OFFICIAL ENTRY FORM

Entrants must complete all sections for the entry to be considered complete. A copy of this official entry is available at http://www.pacounties.org/ProgramServices/Pages/Criminal-Justice.aspx

Name/County Nominator        Paul W. Heimel/Potter County
Address                        1 North Main Street
City, State, Zip Code          Coudersport PA 16915
Title                          Potter County Commissioner
Contact Phone                  814-274-8290  ext. 203

PARTNER INFORMATION
Name of nominee                Andy Watson
Title of nominee               Potter County District Attorney

NARRATIVE

Contributions –

Nearly eight centuries ago, Thomas Aquinas said, “Mercy without justice is the mother of dissolution; justice without mercy is cruelty.” Many societies have endeavored to temper their administration of justice with allowances for the human element. At no time in our nation’s recent history has that delicate balancing act been so deeply examined from a public policy perspective, employing data and scientific measures for continual fine-tuning. In some cases, forward-looking county leaders in Pennsylvania have taken bold steps – transcending conventional thinking and political implications – to advance the latest reform measures that are increasingly working themselves into the criminal justice system.

Potter County District Attorney Andy Watson has joined the forefront of the “smart justice” movement and is our nominee for the Criminal Justice System Best Practices for the 21st Century Partners Award. Given Mr. Watson’s position as a prosecutor, his methodical adoption of strategies that have been proven to reduce recidivism, enhance public safety, make better use of limited financial resources and help victims of addiction is especially significant. It is having a ripple effect among his colleagues.
across the state – many of whom have not been as inclined to evolve from the “tough justice” movement of the not-too-distant past.

Listed below are some of the areas in which District Attorney Watson has become a critical partner in criminal justice reform. Specifics on his promotion of these best practices can be found in the second section of this nomination form, as well as the supporting documents.

1. The innovative Concerned Law Enforcement Against Narcotics (CLEAN) project. This encourages and facilitates those with addiction issues to seek help from police and other law enforcement officials, who are newly trained to connect them with community resources to facilitate their recovery.

2. Active involvement with the treatment teams for Potter County’s Drug Court and DUI Court.

3. A pilot Pre-trial Diversion program launched in Potter County.

4. Support of Potter County’s involvement with two national initiatives, Data-Driven Justice and Stepping Up, designed to achieve objectives identified as critical elements of County Criminal Justice System Best Practices for the 21st Century.

5. Hands-on drug education/public safety programming taken to Potter County communities and schools.

6. Distribution of Naloxone to save the lives of those who have overdosed on opioids.

Promotion of best practices –

1. CLEAN PROGRAM

America’s opioid crisis has reached into Pennsylvania’s most rural communities, destroying lives and taxing limited public resources such as social services, health care, law enforcement, emergency services and court systems. In response to these trends, District Attorney Andy Watson was an early adoptee of the Pennsylvania Attorney General’s Drug Strike Force model, spearheading an investigative team that employed effective tools and techniques to target dealers of heroin and other opioids. The crackdown was a success in reducing the flow of illicit drugs into Potter County and bringing to justice multiple networks of dealers, some of whom were traced to major distribution chains originating in large cities. However, the pursuit of these dealers failed to address the other side of the supply/demand equation. It was after an emotional encounter with a grieving parent whose child had overdosed on heroin that Mr. Watson learned details of the CLEAN Project. He recognized the potential of launching a local
law enforcement initiative that capitalizes on the visible presence of police officers to connect drug addiction victims with the services and resources they may need to overcome their diseases.

CLEAN is short for Concerned Law Enforcement Against Narcotics Program. The initiative’s roots can be traced to Gloucester, Mass. Through CLEAN, individuals who are seeking help with drug addiction are encouraged to contact a law officer for referral to evaluation, counseling and/or treatment. Rather than running FROM the police, they can to turn TO the police for help. And it’s working. In extremely rural Potter County (pop. 16,800), as of February 2018 six individuals – three of them juveniles – have turned themselves in to the police to gain access to community treatment resources.

District Attorney Watson met with representatives of the local health care provider, Charles Cole Memorial Hospital, and administrators from the Potter County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services to solicit their support for CLEAN and set in place a protocol for consistent handling of those who approach police officers seeking help. Once procedures were adopted, he turned his attention to a more daunting challenge – obtaining buy-in from the Pennsylvania State Police and municipal police officers serving in Potter County. Mr. Watson laid out a series of exceptions he would put in place to assure that the CLEAN Program achieves its objectives, but does not interfere with ongoing investigations and enforcement actions. The procedures were crafted to eliminate abuse of the system by those who may be motivated by avoiding prosecution, rather than modifying their behavior to live a drug-free life. Low-level dealers – those who typically were selling small quantities of opioids to be able to afford feeding their own addictions – would not escape prosecution, but their willingness to undergo treatment would be taken into account when the District Attorney negotiated sanctions with defense counsel.

Many of the police officers had experienced the trauma of drug overdoses while on the job and become frustrated with the revolving door of offenders being arrested, processed by the criminal justice system, and returned to the street to continue their drug abuse. Once they were convinced that the program could work and would not be abused, one by one they pledged their support. Mr. Watson then launched the CLEAN Program with a major public relations campaign.

His actions caught the attention of law enforcement officials across Pennsylvania and beyond, prompting his invitation to share details during testimony before the Pennsylvania House of Representatives Judiciary Committee, declaring, “Addicted individuals need to understand that Potter County law enforcement officers are more concerned about citizens’ health and safety than having to arrest them. A majority of the crime that occurs in Potter County is the result of drug use. About 75 percent of the crimes are heroin-related. As prosecutors, we may be able to reduce recidivism and protect our communities more effectively than we would with strict prosecution and jail time for the typical addict. Heroin is so addictive that putting a person in jail will detox him, but it doesn’t give him the tools to become sober. That’s why here in Potter County we are balancing incarceration and rehabilitation.”
2. DUI/DRUG COURTS

Potter County was the first 8th Class county, and one of the least populous in the nation, to accept the challenge of operating specialty courts for certain offenders whose addiction to alcohol or other drugs was at the root of their criminal behavior. The launch and successful operation of the county’s DUI Treatment Court and Drug Treatment Court would not have been possible without the strong support of District Attorney Watson. With initial funding from PennDOT in 2013 and the broad-based support from the judiciary, treatment community, law enforcement agencies and the county commissioners as fiscal managers, the Potter County DUI Court launched in 2013. The Drug Court would follow in 2015.

