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- Ohio Investigative Unit
- **Ohio State Highway Patrol**



Ted Strickland, Governor
Cathy Collins-Taylor, Director

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April 21, 2010

Mr. Peter C. Tobin, Chair
Ohio State Highway Patrol Mission Study Task Force
c/o Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification & Investigation
1560 State Route 56 SW
London, Ohio 43140

Dear Mr. Tobin:

This Task Force was established to review the operations and functions of the Ohio State Highway Patrol to explore opportunities to improve operational efficiency, identify overlapping services, and consolidate current operations.

After months of testimony and volumes of resource materials, the job before us soon will be to compile a written report with findings and recommendations to be submitted to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Minority Leader of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives.

In going through this process during the upcoming weeks, collectively I hope we can develop recommendations that will leave the Ohio State Highway Patrol stronger and more viable as we continue our partnerships with Ohio's police and sheriff's organizations.

I know this morning each of you received a copy of a comprehensive overview of the Ohio State Highway Patrol's 2009 operational successes and local-level assistance to Ohio law enforcement partners. In that document you will see Patrol district and county analysis of crash investigations, traffic safety and criminal patrol enforcement and other ways in which we assist and complement Ohio's sheriff's offices and police departments every day.

Throughout the past months, during each presentation before this Task Force, you have heard three consistent themes of partnerships, team-building and the complementary attitude of our services and resources for all of Ohio law enforcement.

As we are funded by, and work for, the citizens of Ohio, the presentations before this Task Force have illustrated time and again that throughout our operations the citizens of this state are getting extraordinary public safety value for their money.

The partnerships between the Patrol and Ohio's law enforcement community are complementary not competitive. Just two weeks ago you heard a prime example of that through the words of Cincinnati Police Chief Thomas Streicher and his accounts of the Patrol's assistance in restoring peace to Cincinnati in the Spring

*An internationally accredited agency whose mission is to protect life and property,
promote traffic safety and provide professional public safety services with respect, compassion, and unbiased professionalism.*

of 2001. He also shared with you the benefits realized to the citizens of Cincinnati through our collaborative traffic safety program that has led to safer Cincinnati roads and decreased crime in Cincinnati neighborhoods.

This Task Force was in part asked to look at the efficiencies of Ohio law enforcement. I believe the time is now for all Ohio law enforcement to return to our basic foundational roots and core functions as articulated in Ohio law.

As I examine Ohio Revised Code section 5503.02, I see cause for a renewed commitment on our part for the Ohio State Highway Patrol to commit necessary resources toward our role in traffic safety. As you have heard in these public hearings, not only do we provide professional traffic safety services at an extremely high and efficient level, through professional accreditation and the modeling of our operations by agencies in the United States and Canada, we are a benchmark of success in terms of traffic safety operations.

Likewise, our colleagues in Ohio's 88 sheriff's offices and the hundreds of police departments across Ohio are extremely good at what they do - particularly in those areas of their respective core functionality identified within Ohio law.

With that point, I believe Ohio Revised Code 5503.02 as it relates to our core services is appropriate in meeting the public's expectations for the Ohio State Highway Patrol's professional traffic safety and law enforcement services. Likewise, I would suggest the sections of Ohio law pertaining to core functions for sheriff's offices and police departments are equally appropriate for those organizations to meet their mission standards and public expectations.

I call on this Task Force, through the upcoming deliberations and writing of the final report, to preserve our ability to maintain our management rights. We are continuously examining how we can operate more efficiently through the use of technology and the redistribution of resources. Allow us to drive our own destiny.

There has been ongoing discussion during these meetings related to our role in maintaining safety on Ohio roads related to commercial motor vehicles. You heard testimony regarding the professionalism of our inspection program and the outstanding safety benefits realized through our commitment to making Ohio roads safe for commercial vehicle travel in our state.

The Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program has proven to be a key mechanism for ensuring commercial vehicles and passenger cars share Ohio roads safely. The uniformity and consistency of the way we operate our commercial vehicle inspections is a national model for efficiency.

You also heard about the commitment we have to Ohio's most precious resource - our children - through our school bus inspection program. These twice-annual inspections of every school bus in Ohio, which totaled 46,601 inspections last year and 47,622 inspections in 2008, ensure children are as safe as possible when traveling in an Ohio school bus.

