family's personal stories with you; my father's

1 difficulties with PTSD post his Vietnam service.

2 So I was flipping through your budget
3 again. I'm going to push this back a little bit, a
4 little bit of an echo.

5 I was flipping through your budget again
6 and I see, once again, there's nothing specific in
7 there for anything related to veterans suicide
8 prevention; is that correct?

9 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.
10 If you look at --

11 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: So if I missed
12 something, please tell me.

13 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: No. We have
14 16 line items in our budget. There's not a line
15 item that says homelessness, suicide, addiction,
16 mental health.

17 So, what we're -- what we're doing to
18 combat that, because we don't have a program of
19 record for those. So what we started last year,
20 we're one year into kind of a three-year
21 development program. It's Pennsylvania VetConnect.
22 And you might have heard about it.

23 Last year in this hearing I asked for
24 five positions, and I told you I was going to need
25 five more next year and I'll need five more the

1 year after that. VetConnect is how we're gonna
2 help connect our veterans to benefits.

3 The idea is, there's county directors
4 already out there. There's all these
5 organizations. There's the federal V.A. that, when
6 we talk to our federal V.A. partners at all of
7 these facilities and all the things that they
8 offer, their biggest -- their biggest problem is
9 finding veterans that need their help.

10 We have veterans that need help. We
11 have all kinds of organizations that want to help
12 them, but they're not connected. So that's what
13 we're going to do with Pennsylvania VetConnect.
14 You know, we're gonna identify all those resources
15 and we're gonna connect them to the people that
16 need that.

17 We're dividing the Commonwealth into
18 five regions. We're using those -- those personnel
19 that we asked for, those 15. We took the initial
20 couple just out of hide. Last year you approved
21 them for us, so those are -- those are currently
22 hired and we're pressing along.

23 I'm not asking for five this year,
24 because we had an efficiency measure that we did
25 within our facilities and engineering branch. We

1 did a reorganization, and I was able to move five
2 positions off the state document into federal
3 funding.

4 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Okay.

5 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: So I created
6 my five -- five-only positions. I gave them to
7 General Weller to put into VetConnect. So this
8 year I'm not asking you for those five because I
9 found those myself. Next year I'm gonna ask you
10 for another five, unless I find something else to
11 do.

12 But, that's how we're gonna get at all
13 these other issues. And there's resources that are
14 out there for these types of things. There's a lot
15 of federal V.A. programs that will go out and do
16 counseling and do suicide measures and -- and
17 things like that, but we're just not connected to
18 them right now.

19 So that's really our answer is this
20 Pennsylvania VetConnect. I talked a little bit
21 about it last year. I'm still completely convinced
22 in the small places we have been able to set up,
23 just a small part of it so far, we're having great
24 success.

25 And as I promised to you last year, if

1 -- when this thing is built in its entirety, if I
2 am able to identify places that we just don't have
3 resources for, then I'll be back here asking you
4 for those resources to do that.

5 Now, to say we're doing nothing because
6 we don't have it on the Legislature is not fair,
7 either. I will -- I will identify also our
8 Veterans Trust Fund. We granted out again about a
9 million and a half dollars, and much of that is to
10 organizations that are supporting these exact same
11 programs.

12 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: No, absolutely
13 not.

14 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: So we are
15 doing some of that now, but I think VetConnect will
16 go a lot further towards giving us valid solutions
17 to some of these issues.

18 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: I'm interested
19 in VetConnect, in large part, because it is
20 partially funded by the Commonwealth versus the
21 Veterans Trust Fund. And as impressive of a
22 funding source, as it truly is, it's still a
23 government-run charity. And I still fundamentally
24 believe, and I'm not arguing with you.

25 Again, I think that -- you told us this

1 last year with VetConnect, and I appreciate all
2 those efforts. I do -- And, obviously, all of us
3 trust your judgment on how best to get our veterans
4 connected with these services.

5 But, it doesn't change the fact that the
6 competitive organization grants and those sorts of
7 things we have is still not an indication of our
8 support. Now I'm talking about the General
9 Assembly's support; not the Department's support.
10 I want to be abundantly clear about that.

