



The Office of Attorney General and Allegheny County District Attorney's Office Launch New Gun Violence Task Force

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PITTSBURGH — Attorney General Michelle Henry, in collaboration with Allegheny County District Attorney Stephen Zappala, announced the launch of the Allegheny County Gun Violence Task Force — a collaborative network targeting illegal purchases and transfers of firearms and the violent crimes that result from those transactions.

The Task Force is a formalization and expansion of partnerships between the Office of Attorney General, Allegheny County District Attorney's Office, Allegheny County Police Department, Pittsburgh Police Department, and other local, state, and federal agencies.

The newly-formed Task Force will bolster personnel, resources, technology, and community outreach efforts to combat firearms trafficking and gun violence in Allegheny County.

The collaborating agencies announced the formation of the Task Force at a press event this week at the Allegheny County Courthouse.

“The severity and far-reaching impacts of illegally-obtained firearms cannot be overstated, so it is our duty to unify in our missions to stop the flow of straw purchased guns, prevent at-risk youths from possessing firearms, and hold accountable those who perpetrate acts of violence,” Attorney General Michelle Henry said. “The formation of this Gun Violence Task Force empowers us to tackle those initiatives on an even larger scale to keep communities safe, and I look

forward to continuing this essential work with our law enforcement and community partners.”

“We are pleased to expand and enhance our partnership with the Office of the Attorney General to aggressively disrupt the flow of guns targeting the very point at which guns become ‘illegal weapons,’” said District Attorney Stephen Zappala. “We are thankful for their commitment to make Allegheny County safer for our people.”

The new funding, allocated by legislature, will go toward hiring new agents, attorneys, analysts and administrators. These individuals, with specialized expertise and training, will come together to strategize and collaborate on issues of gun violence in a unified and structured way.

The Office of Attorney General is committed to fighting straw purchasing, gun trafficking, and illegal possession of firearms.

The Gun Violence Task Force will expand and formalize the ongoing work to combat gun violence in Allegheny County. Since 2019, the Office of Attorney General’s Gun Violence Section has worked with law enforcement in Allegheny County to investigate and prosecute gun-related crimes. This work has resulted in 130 cases, 45 arrests, and 89 illegal firearms seized, including the examples below:

In February of 2021, the Office of Attorney General worked with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and the Monroeville Police Department to monitor the Monroeville Gun Show for criminal activity. Over the course of the weekend, agents and officers recovered 19 firearms and arrested 7 individuals for straw purchases and other firearm offenses.

One of these arrests was of Earl Eggleton, who had purchased seven firearms for a man named David Fields, who is unable to legally own a firearm. When agents later searched Fields’ home, they found a total of 15 firearms, along with ammunition.

In December of 2023, agents from the Office of Attorney General Gun Violence Section and the Allegheny County Police Department arrested Leondre Johnson, a Pittsburgh man, who was involved in firearms trafficking. A search of Johnson’s home found a straw-purchased firearm, three fully loaded magazines, two full boxes of rounds, two empty gun boxes not registered in his name, and other gun accessories and ammunition, along with drugs, and cash.

These cases show how straw purchasing puts deadly weapons in the hands of people who should not, and legally can not, have access to firearms. Just one individual with a gun has the ability to cause damage and devastation to an entire community.

The Allegheny County Gun Violence Task Force will work diligently to investigate and prosecute offenders of gun crimes, to help address the issue of gun violence and make Pennsylvania a safer place for all who live here.

If you are interested in joining or working with the Gun Violence Task Force, please visit <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/paoag>.

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