

MARTINA WHITE, MEMBER
170TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

B-13 MAIN CAPITOL
PO BOX 202170
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-2170
PHONE: (717) 787-6740
FAX: (717) 782-2929

DISTRICT OFFICE:
10752 BUSTLETON AVENUE, SUITE C
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19116
PHONE: (215) 330-3711
FAX: (215) 330-3709



House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg

COMMITTEES:

CONSUMER AFFAIRS
HEALTH
JUDICIARY
URBAN AFFAIRS

Email: mwhite@pahousegop.com
Website: RepWhite.com
Facebook: [Facebook.com/repmartinawhite](https://www.facebook.com/repmartinawhite)

June 21, 2017

Governor Tom Wolf
508 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, Pa. 17120

Dear Governor Wolf

As House Bill 27 moves through the Senate, it is becoming clear that it will overwhelmingly pass, as the same legislation did in the last term, and land on your desk.

We ask this time that you sign the bill.

I introduced House Bill 27 in response to former Philadelphia Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey's policy of disclosing officers' names within 72 hours of an officer-involved shooting. This policy is in direct opposition of the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association, which believes officers involved in such incidents should be identified publicly *only* if they are charged with a crime.

Also running in direct contradiction to the policy is the precedent set by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), which by law withholds the names of agents involved in use of force incidents.

House Bill 27 is a middle-ground solution that allows for a period of 30 days to pass before an officer's name may be disclosed or until an investigation is complete, whichever comes first. My bill allows time for the factual evidence to come to light so we can understand the events that transpired. This gives officers the reassurance they need to do their work in a proactive manner and continue to keep our communities safe.

In our world of instant news, we have learned the hard way that false narratives against officers who use their firearm can gain momentum very quickly. That negativity has led to riots, officers' names being tarnished, careers ruined and even their lives lost. No one, including officers, should be presumed guilty before the facts of a case are known.

Some opponents of House Bill 27 have falsely claimed the bill would shield officers of wrongdoing. In fact, district attorneys and the state's attorney general are exempt from the bill's restrictions; they would maintain the ability to release an officer's name regardless of the investigation's completion date and reserve the right to release an officer's name within the 30-day window.

Much has changed since the policy of releasing officers' names within 72 hours was initiated. As detailed in the recent FBI Assailant Study, police officers are being "demoralized" and "de-policing" to avoid any behavior that could cost them their jobs, or worse, their lives. The FBI attributes this to the spike in attacks on police last year, fueled by an anti-police narrative spread by the media, activists and some elected leaders.

While police must continue building trust with the communities they serve, disclosing a name hastily is not the way to do it.

Building trust is the responsibility not only of law enforcement but of an engaged community. It requires nurturing every day. Our police build trust by attending neighborhood cleanups and community meetings, visiting classrooms, staffing Police Athletic League Centers and throwing holiday parties for the underprivileged.

The FBI does not release the names of their agents by law, and the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association believes innocent officers should never have their names released publicly. The General Assembly, Fraternal Order of Police, and citizens across the Commonwealth overwhelmingly agree with House Bill 27. Last session you saw the clear support by the General Assembly with an over two-thirds majority vote on House Bill 1538 leaving a potential veto susceptible to override. We urge you to take House Bill 27 seriously and allow the bill to go into law when it reaches your desk.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martina White". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Martina White
Pennsylvania State Representative
170th Legislative District