Goal of both courts is to reduce relapse and recidivism by addressing each qualifying individual’s needs with a customized treatment plan and intensive supervision by the Potter County Probation Department. Only non-violent offenders who meet specific criteria are accepted. The program includes an initial stay in the county jail, mandatory treatment, probation supervision, drug and alcohol testing, community service, and attendance at two public court hearings per month where all participants discuss their issues, successes and failures.

Entering 2018, DUI Court has saved approximately 10,000 jail days. The court has graduated 22 participants. Of those, just three have reoffended with an alcohol/drug charge. The Drug Court has saved approximately 7,000 jail days. It has graduated 11 participants. Only one has reoffended with a drug/alcohol charge. Since the inception of the DUI Court, some 3,143 community service hours have been accumulated; for Drug Court, participants have accumulated 1,058 hours of community service. During the last quarter of 2017, the Drug Court had six active participants. The court processed 464 substance abuse tests, of which 100 percent were negative. Likewise, the DUI Court for the same time period had six participants. All 470 substance abuse tests came back negative.

District Attorney Watson has taken his advocacy of the specialty courts to many venues, including testimony during a public hearing sponsored by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, where he declared: “We have seen some wonderful successes. These offenders are learning sobriety. They are getting jobs. They are spending more time with their spouses. They’re becoming better parents. There are also many indirect positive consequences to what we’re doing. If we can help a mom or dad get the proper services and become sober, then we’re improving the lives of their children and their children are a lot less likely to become addicts by example. If we can help a person to stop using, especially stop using and driving, that saves lives and money by preventing traffic crashes. Giving an addict treatment, education and a platform for leadership enables him or her to become a positive example in AA meetings or elsewhere that might help someone else get or stay sober.”
3. PRE-TRIAL DIVERSION

Potter County partnered with the Pa. Commission on Crime & Delinquency and the County Commissioners Assn. of Pa. for a successful launch of a Pre-Trial Diversion Program. Consultant Maureen Barden worked directly with members of the county’s criminal justice system to lay the groundwork. It was evident from the outset that, without the active involvement and support from District Attorney Watson, the program would not be feasible.

Mr. Watson approached the concept cautiously. However, after completing the National Institute of Corrections training module offered by the University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute and offering valuable input on the implementation plan and procedures, he provided his support. A satisfactory pilot phase was completed and an incremental program is underway.

The fastest-growing demographic group on the county’s criminal justice charts is women. DA Watson has also supported a gender-specific diversion program, consenting to plea arrangements that steer certain offenders into the Women’s Residential Rehabilitation Center in Potter County, operated in a former juvenile detention center.

4. DDJ AND STEPPING UP

Potter County is the least populous county in the nation to have formally allied itself with the Data-Driven Justice Initiative. Additionally, Potter has signed on to another national initiative, Stepping Up, an assemblage of counties committed to improving the functioning of criminal justice systems for those with documented mental health issues.

Prior to passing resolutions of support for DDJ and Stepping Up, the Potter County Board of Commissioners met with District Attorney Watson to determine his interest in participating. He recognized the value of having credible data that would measure the effectiveness of the county’s criminal justice reforms – from the Intermediate Punishment options that have been employed for several years to the newer initiatives – to equip him with the tools necessary to build the critical support networks required in the law enforcement community. Mr. Watson also expressed his frustration with the lack of criminal justice options and diagnosis/treatment services available for those offenders whose criminal behavior could be connected to mental illness.

Once DA Watson, as well as the President Judge, Chief Probation Officer, Human Services Administrator, Jail Warden and other key players pledged their support, the Board of Commissioners moved forward. Progress has been made with both Data-Driven Justice and Stepping Up, confirmed most recently with both initiatives being identified as top priorities in the 2018 Potter County Criminal Justice Advisory Board Work Plan.
To reinforce the long-term impact of criminal justice reforms and put a human face on these issues, multiple CJAB meetings in 2017 included presentations by graduates of the Drug Court and DUI Court. DA Watson and the President Judge have introduced these speakers – an important expression of their sincere support for initiatives that require a significant amount of “culture change.”

5. PUBLIC EDUCATION

Soon after being elected to his initial term as District Attorney, Andy Watson pulled together state and local police and social services program administrators to begin a series of assemblies and other high-visibility appearances in every Potter County school district. These have continued for more than eight years. Focus has been on drug identification and avoidance, two-way communication with local police officers, suicide prevention, bullying, social media risks and other timely topics.

Rising incidences of drug abuse brought a new element, and a new sense of urgency, to these programs and other public education opportunities. Mr. Watson conferred once again with the law enforcement and social service program directors to research best practices for fine-tuning their approach in school settings and expanding the campaign to include parents, school faculty and administrators, community leaders and the public at large. What followed was a series of high-profile public meetings at libraries and other public venues. Drug identification charts, real-life stories by undercover officers, pointers for parents and other adults to recognize signs of drug abuse, and comfortable informal give-and-take sessions have made these gatherings a big success.

As noted elsewhere in this nomination, DA Watson has also appeared before a legislative committee and other groups in an effort to share his testimony with peers in law enforcement – studies have shown that certain groups that might be reluctant to embrace change become more open to alternative programs when they’re introduced and endorsed by peers.

6. NALOXONE

All police departments in Potter County are now carrying a nasal spray that can save a life in the event of a drug overdose. Police have been equipped with supplies of Naloxone, which is an opioid antagonist that blocks the effects of a drug overdose. There was no cost to local governments.

District Attorney Watson was an early adopter of the Pennsylvania Districts Attorney Association partnership with Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield. Although he encountered some early resistance, he persevered. Following the lead of law enforcement, the following entities are now equipped with Naloxone: school districts, emergency responders, county jail staff, social service personnel and health care providers.
Watson: ‘One life saved is worth it’

I am addicted to drugs and I need help.

That simple sentence can offer a person a chance to make a CLEAN break from drug addiction.

The Concerned Law Enforcement Against Narcotics (CLEAN) Protocol, started by Potter County District Attorney Andy Watson a little over a month ago, is fairly simple. Anyone who approaches a law enforcement officer and requests help for their addiction will not be arrested for reporting their addiction or drug-related crime. “As prosecutors we may be able to reduce recidivism and protect our communities more effectively than we would with strict prosecution and seeking jail time for the typical addict.”

