

# Attack causes furor

By Michelle Pittman  
Staff Writer  
Pottsville Republican Herald  
[mpittman@republicanherald.com](mailto:mpittman@republicanherald.com)

## **The beating of a prison guard by an inmate Friday at the State Correctional Institution (SCI)/Mahanoy has brought a call for the resignation of the prison superintendent.**

It also spurred state Rep. David G. Argall, R-124, the state House majority whip, to renew a call for beefing up staffing at the state prisons.

Donald G. McNany, president of the Pennsylvania State Corrections Officers Association (PSCOA), called for the resignation of SCI/Mahanoy Superintendent Edward J. Klem, due to the severity of the attack on veteran corrections officer Joseph Duffy.

McNany also cited several other assaults at the facility and said Klem should have acted swiftly in sending the message that inmates who assault officers will be subject to corrective action.

"It's unfortunate, but sometimes many must suffer for the sins of a few," McNany said. "I'm calling for (Klem's) resignation because of the severity of the attack, but also because he didn't lock down the institution. There should have been a lockdown. Privileges should have been revoked. It's unconscionable that it didn't happen."

According to McNany, when an assault occurs, "the inmates can take advantage of the situation on other blocks. There should have been shakedowns and a full search of the facility, confiscation of contraband, to make sure that the assault wasn't a diversion for something else."

Duffy, an officer with 14 years of experience, was seriously injured by Shawn Breeden, an inmate serving a life sentence for first-degree murder. Breeden, according to the report, repeatedly struck Duffy in the head with a telephone receiver, garbage can lid and ping-pong paddle.

According to managerial reports from the facility, Duffy had asked Breeden to stop disrupting block-out, an alternative to yard time when prisoners can watch television, play cards and socialize.

McNany said Duffy's injuries were so serious that he was taken by helicopter to the Geisinger Medical Center, Danville, where he received staples to cover three layers of sutures on his head. His right hand was also badly damaged.

"This was the second assault in two weeks that resulted in an officer being life-flighted," McNany said. "An officer in Somerset was injured so badly, beaten about the head and neck, that he's required to take speech therapy."

PSCOA press officer William Culp said that the Somerset incident occurred in late January and that in his 20 years in corrections, he had never heard of an officer being so severely beaten before that incident.

"If there was more staff, this wouldn't occur," Culp said. "Last year at Mahanoy, an officer was stabbed twice in the neck with a pencil." He also added that "there have been seven assaults at Frackville this year," referring to SCI/Frackville, located near SCI/Mahanoy.

"The numbers are up for inmate-on-inmate violence," Culp said, "but we don't keep track of those. There aren't enough eyes on every block, and that's to the advantage of these ... violent inmates."

SCI Mahanoy is a 1,900-bed, medium security facility. The latest data shows a current inmate population of 2,200 with an operating staff of 590 employees.

According to PSCOA records, there have been 15 assaults on corrections officers since the beginning of the year.

"We take the responsibility of keeping everyone on the premises safe very seriously," Culp said.

Prison assaults, McNany said, are up across the state, and it is the responsibility of the facilities' superintendents to make examples out of inmates who attack guards.

"Somebody has to be held accountable," McNany said. "(Klem) is saying this is an isolated incident, and that's just unacceptable. He has the ultimate authority in that facility. He is the commanding officer and I question his competency."

In a statement on the most recent incident, Argall said he was "sad to learn of the brutal attack on a 14-year veteran corrections officer at SCI/Mahanoy. My thoughts are with this public servant and his family.

"This incident is another reason I believe our prison staffing legislation is critical for the safety of our corrections officers and the communities they serve," he continued. "My biggest fear is that we will have another situation like we had at SCI/Camp Hill because the staffing is not what it should be at these facilities.

"This is another example of why I have been working with the (PSCOA) to resolve prison staffing issues."

In the last legislative session, Argall authored House Bill 2353 aimed at addressing the staffing issues. He said the language contained in the bill passed overwhelmingly in the House on two occasions.

**According to Sheila Moore, deputy press secretary for the state Department of Corrections, the department secretary, Jeffrey A. Beard, is still formulating a response to McNany's comments. Moore said it is expected there will be a formal reply by the end of the week.**

All calls to SCI/Mahanoy were directed to the Department of Corrections press office.  
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