

MAIN CAPITOL BUILDING
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120

February 3, 2009

Honorable Stewart J. Greenleaf
Senate of Pennsylvania
19 East Wing
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Senator Greenleaf:

As you have likely read, there is a major scandal unfolding in Luzerne County, in which two Common Pleas Judges will be pleading guilty to federal criminal charges, and the expectation is that other individuals affiliated with the Luzerne Court system will be charged. For an extended period of time, the public trust was betrayed, in a manner that is beyond contemptible.

Those who engaged in corrupt behavior will suffer severe legal consequences for their wrongful actions.

But there is a community and Commonwealth obligation to do more. A sense of equity and justice dictates that we look at what can be done for the individuals and families who were victims of these corrupt proceedings.

As the details are made public, it is clear that vulnerable individuals were denied fundamental constitutional protections. Included among the allegations are numerous instances where counsel was not made available to juvenile defendants, where sentences were imposed that were not warranted by the facts, and where kids were forced to spend extended periods in detention facilities for minor infractions of law or policy. The Juvenile Law Center contends that hundreds of children had their rights violated.

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I would greatly appreciate it if you would schedule a hearing of the Judiciary Committee, in Luzerne County, to give the families and juvenile advocacy groups an opportunity to shed light on this terrible situation and to discuss potential legislative remedies. We cannot give back time unfairly taken away, nor can we repair reputations unfairly sullied. But there has to be a way to compensate for the injustice inflicted, and we must help to find that way.

Thank you for your attention and cooperation in this request.

Sincerely,


Lisa Baker
20th Senatorial District


John R. Gordon
27th Senatorial District