The addicts will be referred to the appropriate service providers—with no questions asked. If that person is under the influence of a controlled substance at the time, a family member will be contacted or 911 will be called to help get the person to a hospital for a medical evaluation. “If they choose to relinquish any illegal contraband, they will not be prosecuted or investigated further. The only exception would be for those who are currently charged or under investigation for illegal activity.”

“These individuals will not be immune from prosecution.” However, if these people do ask for help, they will be referred for rehabilitative services. “The reason for this limited immunity from prosecution is due to the fact that Potter County has a very active Drug Task Force and it is conceivable that a person already under investigation could receive some confidential information that the Drug Task Force was ready to make a buy or arrest them which would prompt them to come forward and request rehabilitative services to avoid criminal prosecution.” To date, no one has asked for help through this program, but that does not deter Watson. He understands this is in stark contrast to his stance as a tough prosecutor. And really? You can go to an officer and admit to being addicted to drugs? The answer is a simple yes. Watson is excited to offer this opportunity to people in Potter County, saying, “We need to let the public know. We don’t want to have to arrest people.”

“Addicted individuals need to understand that Potter County law enforcement officers are more concerned about citizens’ health and safety than having to arrest them.” The primary drug dealers still face full prosecution. The small-time dealer, who is usually trying to support a habit, will not likely benefit from a jail sentence. “It is unlikely that they have received the necessary rehabilitative services
to prevent them from returning to a life of crime and addiction.” This offers a chance to go to rehab and get the help they need. Unorthodox? Yes. But still worth the effort.

“If even one individual approaches law enforcement and requests rehabilitative services and one life is saved, it is worth it. It is our duty to follow this protocol and help save lives.” A challenge for Potter County is its location and lack of rehabilitative services. This forces the addict to travel away from home to receive inpatient treatment. “I feel we would see greater success in offenders if we had a local inpatient facility in Potter County which would allow offenders to be closer to their families and children,” he said. This will also create more jobs in the county.

“The downside is that Potter County is a very rural, low-income community. At the county government level, there are simply insufficient funds to create a self-sustaining inpatient facility without help from the state and/or federal government.” Watson said the idea of the CLEAN Protocol was born from a plea by a mother whose son is a heroin addict. “I promised this concerned mother that I would look into the issue and I felt compelled to keep that promise.”
Potter Co. initiates new protocol to help drug addicts

Potter County law enforcement, through District Attorney Andy Watson, have initiated a new protocol with a focus on rehabilitating drug abusers, allowing them to seek help from police by reporting addiction and turn over drug paraphernalia without fear of prosecution.

The C.L.E.A.N. Protocol, which stands for Concerned Law Enforcement Against Narcotics, is being enacted in association with Cole Memorial Hospital and Potter County Drug and Alcohol Abuse Services and comes with overwhelming support from state and municipal police in the county, according to Watson. “This protocol is unique in that any individual that approaches a law enforcement officer or official who requests help will not be prosecuted for reporting their addiction, possible crimes or being in possession of controlled substances or paraphernalia that may be turned over to a police officer voluntarily,” Watson explained.

He said he drafted the protocol in light of the increasing abuse of controlled substances and alcohol throughout the nation, noting that many of Potter County’s citizens do not know where to turn for help. Although the Drug Task Force that was initiated in 2010 by Watson has been and continues to be very successful in removing many of the county’s main drug dealers from our community, “there is always more as law enforcement that we can do to help people,” said Watson.

Through the legal system, many addicts are incarcerated and receive rehabilitation services, however the C.L.E.A.N. Protocol is designed to encourage addicted individuals to work with law enforcement before they are caught and arrested. “I thought it was time to initiate the CLEAN Protocol to let people know we are concerned as law enforcement officers and we want to be actively involved in helping people become sober without fear of prosecution or retribution,” Watson said.

However, currently, Pennsylvania is not equipped with the “Good Samaritan laws” upheld in other states, where a person “cannot” be prosecuted for coming forward, Watson noted. “Technically, we could arrest that person for being in possession of the drugs, but we want to encourage people to come forward and be honest with us so we can help them,” he conveyed. “The only exception I have to carve out is for someone who has already been arrested or is currently under investigation, the (the C.L.E.A.N. Protocol) does not apply.” The reason, Watson said, is that the county’s drug task force is so active, having five to 10 investigations underway at any given time. “Individuals might get word that they’re under investigation and come forward trying to get out of charges,” he explained. “That’s why we have to make that caveat.”

Watson asserts the number one priority is saving lives, whether that means putting someone in jail or getting them rehabilitated or both—“that’s what I’m going to do.” “This is not about creating
impressive numbers of arrests or long jail sentences. What it is about is being able to say we saved somebody’s life today because we cared,” he stated. Watson said law enforcement is also working to mitigate the ripple effect someone’s drug abuse has in society—as well as help facilitate their use of their experience with addiction and recovery to make a positive impact on those around them. “There are many indirect positive consequences to what we’re doing,” Watson stated. “If we can help a mom or dad get the proper services and become sober, then we’re improving the lives of their children and their children are a lot less likely to become addicts by example.”

“If we can help a person to stop using, especially stop using and driving, that saves other people if it prevents a car accidents,” he continued. “It stems the whole tree from branching out, our focus is generational.” Likewise, giving an addict treatment, education and a platform for leadership enables them to become a positive example in AA meetings or elsewhere that might help someone else get or stay sober, according to Watson. He indicated a focus on incarceration over rehabilitation may have been crippling the war on drugs throughout the decades, but this initiative aims to balance that. “I think throughout most of Pennsylvania there is a new approach, but it is more that,” Watson said. “Unfortunately, long-term incarceration is not fixing the problem.”

“Heroin is so addictive, putting them in jail will detox them but it doesn’t give them the tools to become sober”, he stated. “That’s why here in Potter County we are covering both ends of the spectrum, we’re trying to balance incarceration and rehabilitation.” On one end, Watson pointed to the county’s “very aggressive drug task force” that he said has been very successful with many positive arrests of heroin dealers and others. “The real serious offenders are going to state prison, they’re people that have been given opportunities but don’t have a desire to come clean,” he related.

On the other end of the spectrum is a much different approach for some of the “lesser drug abusers” whereby DUI and drug treatment courts are focusing on getting people better by providing them the appropriate resources and tools to change their life, according to Watson.

“When I was a young ADA (assistant district attorney), it was all about people doing bad things going to jail,” Watson stated, “but empirical studies show by taking this approach we can actually do better for our communities.” He said the county’s drug treatment core team and himself traveled to Michigan for training on the approach recently and were impressed by what they learned. It’s a group effort that is made more effective by a great deal of cooperation in approaching the problem of drug abuse from as many angles as possible, Watson emphasized.

