



Public Safety

Setting the record straight on felony murder sentencing

Public safety and victims' rights are being threatened in the Commonwealth because of actions taken by the majority party in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. The House had the chance to enact a constitutional sentencing law that preserved accountability, but Democrats removed key language that would have protected victims and families by keeping criminals in jail.

We were called into session one day before a PA Supreme Court deadline to fix sentencing guidelines for second-degree, or felony, murder. The court ruled the current mandatory life without parole sentence unconstitutional. A bipartisan Senate bill was ready for a vote and could have been quickly signed into law. Instead, Democrat leaders played politics, putting more than 1,000 cases at risk of early release. Imagine being a victim's loved one and finding out the justice you believed was secured is suddenly in jeopardy.

The bill that ultimately passed the House contains loopholes allowing offenders to avoid serving full sentences. It includes medical release provisions for conditions such as asthma, obesity, depression, bipolar disorder, or COVID 19. Victims' families would be given only seven days to respond to early release notifications. The sentencing guidelines in the bill are so weakened that no minimum or maximum sentence is specified, which is inadequate for the taking of an innocent life.

I voted **NO**.

Misinformation has circulated about my vote and those of my Republican colleagues. My "no" vote was to protect victims, families, and our communities. Claims suggesting otherwise are disingenuous.



Victims deserve certainty, accountability, and leaders willing to act responsibly, which is why Attorney General Dave Sunday, the Fraternal Order of Police, the State Troopers and the PA District Attorney's Association stand with me. Protecting the public and standing with victims is a priority for me, and I will always defend their rights.



← Click this QR code to watch a brief interview with both Republican and Democrat district attorneys weighing in on the serious changes and implications made to the bill by House Democrats.

SECOND-DEGREE MURDER SENTENCING LAW

MARCH 26

PA Supreme Court rules second-degree murder sentencing guidelines unconstitutional.

120 DAYS TO DEADLINE

JULY 12

PA Senate amends HB 1042 to include SB 1400 language.

12 DAYS TO DEADLINE

JULY 23

House Democrats ignore SB 1400, amend HB 1042 instead, guaranteeing we miss the deadline.

1 DAY TO DEADLINE

JULY 31

PA Supreme Court denies 120-day extension, convicted murderers and rapists can appeal their sentences.

JUNE 25

PA Senate passes SB 1400 to close the sentencing loophole, sending it to the House for a vote.

29 DAYS TO DEADLINE

JULY 21

Republicans and law enforcement call on House Democrats to pass SB 1400.

3 DAYS TO DEADLINE

JULY 24

Allegheny County District Attorney Stephen Zappala files for an additional 120 days.

DEADLINE DAY

Traumatized Veterans to Get the Care They Need

My legislation supporting veterans becomes law

Legislation I championed to improve services for veterans affected by military sexual trauma has been signed into law.

Survivors of military trauma, whether it be stress-related, a brain injury or sexual assault, carry those experiences with them long after their service ends, and the effects can last for years. We owe it to our veterans to ensure the professionals they turn to for help are equipped to recognize their needs and connect them with the resources they deserve. I'm proud this legislation is now law.

Military sexual trauma remains a significant issue among service members. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, nearly one in three women and one in 50 men in the armed forces report experiencing sexual assault or sexual harassment during military service. Because many incidents go unreported, the actual number is believed to be even higher.

The new law, Act 38 of 2026, amends Pennsylvania law by establishing a training program for county veterans' affairs directors on trauma-informed care, including military sexual trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury. The training is intended to help staff recognize symptoms, reduce potential triggers and better connect veterans with appropriate services and resources.

I would like to thank Rep. Melissa Shusterman (D-Chester) for her support of this legislation and Sen. Tracy Pennycuik (R-Montgomery/Berks), who sponsored companion legislation, Senate Bill 1061.



REP. DONNA SCHEUREN

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OFFICE INFO

DISTRICT OFFICES:

Gilbertsville: 1885 Swamp Pike, Ste. 107
Gilbertsville, PA 19525
Phone: 610-323-3299

Harleysville: 418 Main St., Ste. 101
Harleysville, PA 19438
Phone: 215-256-6030

CAPITOL OFFICE:

P.O. Box 202147
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2147
Phone: 717-787-9501

Supreme Court Upholds Laws Protecting Fairness in Women's Sports

Sadly, Pennsylvania female athletes are still waiting for PA to do the same

This summer, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that states can limit participation in women's sports to biological females only. The decision affirms that biological sex-based restrictions do not violate the Constitution's Equal Protection Clause or Title IX.

Pennsylvania has three bills that would ensure fairness in women's sports in Pennsylvania once and for all. House Bills 158 (Protect Women's Sports Act) and 1849 (Dad's Defending Daughters Act), along with Senate Bill 9** (Save Women's Sports Act), all would exclude biological males from participating in sports designated for females. These three bills have been shuffled between four committees since the start of 2025.

Polls indicate 80% of people, regardless of political party, support women's sports being for biological women only. Athletic competitions give women the opportunity to demonstrate their strength and skill, while also providing opportunities for recognition ranging from accolades to college scholarships.

House Democrats are refusing to give citizens and their representatives a voice on this topic – and the proof is in the chart to the right. Fourteen times they've re-referred the bills to avoid a vote to the House floor; it's both ridiculous and unconscionable. It's time to stop avoiding this issue. We owe it to our female athletes to ensure these rights and opportunities are protected.

** Senate Bill 9 passed the Senate with a 32-18 bipartisan vote but has yet to run in the House for over 15 months.

3 Bills • 4 Committees 14 Cumulative Re-referrals...and Counting