11 Our inability to find additional dollars
12 for you when you need them, are you able to do that
13 as an indictment on us, collectively. And so, I do
14 appreciate that. I sincerely hope you do come back
15 to us next year and ask us for the additional
16 funding for those five additional -- five
17 additional personnel.

18 And as we move forward, as are continued
19 holes in our social safety net for our veterans,
20 don't be shy. I know you won't be, but please
21 don't. We have to have honest and frank
22 conversations because, it's an unacceptable
23 situation across the United States; not just here
24 in Pennsylvania.

25 Thank you again for all of your efforts.

1 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Thank you.

2 ACTING MAJORITY CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: Thank
3 you, Representative.

4 Next will be Major Gabler, Major Rep
5 Gabler. I don't know how we do it, but it's
6 Representative Gabler.

7 REPRESENTATIVE GABLER: Thank you,
8 Mr. Chairman.

9 Thank you, General Carrelli, and
10 distinguished members of the panel: It's great to
11 have the opportunity to have this conversation with
12 you today.

13 I wanted to preference my question with
14 just a few numbers that I think are illuminating to
15 kind of set the stage for how we approach the
16 budget for the Department of Military and Veterans
17 Affairs, consisting of 2600 employees, one of the
18 top 10 employers in the state, providing for about
19 22,000 guardsmen.

20 In order to do that, we are able to do
21 that by having an overall budget of about
22 \$396 million, which 201 million of that comes in
23 from the federal level. So, all of that happens at
24 a cost to state-appropriated funds of about
25 \$160 million.

1 I think one of the things that I think
2 is not well understood sometimes is, just how does
3 that partnership between the state and federal
4 level work, because most people might take a mental
5 shortcut and think, well, the military. That's a
6 federal thing, right? But we have this really
7 interesting model that the National Guard has a
8 long history of, but maybe it's poorly understood.

9 So I guess the first question I want to
10 ask is, what would happen if we fail to fund the
11 National Guard at the state level, these matching
12 funds that allow us to access the federal
13 partnership? Would it be reasonable to assume that
14 those federal funds would just flow to other states
15 and we would lose this asset in our Commonwealth?

16 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Oh,
17 absolutely. If we don't have the necessary share
18 to put in, then we don't get funded. And there's
19 plenty of other states. So they rack and stack by
20 priorities, and Pennsylvania is a large state so we
21 usually get -- certainly get our fair share. But
22 if we didn't have the money to put -- put across
23 that, it would go somewhere else.

24 If you look at percentage-wise -- You
25 know, people talk about DVMA as a small agency, the

1 number of bodies, number of budget, like you said,
2 160 million in our budget. Just realize, the
3 state's share to just the National Guard -- I'm not
4 talking about the veterans' side; just the National
5 Guard side, the state's paying 5 percent of the
6 National Guard bill. The Federal Government is
7 paying 95 percent of that.

8 For every thousand guardsmen we have,
9 the state pays about -- or the Federal Government
10 is putting in about \$34 million. That's why this
11 was so important last year when we asked you for
12 the Military Family Education bill, which -- which,
13 by the way, has broke that continuing decline of
14 our fore-structure and we started on the way back
15 up again. So that -- that's had a great, great
16 effect.

17 For every thousand, if we lose fore-
18 structure -- And the conversations have already
19 started. There's already talk at the national
20 level and other states that see Pennsylvania's
21 numbers declining, and they want our units. So
22 their --

23 The discussions have already started
24 about Pennsylvania being a red state and pulling
25 more fore-structure out of Pennsylvania. Every

1 thousand guardsmen that we lose, we lose about \$35
2 million of federal money.

3 REPRESENTATIVE GABLER: And I appreciate
4 you highlighting that, and you went exactly where I
5 wanted to go, because there's a budgetary side and
6 there's the human capital side. That's where
7 elements like the Education Assistance Program, the
8 Military Family Education Program come in, because
9 one of the things that we need to do is, we need to
10 make sure we are fielding the people that can
11 actually fill these role that -- Obviously, we have
12 a budget to back up.

13 So I wanted to go a little bit into the
14 Education Assistance Program and the Military
15 Family Education Program. So, the Education
16 Assistance Program is something that has a little
17 bit of a longer history. That provides educational
18 benefits for Guardsmen, for Army and Air, service
19 members in our state.