“We are very fortunate to have two great judges that support these efforts President Judge Stephen Minor and Senior Judge John Leete,” he added. “Without them law enforcement couldn’t do anything.” The C.L.E.A.N. Protocol is modeled after a similar initiative that was created in Gloucester, Massachusetts to bridge the gap between law enforcement and addicts who are interested in recovery.

“Even if one life can be saved through this type of cooperation, the protocol is worthwhile,” said Watson. Any individual seeking rehabilitative services may contact the District Attorney at 814-274-9450, Coudersport-based state police at 814274-8690 or reach out to their local police in Potter County.
New program offering addicts treatment, rather than arrest, being explored in Pennsylvania

A program that allows those addicted to heroin and other drugs to go to police seeking treatment without fear of arrest could be coming to the midstate.

Concerned Law Enforcement Against Narcotics, or CLEAN, was started in Potter County recently by District Attorney Andy Watson and is modeled after a Gloucester, Mass., program. It is a cooperative effort among law enforcement, local hospitals and drug and alcohol services.

“If you come to us and you disclose you have an addiction issue—whether drugs, alcohol, whatever—and the person under the influence of the drug turns over the drugs to us, the promise is we will not prosecute you,” he said. Instead, referral for treatment will be made. People who have already been arrested or are currently under investigation for criminal activity related to their addiction are not eligible, although the latter can still be referred for treatment.

Ed Marsico, Dauphin County district attorney, said he is examining the possibility of instituting a similar program. Marsico said he has gathered information on the program and has met with Gary Tennis, secretary of the state’s Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs. Marsico said individual police officers may already be referring addicts for treatment, although not as part of a formal program.

Dave Freed, Cumberland County district attorney, said he’d be willing to consider anything that helps addicts get the treatment they need and that a regional approach is always best.

How CLEAN works

In Potter County, Watson said, he sees a difference between someone dealing heroin and other drugs who “deserve to be prosecuted very strongly” and a smaller dealer who is an addict.

“The goal of this program is for law enforcement to extend our hands and our resources to these addicts to help them get rehabilitative services without fear of criminal prosecution,” Watson said. “We will not ask them who they got drugs from unless they volunteer that information—this is not part of a general investigation,” he said.

Heroin has become a major problem in Potter County, as in most parts of the state, because of its cheap price and availability, Watson said. It was a Potter County mother of a heroin addict who came to him and asked him to start the CLEAN program there. An effort to purge major dealers in Potter County resulted in 100 heroin arrests since last summer, Watson said. “What is seen now are smaller drug
dealers going to Williamsport and bringing back smaller quantities to use and sell to support their habit,” he said.

**The view from law enforcement**

“I don’t know anyone in law enforcement who wants to do anything other than treat the true addicts. So whatever we can do to promote that is a positive,” Freed said. The key issue is funding for intensive drug treatment, and Freed said the Potter County program has support from a medical facility.

While CLEAN helps addicts avoid incarceration, Freed added that prison is where some are convinced they need it. “Our county jails have become treatment facilities and forcing detox on people is often the only way to save them. So I wouldn’t want to do anything to take away that option,” Freed said.

Doug Hockenberry, Camp Hill police chief and head of the Cumberland County Chiefs of Police Association, said an addict coming to his department for help would be referred to Cumberland-Perry drug and alcohol department to find treatment services.

“We would find a means to help them,” Hockenberry said. “We try to explore any option we can give them a second chance to be sober, from Narcan to referral,” he said, adding he believes this would be the goal of most midstate law enforcement officers. Addicts who do get arrested receive drug and alcohol evaluation in prison, Hockenberry said, and it would be up to the county to find a way to help them. Other midstate county district attorneys say they don’t foresee starting CLEAN, but have other ways to encourage addicts to get help.

“We don’t have a named program or protocol, but if an addict walks into a police station in Lancaster County asking for help, he or she will not be arrested,” said Brett Hambright, spokesman for Craig Stedman, Lancaster County district attorney. “In fact, there would be nothing to charge, unless the person has drugs or paraphernalia on them. And in those cases, our first move isn’t to file a charge,” Hambright said. Stedman doesn’t see a downside to Potter County’s program, and welcomes any knowledge it provides that can assist in slowing the heroin epidemic. Lancaster police departments carry Narcan in their vehicles, and are “constantly requesting refill supplies,” Hambright said.

Thomas Kearney, York County DA, said each county is different and demands different approaches. York County, for example, has more referring and program resources available than rural Potter County. Heroin task force hall meetings have helped identify gaps in addressing the opioid abuse problem, Kearney said, and treatment resources have significantly increased. Still, demand exceeds availability, and the county commissioners are working to address that, he said.

Kearney also said that under the Good Samaritan Law, first responding law enforcement is encouraging overdose victims they resuscitate to immediately be taken to a medical facility, where their addiction can be addressed. Each of York County’s 23 police departments have a drug take-back box in the lobby where citizens can deposit unused medications, no questions asked, for disposal. Each patrol officer maintains a naloxone kit, and there have been more than 120 overdosing people saved since April 2015, Kearney said.
Brian Sinnett, Adams County district attorney, said there isn’t an organized program like CLEAN in his county, but he has recommended similar actions. “I’ve repeatedly told groups I’ve spoken to, that if someone feels they are in need of treatment, if they turn themselves in to police I would not prosecute them,” Sinnett said. He said he would be hesitant to prosecute them unless there was something more to the case. Sinnett said police have a lot of discretion in deciding whether or not to charge someone, and that the CLEAN protocol could already be happening informally in different departments.

**No hindrance to law enforcement**

Watson doesn’t believe CLEAN will hamper law enforcement, with a drug task force continuing to operate in Potter County. “Our primary focus is always taking out the primary heroin and other drug dealers,” he said. Law enforcement in Potter County is on board with CLEAN, including state police, he said.

In the past, Watson said addicts were hesitant to approach anyone in law enforcement. “The average addict may not even know where to go to for help,” he said. The drug and alcohol agency in Potter County has grants to assist people with getting treatment, Watson said. Potter County also has DUI and drug treatment courts, such as Dauphin County and many others. Watson said they are not only helping achieve sobriety, but are changing families.

