
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 223 Session of
2022

INTRODUCED BY ZABEL, MADDEN, RABB, SANCHEZ, KRAJEWSKI,
HOHENSTEIN, SCHLOSSBERG, DELLOSO, HOWARD, WARREN, KINKEAD AND
D. WILLIAMS, JULY 28, 2022

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY, JULY 28, 2022

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Joint State Government Commission to establish a
2 bipartisan task force to study the Pennsylvania Crimes Code
3 in order to identify redundant, overlapping and inconsistent
4 offenses, improper grading and gaps in criminal liability,
5 and to make recommendations to the General Assembly.

6 WHEREAS, In 1972, the Pennsylvania legislature enacted the
7 Crimes Code in Title 18 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated
8 Statutes, which contained 282 carefully considered offenses and
9 suboffenses; and

10 WHEREAS, Since the Crimes Code's enactment, it has expanded
11 more than fivefold and now contains more than 1,500 offenses and
12 suboffenses, the majority of which were created without a
13 thorough review of the entire Crimes Code; and

14 WHEREAS, According to a 2009 report on offense grading
15 jointly commissioned by the Judiciary Committee of the Senate
16 and the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives and
17 authored by Professor Paul H. Robinson as well as the University
18 of Pennsylvania's Criminal Law Research Group, this ad hoc
19 expansion of the Crimes Code has resulted in a "system of

1 offenses marked by irrational and contradictory grading
2 differences, and offense grades that seriously conflict with the
3 values of Pennsylvania residents" in addition to various
4 overlapping and duplicative offenses; and

5 WHEREAS, The addition of numerous new offenses and changes to
6 the Crimes Code since the publication of the 2009 report has
7 only exacerbated the issues identified in the report; and

8 WHEREAS, A rational crimes code with offenses that coincide
9 with the views of the residents of this Commonwealth is
10 necessary for public trust in the laws of this Commonwealth; and

11 WHEREAS, The ever-increasing size and scope of the Crimes
12 Code has made it difficult for legislators to identify and
13 remedy gaps in criminal liability within the Crimes Code; and

14 WHEREAS, The convoluted nature of the Crimes Code has also
15 made it difficult for residents to fully comprehend the offenses
16 and grades within the code; and

17 WHEREAS, This is contrary to the goal of the Crimes Code,
18 which is to provide the public with a clear and comprehensible
19 list of prohibited activities and their punishments; and

20 WHEREAS, A cohesive and rational crimes code is advantageous
21 for the residents of this Commonwealth and every constituency
22 working within the criminal justice process as it would serve to
23 reduce confusion and provide a fair and consistent approach to
24 crime and punishment; and

25 WHEREAS, The General Assembly should be knowledgeable about
26 the state and nature of the Crimes Code and aware of any
27 oversights, deficiencies and redundancies within the Code that
28 would best be resolved; therefore be it

29 RESOLVED (the Senate concurring), That the General Assembly
30 direct the Joint State Government Commission to establish a

1 bipartisan task force to study the Pennsylvania Crimes Code in
2 order to identify redundant, overlapping and inconsistent
3 offenses, improper grading and gaps in criminal liability, and
4 to make recommendations to the General Assembly; and be it
5 further

6 RESOLVED, That the task force consist of two members of the
7 Senate, one appointed by the President pro tempore of the Senate
8 and one appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate, and two
9 members of the House of Representatives, one appointed by the
10 Speaker of the House of Representatives and one appointed by the
11 Minority Leader of the House of Representatives; and be it
12 further

13 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission oversee
14 the creation of an advisory committee to assist the task force
15 in conducting the study and making recommendations; and be it
16 further

17 RESOLVED, That the advisory committee shall have 30 members
18 appointed by the Governor with the consent and approval of the
19 task force, comprised of representatives from the Office of
20 Attorney General, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and
21 Delinquency, the Pennsylvania Public Defenders Association, the
22 Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association, the judiciary, law
23 enforcement agencies, private and public organizations involved
24 in criminal justice issues and additional members as the task
25 force deems appropriate; and be it further

26 RESOLVED, That the task force and advisory committee shall:

27 (1) study the existing Crimes Code and any statutory
28 offenses or suboffenses outside the Crimes Code;

29 (2) identify redundant, overlapping and inconsistent
30 offenses, irrational and improper grading and potential gaps

1 in criminal liability; and

2 (3) make recommendations to the General Assembly
3 regarding changes in statute to remedy any defects,
4 redundancies and shortcomings;

5 and be it further

6 RESOLVED, That the task force report its findings and
7 recommendations to the House of Representatives within one year
8 of the adoption of this resolution.