



The Daily Pennsylvanian

City curfew law creates controversy

Members of Occupy Philadelphia and OccupyPenn call the law 'racist'

By Manola Gonzalez · February 13, 2012, 10:53 pm

The city's curfew law, passed last October, was meant to reduce crimes related to flash mob violence.

However, many months later, the law still remains controversial.

On Jan. 28, College senior Brian Goldman and his cab driver were attacked by teens in Center City. Goldman, a *Daily Pennsylvanian* columnist, called violent flash mobs a serious problem in the city.

Philadelphia's current curfew law stipulates that unaccompanied children under 18 must be off the streets by 10 p.m. The bill proposing the law originally only included Center City and University City, but was modified and passed by Philadelphia City Council to include all areas in the city.

The curfew law was first instated due to flash mob violence in Center City and University City over the summer.

According to the Philadelphia Police Department, there have hardly been any negative reactions toward the curfew law. The law has instead been effective in crime reduction and has significantly reduced the issues of the past summer.

"We've seen a marked change in the behavior of these kids," Lieutenant Ray Evers said. The city worked towards "giving [youth] other options to do at night," he added. These included increased hours at recreation centers and the development of activities like bowling nights.

Penn's Vice President for Public Safety Maureen Rush said Penn "never had a great need to enforce [the curfew law]." Penn's campus only had sporadic problems and never experienced a "phenomenon like in Center City," she said.

Along with Philadelphia Police, Allied Barton security guards and University City District Police, DPS is still enforcing the law.

The curfew is currently being protested by members of Occupy Philadelphia and OccupyPenn.

Thomas Dichter, a graduate student in English, is a member of the Philadelphia anti-curfew committee — a group under Occupy Philadelphia.

Dichter called the law homophobic, racist and anti-youth. "Its intention is to keep affluent areas free of black, LGBT and low income youth. It's an extra excuse to stop young-looking people on the street and to target youths of color."

He hopes his committee, which was started last fall, will "provide a voice for the youth" by building a network and generate conversation.

"Studies have shown no effect on crime rate," he said. The law is instead "counterproductive" and is "making youth feel less safe."

The law criminalizes the youth, Dichter said. It was established due to the flash mob problems, but a very small number of youth were actually involved. "It's really just scapegoating. You can't solve this problem simply by making it a crime."

He believes the problem could be eradicated by establishing more spaces for youth to be after hours. "The assumption that everyone can go home and that that's the best place for them to be is a big assumption," he said.

Dichter said the original jurisdiction that included only Center and University cities was "too embarrassingly racist and discriminatory."

Peter McCarthy — a School of Social Policy and Practice graduate student — is another member of the Philadelphia anti-curfew campaign. “The curfew itself is a segregationist law,” he said.

McCarthy believes the curfew is being enforced in an area where children are primarily black. Most black youth are also impoverished youth, implicating class issues, he added.

The curfew law is being enforced in “an area where the commercial enterprise and white population are most concentrated.” The law is meant to appropriate “safe oasis of commercial concentration” by removing the people who can’t contribute to the area’s economy.

He hopes Penn will “realize their pivotal position in the community and the fact they aren’t really doing everything they say they’ll do to help the community.”

Dichter is calling on Penn students to oppose the bill. “This is being done [for Penn students] and keeping us safe from the youth and community around us,” he said.

The current jurisdiction will expire Dec. 15, 2013. Dichter’s goal is to assure it does not get renewed if it can’t get repealed beforehand.

Last updated February 14, 2012, 12:23 pm

Filed under: [News](#)

Permanent link: <http://www.thedp.com/r/25f15d3d>

ALSO ON THE DAILY PENNSYLVANIAN

Reporter's notebook: Knowing Penn rowing

7 comments

The Daily Pennsylvanian :: The Coursera cliff

2 comments

Rachel del Valle | Updating the status quo

1 comment

Phillips | Penn men's basketball still in search of signature win

4 comments

AROUND THE WEB

What's this?

When You Fill Up at the Pump, Consider Where the Money Goes

Exxon

Inching Into An Oil Dividend Strategy (DBO, DUG, CVY, DVY)

Investopedia

Are You In Need Of A Spiritual Retreat?

Lifescript

The roster of new ships suddenly gets longer

Reviewed

4 comments



Comments for this thread are now closed.



Discussion ▾

Community |

Share ▾



another anti-curfew member • a year ago

I would like the cops to cite their claim that crime has been reduced here in Philadelphia since the implementation. Anyone seeking to commit a violent crime is not likely to be stopped by a curfew.

While Thomas and Peter were well spoken concerning the law nothing speaks to the segregation and police abuse like the stories of the youth themselves. We have to remember the law enforcement in this city has bombed homes full of children, aided in the corporate takeover of west philly, and daily walks the streets as a uniformed group of thugs to humiliate and beat young Philadelphians.

Stay tuned as we seek to amplify the voices that are ignored: our youth.

1 ^ ⋮ v • Share ›



Steven Sarge Kelly • 7 months ago

There's nothing wrong with Philadelphia's curfew law. If it's put a stop or reduced these insane flash mobs that's just a bonus.

I worry about my kids when they're not at home. This law allows me to get them in at a quasi-reasonable hour and make the law the bad guy. There's nothing that needs to be done at that hour and so many things can happen to them. Just because it's summer-time doesn't mean that I don't still have to get up in the morning and go to work and this helps me to get them in and get a good nights sleep.

I have two boys who are good kids but boys will be boys and it's easier to get into mischief after dark. Not to mention that there are a lot

of strange people in this world and I believe that our children become more vulnerable to these sick individuals when they seem to be most active under the cover of darkness. Step up. Be a good parent who is involved in your child's life, no matter what your social class our race, and we can all raise the next generation to be good successful people who don't need to wind up in jail.

0 ^ ⋮ v • Share ›



Don't understand • a year ago

I don’t understand how a 10pm curfew is racist or homophobic. Do only black and homosexual people stay out after 10pm?

0 ^ ⋮ v • Share ›



Sam • a year ago

It’s hardly a controversy when it’s just 2 or 3 overprivileged graduate students whining…

0 ^ ⋮ v • Share ›

 Comment feed  Subscribe via email