20 And then last year, of course, we stood
21 up the Military Family Education Program which
22 allows people who are extending their term of
23 service to access educational benefits for their
24 family, a spouse, a loved one, a child, and that
25 makes sense, because when people are at that point

1 in their career, maybe they already got their
2 education, but they're thinking about their
3 families.

4 So, I wanted to set that up to ask you,
5 how can -- how can we do a better job of getting
6 the word out? Because we do need to find the
7 people, we do need to recruit the people to come
8 in; whether they're new people coming in and
9 enticing them with the Education Assistance Program
10 or whether it's enticing people to think about the
11 long term, come in and say, not only can you access
12 educational benefits for yourself, but there will
13 be an opportunity for you to get educational
14 benefits for your family as well.

15 What can we do as a state, as a
16 Commonwealth, in partnership with your Department
17 to better publicize these benefits that are
18 available, and make that our case to the people of
19 Pennsylvania that we can -- that we can improve
20 their lives in exchange for service that they will
21 provide to their Commonwealth and their country?

22 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: So, great
23 question. I mean, some of that is advertising;
24 some of that is just contact.

25 What we've done internally in the Guard

1 is, we sent like little posts -- We use our federal
2 recruiting money and sent postcards out to all of
3 our Guardsmen showing the Military Family Education
4 Program saying, hey, here's a great program,
5 because even our own people don't know about it as
6 much as we try to advertise that.

7 And the recruiting part, I mean, we're
8 doing better in recruiting. If you look at
9 Pennsylvania, about 8900 Pennsylvanians enlist in
10 some component of military service every year. The
11 Guard's share of that has been on the decrease year
12 after year after year. We used to be about
13 21 percent. 21 percent of young people enlisting
14 in the military used to come to our National Guard.
15 We bottomed out at 15 percent.

16 Now, this year with the help of that
17 MFEP program, we've rebounded. Now we're at
18 17 percent, so we're on the way back up. But we
19 need to be able to advertise that more, and we need
20 to be able to get into the schools more. I mean,
21 honestly, we have some -- we have some school
22 systems in Pennsylvania that don't want military
23 recruiters in their school. That's a problem for
24 us. And we're not trying to strong arm or -- but
25 we just want people to be aware of the

1 opportunities that we have in Pennsylvania.

2 I did a Memorial Day event at the Big 33
3 football game, you know. So the All-Stars of all
4 the Pennsylvania high school football teams come
5 together at a single event. I was talking to those
6 coaches about the school programs that we have.
7 They said, I wish I knew that before, because they
8 have a lot of great, great people that they coach.
9 They're athletes of theirs in high school that want
10 to go to college. Some of them are not capable of
11 getting scholarships; paid-for scholarships, and
12 some of those families just didn't have a way to
13 pay for school.

14 And they said, are you telling me if
15 they join the National Guard, you would pay for the
16 school? I said, absolutely. And they said, we
17 need to know more about this program. So some of
18 those are some of the same schools that won't take
19 our recruiters in to just pass out information
20 about those programs. So, we need to do a better
21 job of that.

22 Again, just to show that there's an
23 alternative out there. It's an honorable career
24 field. It's not for everybody. But, here's
25 another way to be able to get a great education and

1 get a good job.

2 REPRESENTATIVE GABLER: Thank you very
3 much.

4 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.

5 ACTING MAJORITY CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: Thank
6 you, Representative.

7 Next will be Representative Comitta.

8 REPRESENTATIVE COMITTA: Thank you,
9 Mr. Chair.

10 Good afternoon, General, your command
11 staff: Thanks so much for being here today and for
12 your service to all of us in Pennsylvania.

13 Last year I asked some questions about
14 the National Guard and climate change, and I want
15 to ask those questions again, because that problem
16 has gotten worse, not better, and I would like to
17 know.

18 Has the Department been acting in any
19 special planning programs for responding to the
20 effects of climate change? Might be flooding or
21 other disasters as a result of extreme weather
22 events.

23 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, ma'am.
24 So I'll take the first part of that, and then I'll
25 hand it over to Mr. Ferraro to talk about some of

1 our environmental and our energy programs.

2 As far as the Department, we have a
3 responsibility as a responder, you know, when you
4 talk about these extreme weather events, the
5 flooding, the snowstorms, things like that.

