

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

A Study of the Statutory Cap on the Pennsylvania State Police

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The Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) has a statutory “cap” that limits the number of state troopers. In 1996, and again in 2001, the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) reviewed the PSP and its complement size. Senate Resolution 2019-105 directed the LBFC to update our earlier work and review the existing statutory cap on the PSP.

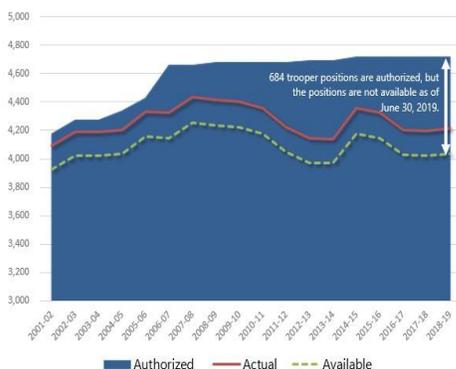
A JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE PENNSYLVANIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

❖ **Since the PSP’s inception, a cap has been in place to control the complement of troopers.** The PSP was a new type of law enforcement structure in 1905, and fearing that the agency may become too powerful, the General Assembly “capped” the PSP to just 228 officers. This initial cap has served as the basis for controlling the size of the PSP’s “enlisted” force. Enlisted means troopers, all of whom have completed training at the PSP Academy and are sworn law enforcement personnel. The cap was last raised in 2001, and a technical change in 2013 further excluded certain specialized positions. In total, as of December 31, 2019, the authorized trooper complement was 4,719 members.

❖ **Contextual issues, such as population changes, incidents, and funding impact the PSP.** Law enforcement is different today than in 2001. Population growth has occurred in some parts of the state, but not others. Municipalities are increasingly turning to the PSP for police coverage, and as a result, incidents have increased by 38 percent. We identified 55 new mandates that have been assigned to the PSP; some included additional personnel, but most did not. The PSP is an expensive, but necessary, arm of state government. Since 2001 there has been a 144 percent increase in total program funding; however, recent legislation will draw down the PSP’s ability to rely upon the Motor License Fund (MLF) for funding.

❖ **Understanding the distinction between authorized, actual, and available complement.** Authorized refers to the total number of troopers, or the maximum capacity of the PSP, which includes capped and uncapped positions. Actual complement refers to



trained troopers, or those who could fill authorized positions. Available complement is essentially the PSP’s effective vacancy rate, which includes positions where troopers may be unavailable for duty because of military deployment or injury. For the past three years, the PSP has had very high vacancy rates (approximately 15 percent).

❖ **Technology and human resource investments have improved the PSP’s obligated time rate.**

Obligated/unobligated times are formulas used to measure trooper time. Ideally, these rates should be equal (50/50). In 2001, these figures were out of balance (64/36), but through technology investments, which made troopers more efficient, and hiring certain civilians, which allowed more troopers to return to patrol, the PSP has improved its rate to 50/50. Going forward, this achievement may not be sustainable.

❖ **Future retirements may outpace the rate at which new troopers can be added to the ranks.** We estimated that as many as 1,221 troopers may retire within the next five years. We applied historical class size averages, factored non-overlapping classes, and projected that only 810 troopers could be trained in that same timeframe. Consequently, just to meet existing operational needs, the PSP will need to increase the training capacity by 411 troopers. Moreover, as many as 116 additional troopers may be needed for duty on the turnpike, gaming, and liquor control enforcement.

❖ **First-year costs for a trooper are at least \$145,782.** We factored wage and benefits, equipment needs, and certain other operational and fixed costs once a cadet graduates and becomes a trooper. We were unable to include other outlays like, administrative costs involved in testing and screening recruits and instructor salaries; consequently, our estimate is probably lower than actual. Most of the first-year cost is attributed to salary and benefits for troopers. While these costs are significant, it is offset by retiring troopers, who had an average total compensation (salary, benefits, and overtime) of \$185,187 in fiscal year 2018-19.

Options for future consideration:

1. **Expand and renovate the existing PSP Academy.** The existing facility lacks adequate capacity for the existing and future needs of the PSP.
2. **Funding Concerns.** Ongoing cuts from the MLF at 4 percent per year, and PSP costs that have historically exceeded the Consumer Price Index, will create an issue that could impact the PSP’s ability to meet service expectations.
3. **Eliminate the Cap.** A “trooper cap” was suitable in 1905, but today, existing budgetary controls are able to control complement size. Periodic complement reviews, including the ratio of obligated/unobligated rates should be conducted on a 3-5 year basis.

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