

Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority



The Crime of Inefficiency: The Cost of Policing Philadelphia

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There is little doubt that the primary function of any government is to provide for the security of its citizens. However, that security should not be attained in such an inefficient manner as to place an undue fiscal burden on those same citizens. The Philadelphia Police Department suffers from poor management, an organizational structure with too little oversight, and unproductive work rules. The result is a bloated Police force with higher expenditures than other peer cities, but no correlating increase in crime prevention.

Comparisons with Peer Cities

PICA Staff began by reviewing basic Police statistics for the ten largest cities in the United States. The goal was to establish whether or not the Philadelphia Police Department was normative or an outlier in staffing, deployment, and overtime. US Department of Justice (DOJ) statistics and discussions with Police and budget personnel in nine other cities, gives a quick snapshot of the Philadelphia Police Department’s ranking relative to its peer cities.

The first example is the number of uniformed officers per 10,000 residents:

City	Uniformed Officers per 10,000 residents
San Diego	17.12
San Antonio	17.96
Phoenix	21.73
Los Angeles	24.15
Dallas	25.05
Houston	27.09
Philadelphia	44.59
New York	45.94
Detroit	46.09
Chicago	47.34
AVERAGE:	31.71

Numbers are based on 2000 census figures and FY2002 Police staffing complements provided by each of the cities.

While Philadelphia ranks seventh in this list, it is within the same range as the other Rustbelt cities which make up this list. This is not to say that such a status is acceptable, but that there are probably a number of historical, geographical, and political factors contributing to Philadelphia’s position.

City statistics reported to the DOJ on the percent of uniformed officers in the field is a telling measure of efficient use of resources:

CITY	Percent of Uniformed Officers in the Field
Dallas	98.3
Chicago	98.2
Phoenix	94.7
Los Angeles	92.5
San Diego	91.7
New York	90.8
San Antonio	90.4
Philadelphia	88.4
Houston	87.5
Detroit	86.9
AVERAGE:	91.94

Not only is Philadelphia seventh among the top ten cities, and 3.5 percent below the average in the numbers reported to the DOJ in 1999, the percentage has fallen to 87.2 percent in FY2003, and is projected to reach 86.8 percent in FY2004, relegating Philadelphia to the bottom of its peer cities, relative to the 1999 statistics.

It is true that Philadelphia's field percentage is a vast improvement from the mid-1980's, when the Department averaged 77 percent of uniformed officers in the field. However, the City continues to rest on those old accomplishments, and lag the other large cities, by remaining at approximately 87 percent since FY1994.

The final statistic reviewed was overtime expenditures. While not every City was able to provide overtime expenditures broken down by civilian and uniformed usage, overall percentages across all cities were similar. As a result, PICA Staff used total overtime expenditures divided by the number of uniform officers as a proxy for average overtime spending for each Police Department.

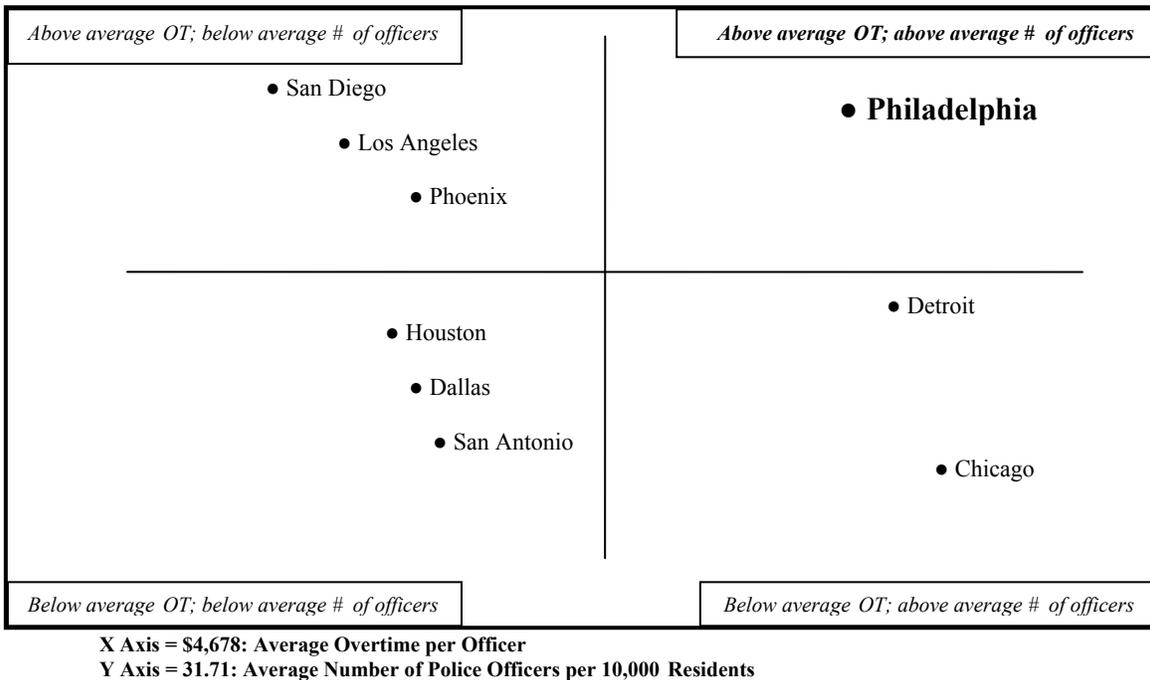
FY2002 statistics were used, so as not to skew Philadelphia's numbers relative to Operation Safe Streets.¹ New York City's figures were left out of the comparison entirely. Although each City had some overtime increase relative to the events of September 11, 2001, New York City's overtime figures were so anomalous as to skew the entire table.

