



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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Governor Shapiro, Lieutenant Governor Davis, and Luzerne County Leaders Call for Increased Investments in Local Law Enforcement to Combat Gun Violence

Governor Shapiro's proposed 2024-25 budget would invest an additional \$37.5 million to help local law enforcement investigate and prosecute gun related crime.

Bipartisan group of elected and law enforcement leaders comes together to support increased funding to make our communities safer.



Wilkes-Barre, PA — Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro, Lieutenant Governor Austin Davis, Luzerne County District Attorney Sam Sanguedolce, Wilkes-Barre Mayor George Brown**, and gun violence prevention advocates highlighted the Shapiro Administration’s investments in local law enforcement to investigate and prosecute gun violence and make our communities safer.

The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) has granted over \$600,000 through the Gun Violence Investigation and Prosecution (GVIP) program to the Luzerne County District Attorney’s office to hire more staff to investigate and prosecute gun violence related crimes in the community.

With gun violence at unacceptable levels in our communities, now is the time to make investments where it matters. That’s why the Shapiro-Davis Administration has proposed \$100 million in [the 2024-25 budget](#) to prevent and reduce gun violence across the Commonwealth, including \$37.5 million in GVIP grant funding so that Pennsylvanians can be safe and feel safe in their communities.

“All Pennsylvanians deserve to be and feel safe in their communities – that means living in a community free from the crime and violence that have harmed too many families across our Commonwealth,” said **Governor Josh Shapiro**. “Thanks to the leadership of Lieutenant Governor Davis at PCCD, we’re already getting resources to our county district attorneys and local law enforcement to help them do the important work of investigating and prosecuting crimes involving gun violence. We’re going to continue to build on that work in my next budget – I’ve proposed \$100 million to continue to combat gun violence and to make sure our law enforcement agencies have the tools and personnel they need to make our communities safer.”

“To attack the epidemic of gun violence, we need to take a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes, invests in community-based organizations that are doing violence prevention work and supports law enforcement agencies to help them do the difficult job they’ve been tasked with in keeping our communities safe,” said **Lieutenant Governor Austin Davis, who serves as Chair of PCCD**. “In the past six months, we’ve provided more than \$2 million in grants to more than 50 agencies to help them recruit and train high-quality candidates to fill more than 400 vacant officer positions, and we will be providing up to \$10 million in grants for local law enforcement agencies to upgrade their data collection and reporting systems. The problem of gun violence isn’t just a Philadelphia or Wilkes-Barre problem; it’s an American problem. But it’s one we can do something about – and the Shapiro-Davis budget is an important step toward making all of our communities safer.”

The GVIP grant program provides grants to support district attorneys’ offices and local law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute crimes related to gun violence. Funding can be used to support multi-agency gun violence task forces, personnel costs, technology, and software to improve investigation or prosecutions or increase clearance rates, firearm tracing programs, and any other efforts that aid in the investigation, arrest, and prosecution of a crime involving firearms.

To measure the success of the GVIP program, PCCD recently published an online dashboard highlighting trends for jurisdictions that received GVIP funding. In 2023 alone, counties that received GVIP funding filed over 8,000 criminal cases involving guns. You can view the full dashboard [here](#).

“I’d like to think that it’s that experience as Attorney General and fighting crime and seeing the gun violence across Pennsylvania that put the need for this funding on Governor Shapiro’s radar. Thanks to Governor Shapiro and previous funding, we were able to hire a detective that was dedicated to fighting gun violence full time and another detective part time and they have teamed up to make more arrests than ever before and those are in county to combat gun violence,” said **Luzerne County District Attorney Sam Sanguedolce**. “It’s partially funded a prosecutor in our office which, as you know, every DA’s office across the county is facing funding shortages and facing difficulty hiring prosecutors. This current funding proposed by the Governor is going to allow us to increase personnel dedicated to reducing gun violence to stop unlawful purchases throughout the county and to prosecute the defendants to the fullest extent of the law. We’ll be able to provide overtime to municipal police officers who assist our office and engage in sting operations to take illegal firearms out of the hands of criminals where they don’t belong.”