“In my view we are helping to stop the generational revolving door by the participant obtaining sobriety and changing their lifestyle. We are seeing their family unit– their wife, kids be introduced to a different way of living.” Watson said he has been invited to take part in a public hearing before the General Assembly in Harrisburg April 1 on drug and alcohol topics.

**Funding a key issue**

Cheryl Dondero, director of Dauphin County Drug and Alcohol Services, said the CLEAN program is on the list of best practices around the country.

While police may already be helping addicts seek treatment, she said, it isn’t yet through an arrest-diversion program like CLEAN. “We are not there yet, but I believe our DA is very interested in working toward something like that,” she said.

In Dauphin County, most police cars are equipped with naloxone. Also, drug and alcohol services is working with PinnacleHealth to make sure overdose patients are met at the ER to help them receive Addiction treatment, Dondero said. There is a waiting list for treatment beds, Dondero said, but the five-county region is working to provide more. State funding to combat addiction has increased, and Medicaid expansion is also helping to get treatment for more people.

Kristin Noecker of the RASE Project of Carlisle, a community recovery organization, said CLEAN could be one more way to leverage getting more addicts to treatment. “It takes the entire community to combat this opioid epidemic,” she said. Many people are already finding their way to rehab through a police or probation officer, but, for many, help comes with a criminal record.

“What I see most, people are finding a way into rehab, through a police officer or probation. When a
person has an addiction problem, many eventually commit some sort of crime,” she said. “Right now, a lot of addicts look at police as the enemy. This could start to change the conversation,” Noecker said of a program like CLEAN.

“I think most officers deal with using addicts,” she said, and they need to have the resources to help them. “If not, we’re just putting these people in a revolving door.” Noecker said police in Cumberland County, where she works, “are on point with putting them into rehab,” although some need to be incarcerated, too.

Knowing where to find help is key. “Some people don’t know where to turn. It may be in the back of a police car when they decide they need help,” Noecker said. “If police are able to provide them resources, that’s just a plus.”

Ensuring there are funds for treatment is the flip side. “We have all these things to help individuals get treatment, but when they look for a bed, they don’t have enough beds to fill the need,” Noecker said.

There is a goal statewide to build more treatment centers, so those who seek help can get it. “If someone ends up in the hospital with a heart attack, you don’t just send them home and say you hope they can find a cardiologist to help you,” she said.
In Potter County, a smarter way to fight the War on Drugs:
Editorial

There’s been a lot of talk—and much action—in Pennsylvania’s courts and in law enforcement circles about what to do about the epidemic of opioid abuse and how to channel drug addicts out of the penal system and into treatment.

To his credit, Potter County District Attorney Andy Watson is looking to help those in the throes of addiction before they even run afoul of the criminal justice system. Taking a cue from a pre-existing program in Gloucester, Mass., Watson recently started a program called “Concerned Law Enforcement Against Narcotics,” that would allow addicts to be steered into treatment without fearing arrest.

“If you come to us and you disclose you have an addiction issue—whether drugs, alcohol, whatever—and the person under influence of the drug turns over the drugs to us, the promise is we will not prosecute you,” Watson told PennLive’s Barbara Miller this week. “Instead, referral for treatment will be made.”

This innovative option, which is a joint effort run by law enforcement, local hospitals and drug and alcohol services, isn’t open to those who have already been arrested or are currently under investigation for criminal activity related to their addiction. But the latter can still be referred to treatment, Miller wrote.

There is no doubt that rural Pennsylvania is in the grip of a heroin epidemic. And that includes Potter County, which abuts the New York state line, about two hours’ north of Harrisburg.

According to a report by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, this epidemic of abuse crosses all geographic, economic and racial boundaries, with scores of people becoming addicted and dying in suburban and rural communities. All parts of the state, including its most rural counties, are affected. The center’s report, “Heroin: Combating this Growing Epidemic in Pennsylvania,” says 80 percent of people using heroin first became addicted to a prescription opioid painkiller such as OxyContin or Vicodin.

According to the report, nearly 3,000 Pennsylvanians have dies during the past five years because of abuse of heroin or other opioids. The high is cheap and easy. A packet of heroin capable of producing a high lasting about five hours costs $10 or less.

In Dauphin County, District Attorney Ed Marisco is examining the program, as is Cumberland County
District Attorney David Freed, Miller wrote.

It is an approach worth considering. Law enforcement needs to vigorously investigate and prosecute those responsible for selling and distributing illegal painkillers and narcotics in our community. Their presence is a genuine plague.

But when it comes to getting help to those who need it, those who, often through no fault of their own, have been pulled into the spiral of addiction, another approach is called for.

“The goal of this program is for law enforcement to extend our hands and our resources to these addicts to help them get rehabilitative services without fear of criminal prosecution,” Watson told Miller. “We will not ask them who they got drugs from unless they want to volunteer that information—this is not part of a general investigation,” he said.

And that’s a smart way to fight drugs.
High praises for specialty court

Many men and women who come into contact with the criminal justice system are at a crossroads in their lives. More often than not, abuse of alcohol or other drugs has played a large part in the behavior that led to their arrest.

Addressing the underlying issues of substance abuse to help criminals embark on a new lifestyle is the foundation of the new “specialty court” system in Potter County. Slowly but surely, the new approach has been making a difference.

Last week, a justice from the Pennsylvania Supreme Court was among a delegation of officials gathering at the courthouse to applaud the Potter County team that has been involved in the sweeping criminal justice reforms.

Justice Sally Updyke Mundy presented a certificate of accreditation to President Judge Stephen Minor and Senior Judge John Leete, recognizing the Potter County DUI Treatment Court as a nationally recognized best practice in criminal justice administration.

Now in its third year, the specialty court offers certain alcoholic offenders the opportunity to access treatment and support services which, if successfully completed, can lead to a reduction in criminal charges. Supreme Court accreditation signifies that Potter County’s DUI Treatment Court has met national and state standards.

Goal of the court is to reduce relapse and recidivism by addressing each qualifying individual’s needs with a customized treatment plan and intensive supervision by the Potter County Probation Department.

Potter County also operates a Drug Treatment Court for those offenders who qualify for the program and have been diagnosed with a drug addiction other than alcohol. Judge Leete presides over both of the specialty courts.
Nationally, more and more court jurisdictions are adopting the treatment court systems. Few of the specialty courts have been implemented in a county as rural as Potter.

A third element of the county’s sweeping criminal justice reform activities, the Women’s Residential Recovery Center at the Northern Tier Children’s Home, has also attracted statewide interest as a potential model for other jurisdictions.