¹ In FY2003, the first full year of Operation Safe Streets, Police overtime jumped by over forty percent. Average overtime per uniformed officer rose from \$7,393 to almost \$10,400.

CITY	Average Overtime per Uniformed officer
Chicago	2,182
Houston	3,324
Dallas	3,679
San Antonio	3,795
Detroit	4,526
Phoenix	5,181
Los Angeles	5,582
San Diego	6,437
Philadelphia	7,393
AVERAGE:	4,677.67

Of the nine remaining cities, Philadelphia easily has the highest average overtime expenditures, nearly 60 percent higher than the average. Once again there appears to be some regional issues involved in Police overtime issues, although Philadelphia is notable as the exception. While Southern cities and Western cities tend to group with each other, Philadelphia is significantly higher than other similar cities.

When viewed graphically, Philadelphia's position as an outlier is glaring. The following graph combines average officers per ten thousand residents and average overtime per officer relative to the averages.



Philadelphia is the only city that manages to combine higher-than-average overtime costs with a higher-than-average number of police officers per resident.

Underlying Causes

In order to understand the reasons for Philadelphia's anomalous statistics, PICA Staff engaged in discussions with current and former senior city managers, members of the Police Department, and similar officials in other cities surveyed. Although the frank conversations highlighted a number of serious concerns, most felt that a concerted effort to enact changes could increase departmental efficiency quickly.

Almost all of the conversations highlighted poor management within the department; a lack of oversight by the traditional city administrative structure; unnecessary personnel rules; overly permissive overtime rules; and, a lack of coordination across the criminal justice system.

Poor Management and Lack of Oversight

The Philadelphia Police Department is adept at achieving its primary mission – reducing crime and maintaining public order. However, it fails to achieve that mission in an efficient and effective a means as possible. Insufficient training is given to newly promoted managers. There is an over-abundance of promotions, resulting in too many managers, and a too small percentage of uniformed officers on the street. Senior management fails to communicate internal priorities, and fails to encourage efficiency changes.

Many of the management problems were exacerbated when the Police Commissioner was given the added title of Secretary of Public Safety. The City's Managing Director has less control over Department operations, and the oversight role of the Finance Department has been reduced. While the Police Department has historically seen itself as a distinct unit of city government, this governance change has isolated the Department to the point of managerial ineffectiveness.

Unnecessary Personnel Rules

In order to be a Police Sketch artist in Philadelphia, an individual must be a uniformed officer. In order to place decals on police cars, supervise 911 operators, or even post temporary "no parking" signs, an individual must be a uniformed officer. Officials in peer cities found these requirements "amusing" and "wasteful." These examples, and similar rules, need to be reviewed with an eye toward efficiency rather than preserving job slots for uniformed officers.

Another concern raised is the result of having one union representing all uniformed officers in the Police Department. Grievances pit union members against each other, and create awkward situations for mid-level Department supervisors. This reality affects the pace of internal management change and impedes the implementation of effective work rules.

Overtime and Criminal Justice Inefficiencies

One of the most dramatic costs associated with the Police Department is its generous use of overtime dollars. As evidenced in the statistics above, Philadelphia's average overtime is nearly 60 percent higher than the average of its peer cities. These numbers are prior to the advent of Operation Safe Streets, which has nearly doubled the amount of funds spent on police overtime. Some of the problems with overtime result from poor managerial oversight – there is a Department culture which encourages a basic amount of overtime per officer, almost as a pay supplement. Overtime goals are established arbitrarily based on previous years usage rather than internal analysis. Managers are rarely held accountable for overruns in overtime usage.

Overtime is also often used by the Police Department as a “catch-all” funding line to cover the costs associated with new initiatives, such as the Operation Safe Streets program. Philadelphia should look to other departments within its own government, as well as other Police Departments across the Country, all of whom are able to use innovative approaches to increase services without increasing costs. For example, when the Police Superintendent in Chicago wanted to increase police presence recently, a new program was instituted whereby all officers, regardless of assignment, spent a minimum of one out of every five weeks on the street.

