

Massachusetts Governor Baker, State Police Colonel Mason unveil State Police legislative proposals, outline progress on reforms

Governor Charlie Baker and Colonel Christopher Mason today held a press conference at the Massachusetts State Police Academy to announce a bill to improve and modernize State Police hiring, promotions, accountability, and discipline and update the public on the progress of significant reforms within the Department.

Governor Baker and Colonel Mason also addressed the 85th Recruit Training Troop – believed to be the largest and most diverse pool of trooper candidates in State Police history – before speaking with the news media.

“Colonel Mason has been working hard to make progress on several reforms, and we are pleased this class of recruits will be the first to go through his new trainings that focus on stringent ethics and community policing,” said Governor Baker. “We are also filing legislation to allow the Colonel to take swift action against Troopers who do not live up to the oath they swore, promote a more diverse workforce and bring Department policies in line with modern management practices.”

Among the changes proposed by Governor Baker are specific steps to increase diversity within the Department; allow swifter and more severe penalties for violating the public trust; and maximize merit and capability in the promotional process. Specifically, An Act Advancing Reform within the Massachusetts State Police would:

- Streamline the process for taking administrative action to suspend officers without pay when they are charged with for serious offenses and simplify the disciplinary process for imposing lower forms of discipline for minor offenses;
- Create a new fraudulent pay statute that will allow state and municipal agencies to recover treble damages from police officers who knowingly submit false claims for hours worked for payment;
- Authorize the creation of a cadet program as an alternative route to the State Police Academy, similar to those used successfully by municipal police departments, an innovation that will diversify the pool of prospective recruits;
- Eliminate the requirement that the colonel of State Police be selected exclusively from within the Department, allowing external candidates with 10 or more years in law enforcement and five or more years in a police or military leadership position;
- Eliminate the oral interview component from the formula that determines scoring for promotion to lieutenant or captain in order to reduce the potential for subjectivity or bias in promotional decisions; and
- Accelerate the rate at which longevity points are accrued in the context of promotion to the positions of sergeant and lieutenant in order to expand the pool of qualified candidates for these positions.

“The future of Massachusetts State Police will be determined by the personnel we recruit, hire, and train today,” said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito. “These legislative proposals will help shape the organizational environment in which they work to serve, protect, and inspire our communities.”

Also today, Colonel Mason provided an update on his internal efforts to ramp up the Department’s accountability to the

public, revise the curriculum at its Academy, and increase diversity within its ranks. Within the past two months, State Police have:

- Activated Automatic Vehicle Location systems in nearly 3,000 cruisers;
- Posted a Request for Responses for a contract to provide the Department with 1,500 body cameras and 1,000 in-car video systems;
- Put new supervisory oversight policies in place for programmed overtime assignments, such as those used in the former Troop E;
- Implemented ethics training specific to time and attendance at the State Police Academy along with instruction on modern policing skills such as empathy, de-escalation, and communication;
- Developed continuing ethics training modules on time and attendance and supervisors' duties for current Department personnel;
- Created and posted the position of Diversity Recruitment Officer to assist in recruiting, hiring, and developing employees from historically underrepresented communities; and
- Promoted two women and five people of color to the supervisory ranks of detective lieutenant, captain, detective captain, and major, with one assigned as a troop commander and five assigned as unit commanders.

"The Massachusetts State Police remain fully invested in our commitment to excellence in modern policing," said Colonel Mason. "Even as we fulfill our core public safety mission in every corner of the Commonwealth and adopt new responsibilities in a changing world, we are making important and measurable progress increasing the Department's diversity,

our accountability to the public, and the training practices we employ. With the support and assistance of dedicated personnel at every level of the Department, State Police are moving forward on the right track.”