6 So, one, we have a responsibility as a
7 responder to those -- to those agencies through
8 PEMA, with concert to many other safety agencies,
9 with state police, PennDOT. You'll see a large
10 number of -- And this year, I don't know where
11 there's -- what the lock -- to knock on.

12 But this year, thankfully, we've had a
13 fairly mild winter, and we have not -- our largest
14 mobilization for a winter storm is now a year ago.
15 Last January I think we had about 350 people that
16 we called to state active duty. Our last major
17 flood event, really major flood event was about two
18 summers ago. So this year, thankfully, we haven't
19 had anything big to respond to, but, of course,
20 we're ready and we're able to respond.

21 But that's reactive. So what are we
22 doing proactively to help the environment to help
23 with this problem. And we are extremely proud of
24 the programs. We have been recognized by the
25 Department of Defense as having some of the best

1 environmental programs in the country here in
2 Pennsylvania.

3 And then, our work in energy, I think,
4 is just absolutely phenomenal what we've been able
5 to do saving energy. This is coming from an agency
6 that operates Fort Indiantown Gap. I can tell you
7 like a decade ago, we were still heating some
8 buildings with coal, and now we have a solar farm.
9 Mr. Ferraro sits on our energy conservation efforts
10 and can tell you a lot about what we're doing.

11 Mark.

12 MR. FERRARO: Thank you, sir.

13 Thank you, ma'am, for the question.

14 In our -- In our efforts to go green,
15 we're looking at numerous projects, both on the
16 state side as well as the federal side.

17 As you're well aware, we stood up a
18 solar farm in Fort Indiantown Gap last year. As a
19 result of that, in the first nine months of
20 operation, we were able to reduce 5.1 million
21 pounds of CO2 gases. So, just from that solar
22 field that we put in at FIG alone, we were able to
23 offset some things.

24 We're also installing, as we do new
25 construction or add ALTS using capital funds or at

1 our facilities, we are now installing smaller solar
2 arrays on our facilities to offset even more. We
3 are looking into a lot of geothermal projects as
4 well, and we're also working with the Army Corps of
5 Engineers.

6 We've just kicked off an installation
7 energy and water plan where they will come in and
8 assess what we're doing over the next 12 months.
9 And then from that, they will come back to us with
10 a list of projects that we can do from a
11 perspective of reducing energy -- or greenhouse
12 gases and being able to be resilient in our energy
13 and water needs.

14 We have a lot of programs that we're
15 working towards. We're looking at now installing
16 charging stations for electric cars at Fort
17 Indiantown Gap. We're looking at how we can offset
18 some of that at our readiness centers to be able to
19 service our service members that come in on weekend
20 drills and what not, so we are looking at a vast
21 amount of programs.

22 We have a recycling program which
23 generates close to \$700,000 a year through our
24 recycling efforts. We recycle everything. We just
25 actually started our own anti-freeze recycling

1 program. We're recycling anti-freeze now. So, a
2 lot of -- a lot of hard work both on our
3 environmental team, and we have dedicated energy
4 managers on our staff that do nothing but focus on
5 this effort.

6 REPRESENTATIVE COMITTA: That's
7 wonderful. Thank you so much for underscoring what
8 you're doing with energy efficiency, reducing your
9 carbon footprint. Thank you for all of us today
10 and for our children tomorrow.

11 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Thank you,
12 ma'am. Appreciate it.

13 ACTING MAJORITY CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: Thank
14 you, Representative.

15 Next will be Chairman Sainato.

16 REPRESENTATIVE SAINATO: Thank you,
17 Mr. Chairman.

18 General, it's good to see you again.
19 I'd just like to echo the comments of many of our
20 members. It's been an honor and privilege to work
21 with you on the Veteran Affairs and Emergency
22 Preparedness Committee. I think we've seen a lot
23 of positive things happen these last eight years
24 between myself and Chairman Barrar and our very
25 dedicated members of the Committee.

1 Just a little refresher on the very
2 important legislation we had passed this year with
3 the National Guard extending that benefit out.

4 Do you have some comments just to alert
5 people to the whole process, how it's shaping up to
6 get this thing implemented?

7 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Sir, are you
8 talking about our Military Family Education
9 Program.