Potter County is also pursuing a pilot “pre-trial diversion program,” through which those who are initially charged with a crime are evaluated early on in the processing of their cases for issues such as alcoholism, drug addiction or other circumstances that could be addressed.

Overarching goal of all four initiatives is to improve public safety by reducing the number of repeat offenders, thus reducing jail populations. “Treatment courts are the most effective judicial intervention,” Justice Mundy said at Thursday’s ceremony. “These programs are allowing families to stay together and allowing people to realize some quality of life.”

Potter County President Judge Stephen Minor first proposed the DUI and Drug Treatment Courts after studying other models. “Our court system has been like a revolving door,” Minor said. “Offenders would return to the community and have the same type of problems. We’d see the same people and even multiple generations of the same family in every aspect of the court, over and over, at Children and Youth, Domestic Relations, and criminal proceedings.”

Judge Leete presides over the treatment courts. “I’ve been a judge for 29 years and this is the best thing I’ve been involved in,” Leete said during Thursday’s ceremony. “We’re solving problems (with) a different approach. This is about saving lives, rebuilding lives and new beginnings.”

Only non-violent offenders who meet specific criteria are accepted. The program includes an initial stay in the county jail, mandatory treatment, probation supervision, drug and alcohol testing, community service, and attendance at two public court hearings per month where all participants discuss their issues, successes and failures.

Seventeen men and women have completed the program and more than a dozen others are working their way through stages that can extend for two years. The program has saved more than 6,000 jail days. Participants have performed more than 2,600 hours of community service.
Gov. Wolf addressed an audience last Monday at the capitol building in Harrisburg. Among those in attendance for a discussion on the state’s heroin epidemic were Potter County District Attorney Andy Watson, sixth from left, and Rep. Matt Baker, far left.

Gov. Wolf applauds Potter County’s response to heroin epidemic

by Kelly Stemcosky kellys@tiogapublishing.com

Potter County’s progressive response to the heroin epidemic was honored by officials from several Pennsylvania boroughs, and Governor Tom Wolf last week.

District Attorney Andy Watson, Colleen Wilber from County Drug & Alcohol Services and Coudersport Police Chief Curt McClain were guest speakers at the State Association of Boroughs Fall Leadership Conference in Gettysburg last Saturday.

“We gave a talk to representatives across the state on the heroin epidemic and while our CLEAN Protocol,” said Watson. “It was incredible. After we spoke, we fielded questions and getting ready to leave there were people thanking us for what we’re doing here in Potter County, and asking further questions to expand their county’s horizons to follow Potter County’s lead.”

Watson said his, Wilber and McClain’s talks focused on the county’s drug court, which sends small-time dealers and addicts through a year-long intensive program of treatment and accountability through frequent probation visits, drug and alcohol testing and twice monthly court visits.
They also spoke about the CLEAN Protocol, which Watson introduced earlier this year. Anywhere in the county, drug addicts can approach a police officer, or Watson himself, to ask for help. They won’t be charged unless they are part of a current investigation, and no questions will be asked. Officers will then contact Wilber’s office, which will work with the person to set up treatment.

Watson said the conference will be airing on Pennsylvania Cable Network at some point.

Watson then found himself last Monday in Harrisburg meeting with Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf. “I was invited by Governor Wolf and Secretary of Drug and Alcohol Gary Tennis for a press conference at the capitol building concerning the use of naloxone, or Narcan,” said Watson.

Narcan is a substance administered during an opiate overdose which reverses the effects of respiratory depression. It’s most often given in a nasal mist, and recently, every police department in Potter County was given two doses of Narcan through a grant Watson obtained from the State District Attorney’s Association.

“They [Wolf and Tennis] were honoring the fact that only 16 counties in the state have county-wide administration of Narcan. Governor Wolf recognized Potter County for having county-wide coverage and all of the county’s efforts in the fight against drugs,” said Watson.

“It was very reassuring not only that the Governor but other DAs across the state, law enforcement and secretary Tennis were supportive for what we’re doing here in Potter County. Now that I have met Governor Wolf, now that he knows what we’re doing in Potter, that hopefully opens up further lines of communication to fight the heroin epidemic.”

To learn more about the county’s drug and alcohol programs, call Watson’s office at 814-274-9450, or Wilber’s at 814-544-7315.
Potter County officials thinking outside the box in fight against heroin

When Andy Watson became the district attorney in Potter County in 2010, he set a goal of ridding this rural county of drugs that plagued its citizens. And with each year, each new idea, Watson has made headway—so much so he has garnered the attention of state officials who themselves are looking for ways to curb the opioid and heroin epidemic.

From the start, Watson looked beyond the borders of Potter County—and even the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania—to hone in on what is working and to start programs to help those who are addicted to drugs. “As a prosecutor, my number one goal is to save lives and protect victims.” Pennsylvania, like the rest of the country, is grappling with the rise of heroin and opioid use, which has resulted in increase overdoses and deaths. In the six years since, he has attacked the issue on four fronts—Potter County has created a Drug and DUI Treatment Court, opened a women’s rehabilitation center with a primary focus on drug and alcohol counseling, restarted an aggressive drug task force and initiated the CLEAN protocol.

God’s Country

Potter County, also known as God’s Country, is about as rural as you can get, ranking as one of the least populous counties in Pennsylvania. With a population of just over 17,000, it is easy to imagine this county as being a utopia of sorts, immune to the dangers of more urban areas. That, however, is not the case.

Watson said a majority of the crime that occurs in Potter County is the result of drug use. About 75 percent of the crimes are heroin related, he said—and that is a conservative estimate. He added that a majority of the DUIs also involve heroin. “The primary substance of choice is heroin, followed by marijuana.”

Why heroin? “Because it has a much more potent high,” Watson said. And it’s cheap—cheap and deadly. According to some reports, there have been many overdose deaths reported in Potter County. Watson, however, said there was one overdose death in 2015. His office is in the final stages of the investigation and charges will be filed, he said.

Watson estimates there are between three to five overdoses a month in Potter County, but that number varies from month to month. “Our numbers are quite low,” he said, adding he is hopeful this is due to
the efforts of a team of county officials dedicated to ridding the area of this deadly drug. When Watson became DA, he was surprised at the drug problem he inherited. “My head actually went back in my chair. The problem was out of control.”

When Watson was growing up in Potter County, he never heard of heroin. For years, alcohol and marijuana were the drugs of choice. When he assumed office in 2010, the principal drugs were marijuana, prescription medications and cocaine. A year later, the tide swept toward bath salts and some production of meth. That all changed in 2012 when the heroin epidemic hit Potter County. And hit hard.

