

County of Centre



PUBLIC DEFENDER

David Crowley
Deborah Lux
Parviz Ansari
Patrick T. Klena
Casey M. McClain
Richard G. Settgast
Kathryn L. Urbanowicz

Centre County Courthouse -- Room 104
102 South Allegheny Street
Bellefonte, Pennsylvania 16823

Telephone (814) 355-6798

Fax: (814) 355-8659

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PA Senate Bill 979: Pennsylvania Center for Effective Indigent Defense Representation

PA Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing: April 1, 2014

Testimony of David Crowley, Centre County Public Defender

Chairman Greenleaf and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

My name is David Crowley. I am the chief public defender of Centre County, and have held that office since August 1989. The entire length of my 30 year legal career has involved the representation of the criminally accused; either as a private practitioner, a conflict attorney, or public defender. I was President of the Public Defender Association of Pennsylvania in 2001 when Governor Corbett, then Chairman of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency convinced that agency that fairness and equity demanded that it open its coffers just a little and grant our modest request of \$40,000 annually to run a 4 day training program to improve the trial or appellate skills of public defenders. I have served on the volunteer faculty of those training programs almost every year since then.

In its 1998-1999 session, the General Assembly, moved by that same spirit of fairness and equity, decided to make a onetime expenditure of an amount equivalent to what was at that time given to the Attorney General on an annual basis to train District Attorneys to defend capital post-conviction proceedings in state courts. When Governor Ridge released those funds in 2001 to the Dickinson School of Law in Carlisle I served on the steering committee to design the program. It was not an easy task as we were obligated to focus on that small segment of a capital case where a defendant has already been sentenced to death, lost his direct appeal, and is attempting to litigate ineffectiveness of counsel claims in state court before going into federal court. All of us on that committee were frustrated by the knowledge that this money spent on teaching PCRA counsel to spot the mistakes made by trial counsel could have been put to better use in a program designed to teach trial counsel not to make those