That is not to say that all of the overtime spending results from poor internal management. Work rules established by the contract with the Police union provide little room for managerial oversight regarding the taking of leave. A great deal of overtime is utilized simply providing for a full workforce when an unbalanced number of officers take leave during peak vacation periods. Then Commissioner Timoney required special authority to manage leave for the Millennium 2000 celebration, despite the throngs of visitors and the risks posed by the Y2K bug. It is simply untenable for managers to be stripped of the tools necessary to manage the workforce.

Additional overtime results from the inability of the other elements of the criminal justice system in Philadelphia to work with the Police Department. The Department of Prisons, District Attorney's Office, Defender's Association, Sheriff's Office, and the First Judicial District combined with the Police Department, make up nearly one-third of the City's non-reimbursed budget. Although some of these entities are elected independently, they all work for the citizens of Philadelphia and should provide the most coordinated and effective criminal justice system possible. Several million dollars in police overtime alone have been wasted by the inefficiencies resulting from an inability of these entities to work together.

Recommendations

- ***Reduce the size of the uniform complement by at least 500 employees while increasing the percentage of officers on the street to 92 percent.***

It is clear from the comparative statistics that Philadelphia has too many uniformed officers per capita. It should be noted that there is no correlation between number of officers (within a reasonable range) and crime. The criminology field has demonstrated clearly that socioeconomic factors and demographics are the best predictors of crime rates.

Additionally, if the Department is able to achieve the average percentage of officers on the street, the total number of officers on the street will not change. There will simply be fewer, unnecessary administrative positions.

- ***Restore the position of Police Commissioner to reporting to the City's Managing Director.***

The Police Department needs to be a part of the City's overall public service program. Police Department policies, initiatives, spending and procedures can all benefit from better interaction with other City departments, particularly the Finance Department. Clear reporting lines need to exist to ensure that independent actions by the Department do not jeopardize the overall City budget.

- ***Negotiate with the Police Department Unions to eliminate costly, unnecessary job requirements.***

There is no viable reason that a uniformed employee is required to post temporary "No Parking" signs, or serve as a sketch artist, or put decals on police cars, or even supervise 911 operators. Few if any other peer cities have these rules; no other City has all of them. The excess funds spent for these positions, to provide extra jobs for uniformed employees, is tax-payer money wasted.

- ***Explore avenues for splitting the Police Union into at least two units – representing different organizational levels.***

Philadelphia remains the only peer city to have one union representing all of its officers. Some cities have more than four unions representing different administrative levels. The current system in Philadelphia blurs lines for grievances and inhibits discipline and management in the Police Department.

- ***Establish clear and reasonable goals for departmental overtime usage, including a strict justification and approval process for the use of overtime.***

The Police Department needs to be accountable for its overtime budget like any other City Department. Overtime goals, in line with those of other peer cities, need to be

clearly established and adhered to, barring a public safety emergency. Other City Departments are required to maintain their budgets when introducing new initiatives; the Police Department should be no different.

- ***Establish a system of leave usage which allows for proper workforce planning for the Police Department.***

It is impossible to do proper workforce planning without administrative control over granting leave. There is no other workforce where employees can all take-off at peak times requiring massive overtime to provide basic staffing. Some form of leave granting system based on seniority or rotating choice opportunities, with final approval in the hands of top administrators, is the only way to ensure efficient workforce deployment.

- ***Establish a Secretariat for Criminal Justice with oversight and budget approval authorities over the Police Department, Department of Prisons, District Attorney's Office, Defender's Association, Sheriff's Office, and the First Judicial District.***

Philadelphia's Criminal Justice System represents over one-third of the non-reimbursable City budget. Only a senior administrative official, reporting directly to the Mayor, with significant budget recommendation authority, will be able to ensure that the disparate entities involved in criminal justice in Philadelphia will work together to provide the most efficient and effective service to the citizens of Philadelphia.

Conclusion

The recommendations presented in this White Paper are not the result of looking to close a budget gap. PICA Staff utilized a set of comparative data to highlight possible inefficiencies in government spending, investigated the reasons for those apparent inefficiencies, and made appropriate recommendations. These changes represent a better use of taxpayer funds whether the City enjoys a \$300 million surplus or faces a \$100 million deficit. We cannot afford to make efficiency decisions based solely on budgetary pressure.

The recommendations listed above could net savings for the City of at least \$35 million annually, and probably much more. Just as importantly, the result would be a more resourceful Police Department and Criminal Justice System, delivering a higher level of service at less cost to the taxpayers of Philadelphia.

The taxpayers deserve no less.