**Up to the Task**

Part of Watson’s crusade to curb heroin was the realization that he didn’t necessarily have to reinvent the wheel. One of his first acts as DA was to recreate a drug task force, which had been disbanded by one of his predecessors. He explained it is up to the DA in each county whether to utilize a drug task force. Through the state Attorney General’s office, officers are trained and certified through the East Drug Task Force.

“It’s been phenomenal. Very, very active,” he said. To date, about 100 arrests have been made, thus removing and incarcerating the majority of the primary drug dealers in Potter County. But, as Watson explained, the high-volume dealers have been replaced by small-time dealers out for a quick sell and a quick high. “Mainly addicts try to fund their own addictions,” he said. “The individuals make several trips to Williamsport every week to buy smaller quantities of heroin, costing about $5 per bag. They return to Potter County—or the surrounding areas of McKean and Tioga counties.” They sell this heroin at about $20 per bag and use some of the portion of the heroin for themselves. “Therefore, these addicts are making sufficient profit to support their own addiction.”

**Courting a Solution**

There are drug dealers who break the law and there are drug addicts who break the law. There’s a significant difference between the two and with the help of a specialized court system, Potter County is helping those addicted to drugs and turn to crime in their quest for their next high.

In a little over a year, Potter County’s Drug Treatment Court has shown success. The program currently has 11 participants with others waiting to be accepted. Funded by the state’s Intermediate Punishment Program, the Drug Treatment Court, a participant has to be eligible to be admitted. The defendant must be at least a Level 3 offender, a Potter County resident, must not have any history of violent offenses and must have a moderate to severe diagnosis of drug dependency. The Drug Court is strict and the participants are closely monitored by county officials. They need to report to court bi-weekly, do community service weekly, have several weekly urine screens, attend counseling, attend AA or NA meetings and have routine visits with their supervising probation officer. This comes after they have completed
30 days of incarceration and/or inpatient counseling, if recommended.

Once caveat Watson mentioned was the defendant’s loss of a driver’s license, which limits their ability to complete the necessary obligations for the program. “This is a matter that the Potter County Treatment Court Team wishes that the Legislature would review and amend the law to permit a type of limited license.”

“Drug Treatment Court has proven to be much more challenging that the DUI Treatment Court. It is simply the nature of the beast—particularly because there are so many more relapses compared to DUI Treatment Court.” These relapses are due to the tight hold heroin has on them. “It is so powerful, so potent. They just don’t care,” he said. “They need to get their fix. They are not thinking about the consequences.”

All-in-all, the court has been a success, Watson said. “Personally, I am impressed with what we are seeing.” Part of this success is the hands-on approach of helping participants overcome their heroin addiction. “It’s the one-on-one relationship from the start. We respect each other. They don’t want to let us down.” In short, the court is more effective by offering each person immediate help as well as immediate consequences to what they may do. Many recovering addicts are holding down jobs, reconnecting with their families and improving their mental health. The impact is undeniable, he said, especially in curbing generational addiction. “That is what I like about the Drug Treatment Court … Our Treatment Court is saving and changing lives.” To date, one Drug Court participant has been removed from the program.

### County Cooperation

John Donne once penned “No Man is an Island” and Watson is quick to acknowledge that the drug fight in Potter County is not his alone.

First and foremost is his alliance with President Judge Stephen P.B. Minor and Senior Judge John Leete. Watson said any program he starts, except for his CLEAN program, needs to be approved by Minor and Leete. “Nothing would happen without those two judges.”

Program support is one thing, financial help is another. A large percentage of the county’s budget is earmarked for the courts and addressing the drug problem. This includes the Women’s Rehabilitation Center in Harrison Valley. “We have a great group of commissioners that are very supportive of what we do in law enforcement.” But as with anything else, a dollar only goes so far. “They can only do so much without raising taxes.” The team of warriors also includes the drug task force, workers in the Drug & Alcohol Agency and probation. “It has to be a team effort or it won’t work.”

### Statewide Recognition

When Watson started to champion the fight against heroin, he was doing it for an area he has called home all his life.

That, however, changed after he testified at the Center for Rural Pennsylvania’s hearing on opioid and
heroin use on April 1 at the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford. “The response has been incredible.” Watson will speak today before the State House Judiciary Committee about the CLEAN program he initiated. He will also speak before the State Senate counterpart in the next few months. “They are talking about looking at it and proposing legislation,” he said.

All of this attention has come as a surprise for Watson. “It was not my intention to make this statewide. It was created simply for Potter County.” No matter how much success or attention his programs receive, one thing is for sure, he is not one to rest on his laurels. Just last week, he was thinking of a new program to possibly implement. “We have to be proactive. (The drug epidemic) is miles ahead of us … we need to think outside the box in how to stop it.”
Drug Forum Examines Epidemic Affecting Potter County  
September 15th, 2016

Fatal heroin overdoses, families ripped apart, decaying communities and a rising financial toll for taxpayers – these are among the devastating consequences of a drug epidemic that has swept across northern Pennsylvania and shown its ugly face in Potter County. Three public officials in the forefront of trying to stem the tide reported on their progress and offered some advice to families and community members during a public presentation at the Oswayo Valley Memorial Library in Shinglehouse. Speakers were Potter County District Attorney Andy Watson, Shinglehouse Borough Police Chief Brad Buchholz and Potter County Drug and Alcohol Programs Administrator Colleen Wilber.

Watson explained that the law enforcement community has seen a meteoric rise in serious drug cases since 2010. He has been a central figure in the establishment and operation of a regional law enforcement strike force that has intercepted some drug trafficking through undercover officers and confidential informants. Buchholz has also played a role on the strike force, which is part of a statewide initiative controlled by the office of Pennsylvania Attorney General. They showed samples of heroin packets that are commonly available in Potter County, inexpensive and often adulterated or “cut” with other substances.

The D.A. cited more than 100 arrests since the strike force began its work, some of which involved major dealers linked to distribution networks centered in Williamsport and other more populated areas. Watson encouraged citizens to be on the lookout for suspicious behavior that could be related to drug trafficking. He also discussed a new initiative that encourages those who are addicted to illicit substances to contact law enforcement officials for referral to treatment options as an alternative to criminal prosecution. Buchholz suggested that parents monitor their children’s internet or mobile device use, since those electronic tools are used for 90 percent or more of drug transactions.
Wilber’s spoke of services available through the county. Her agency assesses drug and alcohol offenders for addiction and connects them with treatment options. Services are available to all county residents – not just those involved the criminal justice system. She and Watson serve on a team that administers two “treatment courts” that provide alternatives to traditional criminal justice disposition in some cases.

