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Date: Monday, March 13, 2017 at 7:49:16 PM
To: "Maida Townsend" <MTownsend@leg.state.vt.us>, "Patti Lewis" <PLewis@leg.state.vt.us>
Cc: "Hall, Glenn" <Glenn.Hall@vermont.gov>
Subject: H.368

Dear Chair Townsend and Rep. Lewis:

I am writing in regard to H.368 and to request that the House Committee on Government Operations defer voting on this bill until the next legislative session. This postponement will allow me the opportunity to determine (1) whether to create a Cold Case Unit within the Vermont State Police; (2) how best to structure and staff such a Unit; and (3) what affect such a Unit will have on the overall DPS budget.

As Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety, I am fully committed to the investigation of so-called Cold Cases and understand the importance of these cases to family members and the public. I therefore support the laudatory goals of this proposed legislation. However, as the head of the Executive Branch component responsible for these cases, I am in the best position to determine, in consultation with the VSP, how to staff and fund the investigation of such cases. With all due respect to the Committee, the proposed legislation would significantly handcuff my ability to fulfill my broad management responsibilities to DPS and determine how best to deploy our limited resources. Essentially, this bill would require me to staff this unit with two part-time non-sworn employees and fund it out of the DPS FY18 budget (which has not yet been enacted). This mandate may therefore limit my ability to deploy DPS resources in a manner I believe best protects and serves all Vermonters. In short, the manner and method DPS utilizes to investigate Cold Cases should be left to the sound discretion of the Commissioner of Public Safety.

As mentioned above, I am fully committed to investigating these cases as effectively and efficiently as possible. Equally important, I fully sympathize with the families who suffer from not knowing what has become of a loved one. I have been Commissioner for just over two months. I would therefore request that the Committee allow me the opportunity to internally discuss this matter with the VSP and develop a strategy for ensuring that these cases are diligently pursued. I can assure the Committee that I will be prepared to report to the Committee on our progress at the start of the 2018 legislative session. If thereafter the Committee is dissatisfied with DPS's effort, this legislation can then be reconsidered.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or need any additional information.

Thank you.

Thomas D. Anderson

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Commissioner

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