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Body Camera Bill Now Law

The 2016 legislative session was one of the shortest in state history but was still riddled with controversy and a tremendous amount of work on public safety issues. Our lobbying efforts were extremely successful this session. The legislative committee voted to prioritize three items this session: Body cameras, 72-hour hold reform and Gun Violence Protection Order legislation. In addition to these items, we helped pass a new law that will allow pharmacies to collect unwanted prescription drugs. We also saw significant progress in our massage licensing legislation and funding for crisis intervention training, but the legislature wasn't able to fund those priorities with the surplus being spent instead on tax reform and other budget items.

Body Cameras

After two years of debate, the legislature passed a comprehensive body worn camera bill, which the governor signed into law. The number one legislative priority for the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) was one of the most discussed issues at the capitol. Senator Ron Latz (DFL-St. Louis Park) and Representative Tony Cornish (R-Vernon Center) agreed to a compromise between their different proposals in the last week of session.

The bill classifies body camera data as private with the exception of incidents that result in substantial bodily harm or an incident involving the discharge of a firearm. The data collected in those scenarios would be public after the close of an investigation. Most importantly, the bill will allow any data subject of the video access to the data. If that data subject wants to make the data public through social media, give it to traditional news sources or post it on YouTube they have that right to do so.

Law enforcement is under great scrutiny across the country and it was clear body camera public policy must include greater public involvement and accountability measures. The bill has numerous transparency provisions such as public audits, regulation on sharing data with other agencies, a requirement for public comment input and public hearings on your agencies policy and a compliance review in three years by the State's Legislative Auditor.

This proposal took a tremendous amount of effort over the past two years and could not have happened without members of the MCPA responding to our rapid response emails and contacting their legislators. Specifically, Chief Jeff Potts, Bloomington PD, Chief Eric Gieseke, Burnsville PD, Chief Paul Schnell, Maplewood PD and Chief Eric Werner, Maple Grove PD all were key players at strategic times in our lobbying efforts.

72-hour Hold

Chief John Ohl, St. Anthony PD helped craft a proposal that clarified current law and will now require mandatory law enforcement notification when an individual is released, discharged or leaves early from a 72-hour transport hold.

According to an earlier MCPA survey, approximately 95 percent of law enforcement agencies that responded to the survey say mental health related calls have increased over the last five years with 20 percent of agencies saying the calls have more than doubled in that time. This proposal

will help law enforcement be better informed and better prepared for these types of calls and could prevent tragedies from taking place.

The proposal, was championed by Senator Ron Latz (DFL-St. Louis Park) and Representative Nick Zerwas (R-Elk River), passed unanimously and was signed into law by Governor Mark Dayton (DFL).

Gun Violence Protection Orders

All gun legislation was tabled this year under divided government but we did engage in starting the conversation around Gun Violence Protection Orders (GVPO). This order would allow family members and law enforcement to ask a judge to temporarily restrict people from having guns when there is substantial evidence that they pose a significant danger to themselves or others by possessing a firearm. The proposal received an informational hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee in one of the most controversial committee hearings of the entire session. Stakeholders on both sides of gun safety issues are planning substantial issue advocacy efforts in the November elections.

Drug Sentencing Reform

While the final drug sentencing reform legislation wasn't exactly what chiefs were hoping for, by passing this compromise legislation, we were able to undo the guidelines set to automatically go into effect on August 1. These would have significantly reduced sentences for top-level drug offenders.

Thank you to all of the chiefs and staff who were involved in lobbying at the Capitol. We are only successful due to your issue area expertise and ability to inform legislators on how potential legislation impacts the communities you are sworn to protect. It is an honor to represent you at the Capitol.

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