



## SENATE OF PENNSYLVANIA BILL SUMMARY

### Senate Bill 859 Printer's No. 976

Prime Sponsor: Senator Greenleaf  
Committee: Judiciary

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#### **SYNOPSIS:**

This bill amends Title 61 (Prisons and Parole) to consolidate the Department of Corrections and the Board of Probation and Parole into a single agency called the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

#### **SUMMARY:**

This bill recognizes the related and often overlapping duties of the Department of Corrections and the Board of Probation and Parole. The bill recognizes that the consolidation of these duties and responsibilities in a single agency will result in increased stability, increased efficiency, and continuity of supervision delivery and of rehabilitative efforts. The name of the Board is changed to the "Pennsylvania Parole Board" and it is defined as a "departmental administrative board within the Department." The makeup of the Board and the manner of their appointment remain the same.

The bill updates the manner in which parole decisions are made by allowing attendance at meetings by videoconferencing. The Department, and not the members of the Board, will appoint the Board Secretary. Legal counsel for the Board will be appointed in accordance with the Commonwealth Attorney's Act.

Under the "general powers of the Board," the Board will no longer have the power "to supervise and make presentence investigations and reports." The Board will no longer compile statistical information about offenders on probation or parole, nor will it establish statewide standards for supervision or qualifications of probation personnel. These responsibilities will be transferred to the Department. The Board will, however, establish special conditions of supervision for an offender it orders to be released on parole, and it will promulgate regulations establishing general conditions of supervision applicable to every offender it releases on parole. The time period to be served when an offender is recommitted to state prison will be computed by staff of the Department.

The bill adds a "parole violator center" to the list of places where a technical parole violator can be sent. This term is defined as "a secure area operated or contracted by the Department that has been designated to house offenders released on parole by the Board or detained or recommitted by the Board for a technical parole violation." This provision recognizes the expanded tools that the Department will employ to supervise parolees and guide them during the reentry process.

The Parole Board will have sufficient staff to support its independent function of making decisions on parole and recommitment, but the supervision and training of parole agents will be shifted to the Secretary of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Effective Date: This bill is effective in one year.

**BILL HISTORY:**

There is no bill history during this legislative session.

Prepared by: Cawley 6/1/2015