The Luzerne County District Attorney’s Office utilized PCCD’s GVIP funding for a variety of expenses related to staffing, equipment, and training under the gun prosecution unit and Gun Violence Task Force. Funding was used to expand the gun prosecution unit, adding a full-time detective and assistant district attorney dedicated to prosecuting cases arising out of the unit’s efforts. Additionally, funding was used for equipment to

support the new hires and training for existing and new detectives. The gun prosecution unit remains busy investigating “ghost gun” cases and straw purchases within the county. Since its inception in 2020, the unit boasts over a 99 percent conviction rate for persons charged with PICS check violations (i.e., violations of the firearm background check). Most recently, in the first quarter of 2024, the unit also seized or recovered 16 firearms from persons charged with felony or misdemeanor charges.

“Investigation and prosecution of gun-related crimes requires training, time, and funding. The PCCD’s Gun Violence and Prosecution Grant Program allows for funding to make these investigations and prosecution possible,” said **Wilkes-Barre Mayor George Brown**. “As Mayor of the City of Wilkes-Barre, I implore the Pennsylvania State Legislature to work with Governor Shapiro’s Administration to again secure funding for this grant program for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. I thank Governor Shapiro and Lieutenant Governor Davis for their visit today, and continued dedication to law enforcement agencies throughout the Commonwealth.”

The \$37.5 million for the GVIP grant program is part of a broader \$100 million proposed investment to address gun violence, including:

- **\$37.5 million increase** for PCCD’s Violence Intervention and Prevention program, bringing the total to \$77.5 million in state funds (up from \$40 million last year);
- **\$1 million** to stand up an Office of Gun Violence Prevention within PCCD;
- **\$1.5 million** to increase staffing at the Pennsylvania State Police to grow the trooper force and its civilian employees in essential units to combat gun violence;
- **\$11.5 million** to create a statewide Building Opportunity through Out of School Time (BOOST) program, which will aim to reduce community violence by providing more after-school learning opportunities for young people; and
- **\$11 million** to create more welcoming environments by building parks, addressing blight, and improving shared spaces, such as parks, streets, and playgrounds to promote safer communities.

“I’m ready to go to Harrisburg and fight for this \$37.5 million in the state budget that invests more money in keeping the people of Luzerne County safe. As a former Clerk of Court manger and a former Mayor of Avoca, I know we must support our district attorney’s and our local law enforcement agencies,” said **Representative Jim Haddock**. “This money is vital. I am ready to fight for more funding for them our schools and more funding to create good jobs, and everything else we should be doing to stop gun violence at the source.”

“What an incredible place to have the Governor make his presentation about the safety and the welfare of all of us. We’re not Democrats or Republicans – we are Americans

first and our safety does not have a political party,” said **Representative Eddie Day Pashinski**. “This money and this program that Governor Shapiro is bringing forth today is one of those things that’s necessary to help all of those that keep us safe every day.”

“Governor Shapiro’s plan shows he’s thinking ahead to tackle crime,” said **Senator Marty Flynn**. “I’m all in on this. By investing in community-based programs, law enforcement resources, and emergency services, we can build stronger, safer communities that benefit all Pennsylvanians.”

Additionally, the Governor’s proposed budget includes a \$5 million increase for the Nonprofit Security Grant Fund through PCCD, which supports nonprofits, community centers, faith-based institutions (such as churches, synagogues, and mosques), and other organizations install safety and security measures.

“I was shot 12 times with a 22-caliber rifle – six times in my legs, four times in my abdomen, and two times in my left arm. I had a broken hip, broken arm, and numerous internal injuries from the from the bullets,” said **Kathy Lee Toothill, gun violence survivor**. “I have to say that recovering from gun violence is a lifelong process. There was no victim’s advocacy back in 1972 – and so we were left to our own devices. I joined Moms Demand Action and became a fellow of the Everytown Survivor Network. I am so glad to hear that there will be money available to help the prosecution and helping people like me who have been victims of gun violence who are now survivors.”

Governor Shapiro and Lieutenant Governor have also called on the General Assembly to strengthen Pennsylvania’s laws and pass significant gun reform legislation. The Pennsylvania House has already passed a package of bills to do just that in a bipartisan manner, including universal background checks and legislation that bans ghost guns. Governor Shapiro supports these bipartisan bills that empower families and Pennsylvania law enforcement – and he is committed to building a broad coalition to support commonsense gun safety reform to protect communities all across the Commonwealth.

Read more about Governor Shapiro’s 2024-25 budget proposal at shapirobudget.pa.gov.

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