Whether through commercial vehicle or school bus inspections, those services we professionally perform provide a critical level of safety that positively impacts Ohio economically from the commerce involved with commercial trucking, and impacts our future through the transportation safety of Ohio school children on busses every day.

In regards to commercial motor vehicles and school bus safety programs, there are no benefits to expanding programming that would decentralize and dilute important safety controls. Moreover, it makes no sense to create 88 more bureaucracies.

This Task Force was also asked to evaluate the level to which there is duplication of services between the Ohio State Highway Patrol and our law enforcement partners.

Is there duplication of some critical functions directly tied to public safety? Absolutely.

Is that duplication in many instances appropriate in preserving public safety and meeting the public's expectations? Absolutely.

As articulated two weeks ago by Upper Sandusky Police Chief David Olds and Hillsboro Police Chief Nicholas Thompson, the overlap of certain key law enforcement services actually serve as a benefit to Ohio law enforcement officers and the general public. You heard from each of them how duplicity of some services, particularly in specialty units, establishes invaluable relationships across agencies, provides a necessary added level of officer safety protection and fulfills the public's expectations that wherever and whenever they need our help someone will be there quickly to take charge of a situation and provide whatever resource is needed to meet the incident or resolve the problem.

In terms of partnerships and team-building of a network of Ohio law enforcement involving the Patrol, sheriff's offices and police departments, you have heard about the exceptional training we provide to other agencies. Whether through inter-agency training provided at our Academy or through specialty units like the direct-to-threat training provided by our Special Response Team, we have directly contributed to a better-trained law enforcement community across Ohio – regardless of agency or affiliation. Hundreds of Ohio agencies and thousands of Ohio law enforcement have been trained by us in recent years.

You have heard about the specialized civilianization of the Patrol which has put more troopers on the road and in position to protect and help people in need. An example you heard about is the driver examination process we oversee, and the more than one million knowledge, driving and CDL tests we administer each year. This entire process is conducted exclusively by civilians and in direct conjunction with our partners in the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

Staffing levels and their relationship to funding is a theme that has woven its way through presentations and discussions between members of this Task Force. Let's not ignore this point – whether a county sheriff, police chief, or superintendent of the Patrol, everyone is under-funded and under-staffed. No one can dispute that claim.

I sincerely hope one thing each member of this Task Force has taken away from each presentation, as well as the voluminous supporting materials requested for review by this committee, is that there is no evidence to suggest we are over funded. In fact, the evidence suggests quite the contrary – that we are operating efficiently and effectively in pursuit of our core mission. We are responsible stewards of the budget afforded to us by the citizens of this state.

You heard testimony about cuts in sheriff's offices and police departments. We acknowledge times are tough for all of Ohio's law enforcement but let me say this about the cuts. The more a sheriff's office or police department is required to cut because of budgetary challenges, the more the Patrol is called on to pick up and fill the gap.

The public's expectation is that regardless of staffing or funding challenges, when they need help there will be someone there to help. We have, and will continue, to fill the gaps that complement our law enforcement colleagues in need of assistance.

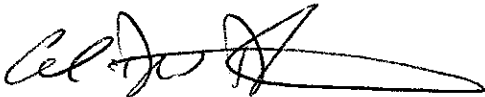
It's about relationships we have and strengthening our partners in times of need. Those relationships provide the safest Ohio possible in which people can work and live.

As Ohio's law enforcement community continues to work closer together to address the staffing and funding challenges we all face, I believe it is important that the jurisdictional issues discussed by this Task Force be examined as it relates to all agencies -- not just the Ohio State Highway Patrol. The matters before this Task Force, however, may not be the best place to clear up this important topic.

As the process now begins to write the final report from this Task Force let me assure each of my colleagues on this committee that as superintendent I am focused on fostering a new era of positive relationships with my counterparts in the Buckeye State Sheriff's Association, Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, numerous public safety stakeholders and the Ohio General Assembly.

I believe there are great things ahead for all of Ohio's law enforcement and as part of a new generation of Patrol leadership I am eager that this Task Force can be used as a springboard toward enhanced partnerships, greater team-building and the fostering of a complementary attitude shared by all levels and ranks of Ohio's law enforcement community.

Sincerely,



Colonel David W. Dicken
Superintendent
Ohio State Highway Patrol