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**Seventy Urges Permanent City Police Advisory Commission
Says Current PAC should be disbanded**

PHILADELPHIA – July 31, 2014 – The Committee of Seventy today urged the creation of a permanent and independent Police Advisory Commission to enable more effective public oversight of corruption and misconduct within the Philadelphia Police Department.

“Police misconduct has become an epidemic,” said Ellen Mattleman Kaplan, Seventy’s Interim President and CEO. “Too many officers play by their own rules and are poisoning the integrity of the entire police force. It’s not fair to the majority of officers who perform their jobs honorably. It has crushed the confidence of the citizens of Philadelphia.”

According to Kaplan, a proposed [Charter amendment](#) to create an independent Police Advisory Commission has been pending without action in City Council’s Law and Government Committee since its introduction in March 2012. The Commission – whose 17 members must reflect the diversity of the city and have skills and experience relevant to the Commission’s work – would have the power to investigate complaints against police officers and to make recommendations for disciplinary action. The Commission would also have subpoena power.

Kaplan said the current Police Advisory Commission, which exists by executive order, should be disbanded. “It has failed to accomplish its mandated mission to ‘prevent future incidents of police misconduct and abuses of civil rights, reduce the amount of money needed to satisfy judgments and settlements based upon allegations of police misconduct [and] promote public confidence in law enforcement.’”

In addition to demoralizing the public, the costs of police misconduct are huge, Kaplan pointed out. For example, she noted a Philadelphia *Daily News* report of nearly \$14 million in settlements from the city in civil rights lawsuits against police in 2013, up from \$8.3 million in 2012.

“It’s time to start fresh with a new Police Advisory Commission that citizens can trust,” Kaplan stated. “Council should move forward immediately with its proposal and, if approved by city voters as we hope it will be, make sure the Commission has enough resources to do its job.”

During this spring’s budget hearings in Council, the Police Advisory Commission’s Executive Director reported a budget of just under \$283,000 for a staff of five to oversee 6,600 police officers. By contrast, Washington D.C.’s Police Complaints Board has a budget of over \$2 million and oversees nearly 4,000 police officers.

Kaplan said that external oversight of the Police Department has been “weak to non-existent.” Recommendations to overhaul the Police Advisory Commission – as far back as a November 2001 report by the Mayor’s Task Force on Police Discipline – have been ignored. Further, an independent Integrity and Accountability Office that was created by a 1996 court-ordered settlement agreement, and issued a series of public recommendations to improve police accountability and practices, was shut down in 2005.

“The crisis of confidence in the police department can’t be shoved to the sidelines,” Kaplan concluded.

The Committee of Seventy is a non-partisan government watchdog. For more information, see www.seventy.org.