Potter County has received national and state accolades for some of its early forays into innovative programs that are geared toward reducing jail populations and more effectively addressing issues and circumstances that can lead an individual to criminal activity. Senior Judge John Leete presides over the DUI and Drug Treatment Courts, while President Judge Stephen Minor has been a driving force behind their establishment. Potter County Commissioners Doug Morley, Paul Heimel and Susan Kefover have also been supportive, providing increased staffing in the county’s Probation Department and establishment of a Women’s Residential Recovery Center in Harrison Valley.
Drug addiction has reached epidemic proportions in Potter County.

The numbers that were shared during a town meeting last week in Galeton were shocking. There have been an average of four heroin/other opioid overdoses per month and between one and four fatalities annually since 2014. Potter County District Attorney Andy Watson was joined by two other local law enforcement officials in summarizing the drug epidemic for about 50 people attending the forum at Galeton Area School. “People don’t always see the direct impact of addiction in their own lives, but there’s a ripple effect that can be felt through entire communities,” said Watson. “No place is immune from this devastating problem, including rural areas.”

He cited credible public education, effective law enforcement and criminal justice innovations as three proven tools to combat the scourge of drug abuse. “Education is key, whether it be for the addict or the public,” Watson said. “That’s what these forums are for -- to let people know what’s happening in our communities and what we can do to address those issues.”

Part of last week’s presentation was a summary of signs that an individual is struggling with drug abuse. Attendees also learned of the changing strategies by law enforcement to stem the flow of narcotics into the region through a regional task force, undercover operators with “controlled buys,” and other techniques.

Watson also spoke of the specialty courts that are now in place to provide treatment and support services to some criminal offenders who are diagnosed with addiction to alcohol and/or other drugs. “We’re seeing a significant reduction in recidivism since we instituted the courts three years ago,” Watson explained. “These programs not only have a positive impact on the addict, but also the friends and family of the offenders. It’s helping to stop the generational addiction in families that we see time and time again.” The D.A., now in the final year of his second four-year term, acknowledged that he was reluctant to sign on to the specialty court concept.

“I had always been a harsh prosecutor in the past when it came to drug-related crimes and I used to try to put defendants away for as long as the law would allow, but I was wrong,” Watson said. “Dealers need prison, but there’s a difference between a typical addict who might be selling a small quantity so he can feed his own addiction, and a large-scale dealer. I now realize we need to offer as much support
as we can, especially from the criminal justice system.”

Watson has been recognized statewide as the driving force of the CLEAN Protocol in Potter County—short for Concerned Law Enforcement Against Narcotics. It’s a joint project of the DA’s office, local police departments, Cole Memorial Hospital and Potter County Drug and Alcohol Abuse Services. The program allows people with the disease of addiction to seek help, under certain circumstances, without fear of criminal prosecution. Offenders are encouraged to reach out to law enforcement to make connections with community resources.

And there’s yet another innovative program that’s has been launched on a trial basis in the Potter County Court Systems. “Pre-Trial Diversion” can steer certain offenders to short or long-term rehabilitation and other services as an alternative to jail or other sanctions.

“Potter County is leading the way among rural counties in terms of support services, thanks in large part to the incredible support of Judge Stephen Minor and Senior Judge John Leete,” Watson said. “None of these programs would be successful without their support and the commendable work of the state and local police, who are saving lives every day.”
Governor Wolf Recognizes Law Enforcement for Battling Opioid Epidemic

October 17, 2016

Harrisburg, PA – Governor Wolf today thanked Pennsylvania’s law enforcement community for combating the opioid epidemic by carrying the overdose reversal drug Naloxone. There are now 17 counties that have full participation of police departments carrying Naloxone. He also encouraged other municipal police departments to carry Naloxone. Governor Tom Wolf was joined by the Pennsylvania State Police, district attorneys, capitol police officers, and other state partners.

“I am proud to announce that we now have 17 counties with complete police participation in carrying naloxone – the overdose revival antidote,” said Governor Tom Wolf. “More than 1,500 opioid overdoses have been reversed by state and local police officers since November of 2014,” said Governor Wolf. “While my goal remains having 67 counties with 100 percent naloxone participation by municipal police departments, these 17 counties are a wonderful start. I want to thank you all for your efforts and encourage you to keep fighting.”

“This opioid epidemic is devastating our communities and families,” said Gary Tennis, secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs. “Pennsylvania loses 10 people a day to overdoses. These people are mothers, fathers, daughters and sons. It’s heartbreaking to families to lose a loved one.

“With leadership from Governor Tom Wolf at the state level and help from the Pennsylvania State Police, our district attorneys and other county law enforcement partners and first responders, we can save lives and preserve families,” said Tennis.

The 13 counties with all municipal police departments carrying naloxone include: Butler, Chester, Clarion, Dauphin, Delaware, Franklin, Lehigh, Northampton, Perry, Potter, Wayne, Wyoming, and York. The four additional counties with naloxone coverage by Pennsylvania State Police include: Forest, Fulton, Sullivan, and Juniata. These counties do not have municipal police departments.

“The Pennsylvania State Police remains committed to fighting this epidemic,” said Lt. Col. Stephen
"Strong working relationships with the respective district attorneys and law enforcement partners throughout the commonwealth enhance these efforts."

"In York County alone we have save over 165 lives this year alone, for a total of 264 since our naloxone program started," said York County District Attorney Tom Kearney.

Governor Wolf also outlined his legislative priorities to battle the opioid epidemic, including:

- Strengthen the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program so that doctors are required and able to check the system each time they prescribe opioids
- Better prepare doctors and physicians for prescribing opioids and pain management drugs improving medical school and continuing education curricula on opioids
- Limit the number of opioids a patient can receive at emergency rooms to a seven-day supply with no refills limit the number of opioids a patient can receive at emergency rooms to a seven-day supply with no refills
- Require insurance companies to cover abuse deterrent opioids that make it more difficult to abuse these drugs
- Establish a voluntary directive, to allow patients who do not want to be prescribed opioids to deny or refuse the administration of these drugs

www.governor.pa.gov
Signature of the nominating party.

[Signature]

Paul W. Heimel
Potter County Commissioner