

* All Articles are from the Philly Daily News news paper.

Crooked cop shoots innocent m

Inching toward life after per diems

Since most, if not all, reform from any legislative body is incremental, it is heartening to see a baby step toward reforming the Pennsylvania Legislature's too-often abused per-diem allotments.

I've railed against excessive per diems for decades. They're payments, now in the \$160-a-day range, that lawmakers can collect in addition to salary.

Such payments are to be used for food and lodging. They are tax-free. They can be claimed whether the Legislature is in session or not. And they require no receipts. In other words, they can be collected without any proof that they were actually spent on food and lodging.

Many lawmakers, including Philly Democrat Mark Cohen, for years collected per diems for as many days as they liked, including holidays and weekends.

The online news service Pennsylvania Independent reported last month that lawmakers collected more than \$12 million in per diems in the first six months of 2013 and that 32 lawmakers collected more than \$10,000 each during that time.

The system allows lawmakers to add tens of thousands of dollars to their salaries each year despite Article II, Section 8 of the state Constitution (routinely ignored) that says lawmakers' compensation shall be limited to salary and mileage "and no other com-

ensation whatever."

Enter state Rep. Nick Miccarelli, R-Delco, an Iraq War vet (a Blackhawk helicopter door-gunner), elected in 2008.

He's circulating a memo to fel-

low members saying he'll soon seek to amend House rules to limit per-diem claims: no more holidays and no more than seven claims per month for days when the House is not in session or hold-

ing committee meetings.

It's a small step. But it's sensible and a step toward integrity and tax-dollar protection, both of which are long lacking in our Legislature. ■

— John Baer

PER DIEMS should be illegal!

Video contradicts cop's claim of armed attack

DALLAS — Surveillance video showing a Dallas police officer shooting a mentally ill man standing still about 20 feet away contradicts the assertion of an officer that the man threatened his safety by lunging at him with a knife.

Bobby Gerald Bennett remains hospitalized after being shot in the stomach Monday. The officer who shot him, Cardan Spencer, is on indefinite administrative leave pending a criminal investigation after a neighbor released surveillance video that captured the incident.

Bennett was charged with aggravated assault with a deadly weapon on a public servant, but Police Chief David Brown announced Friday that the charge would be dropped.

Bennett's mother, Joyce Jackson, said in an interview Friday that her 52-year-old son has been diagnosed with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, and that he was off his medication at the time of the shooting. Jackson said she was arguing with Bennett when she called the police. She was told that officers who have been trained in dealing with the mentally ill would arrive to assist her.

— Daily News wire reports

OHIO GOVERNOR STAYS EXECUTION OF CHILD KILLER

Ohio Gov. John Kasich stayed the execution of a condemned child killer Wednesday to assess the inmate's request to donate his organs.

Ronald Phillips, 40, asked that he be allowed to donate a kidney and his heart to ailing relatives. Prison officials denied his request Tuesday and moved Phillips to the death house for his scheduled execution today.

The Republican governor said Wednesday he wants to look into the medical possibilities of granting Phillips' request.

Phillips is to die for the 1993 rape and death of his girlfriend's 3-year-old daughter in Akron.

He has viable organs, they should be donated. It'd be a crime to deny this transplant.

WEIRD NEWS

I pot I saw a puddy tat

CHISINAU, Moldova — A cat has been busted for smuggling pot into a prison in Moldova.

Guards became suspicious about the feline, which routinely entered and left the prison through a hole in a fence, when they noticed its odd collar. On closer inspection, they found two packets of marijuana attached to it.

The Department of Penitentiary Institutions said Friday that someone in the village of Pruncul was using the cat as a courier to supply inmates with dope at the local prison.

Whomever the human was, this wasn't a first regarding cat couriers at lockups.

In June, guards caught a cat carrying cellphones and chargers taped to its belly to inmates in Penal Colony No. 1 near the city of Syktyvkar in northern Russia.

I wanna know what happened to the cat??