10 REPRESENTATIVE SAINATO: Yes.

11 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: So, to date,
12 the last numbers I saw, we've had about 700
13 families sign up for that just recently. I was
14 briefed at a staff meeting about a month ago that
15 we are -- I believe it's 12 percent. Our retention
16 level amongst our Guardsmen is up 12 percent from
17 where it was a year ago. A lot of that, by and
18 large, is due to that program.

19 Now, we've done some other -- You know,
20 we're trying to concentrate more on families.
21 We're concentrating on the operational tempo. So
22 there's been a number of things that we've done at
23 the state command level to try to lower our
24 operational tempo amongst our soldiers and airmen.

25 But, the biggest single impact is from

1 that Military Family Education Program. And we're
2 still within the open season of this -- This first
3 year is open season for a number of people. So I
4 -- I -- I know that number is going to go much
5 higher, but there is quite a bit of buzz going on
6 around the state and to our Guard about that
7 program.

8 I was at a national convention in Denver
9 in September of all the states and territories of
10 the National Guard, and the chairman actually asked
11 me to get up in front of everyone and talk about
12 Pennsylvania's program. He said, Pennsylvania
13 innovated this new program, and we think this is
14 the future of taking care of families throughout
15 the United States. I got up and addressed what we
16 were able to do in Pennsylvania.

17 So, there are a lot of states that are
18 going to copy that exact same -- same program as a
19 model for them.

20 REPRESENTATIVE SAINATO: I just think
21 it's such a great program for us to be the
22 innovator, working with you, working with our
23 Committee and the Governor on this. I just think
24 it was such a major accomplishment, and a little
25 feather in the hat for Pennsylvania and our

1 Pennsylvania Guard.

2 I just think people need to know that
3 it's actually a win-win because it saves taxpayer
4 money as well, because now you don't have to train
5 them or keeping them for six more years. I mean,
6 that was always the thing. It benefits our state
7 institutions of higher education.

8 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.
9 And, you know, and those all -- So those are all
10 the statistics as to why this is so good for us. I
11 wish I could bring in some of those families in
12 right here and let them tell you in their words
13 what a difference this makes to their families. I
14 mean, you hear those stories and it's, like --
15 that's why we're doing it.

16 REPRESENTATIVE SAINATO: I will vouch
17 for you, General. I remember seeing some of those
18 families when we had the press conference out at
19 the Gap, and the look on their faces. And hearing
20 some of those stories, I think it makes us all feel
21 good.

22 Thank you for your service, and each and
23 every one of you at the table for your military
24 service.

25 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 ACTING MAJORITY CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: Thank
2 you, Chairman.

3 Just a brief question. I was curious
4 about the status of your agency's conversion to the
5 new P25 radio system. I know last year there was,
6 what, \$5.3 million budget. This year it's nothing.
7 So, we're all set? Is that working?

8 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: No, sir.
9 Last year -- So, originally, it was a three-year
10 buy. We didn't receive any funding in the first
11 year. That was two years ago.

12 Last year I believe it was just under
13 5 million, and then this year it's within our GGO
14 budget. If you look at what we are asking in GGO,
15 there's a 5 point -- I believe it's \$5.9 million
16 within our GGO for those radios. With what we
17 spent last year and what we propose in this year's
18 GGO, that will square up all the radio costs for
19 the state radios.

20 ACTING MAJORITY CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: I'm
21 sure it would be a topic of conversation with PSP
22 tomorrow.

23 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Yes, sir.

24 ACTING MAJORITY CHAIRMAN DUNBAR: With
25 that being said, we appreciate your time and your

1 team's time for being here with us and we
2 appreciate your service. Thanks so much.

3 We're going to adjourn and be back at
4 3 o'clock for Labor and Industry.

5 ADJUTANT GENERAL CARRELLI: Thank you,
6 sir. Appreciate it.

7 * * * *

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Karen J. Meister, Reporter, Notary Public, duly commissioned and qualified in and for the County of York, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript, to the best of my ability, of a public hearing taken from a videotape recording and reduced to computer printout under my supervision.

This certification does not apply to any reproduction of the same by any means unless under my direct control and/or supervision.

Karen J. Meister
Reporter, Notary Public