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In Scranton, Lt. Gov. Austin Davis Brings Together Elected Leaders, Law Enforcement and Victim Service Providers to Discuss How State Investments Will Fight the Epidemic of Gun Violence

Bipartisan State Budget Takes Comprehensive Approach to Making Pennsylvania Communities Safer

Scranton, PA – Lt. Gov. Austin Davis heard from state and local leaders, as well as local law enforcement officials and victim service providers, at a roundtable discussion in Lackawanna County today about how the newly signed, bipartisan state budget will help keep Pennsylvania communities safe and address the epidemic of gun violence.

“Firearms are the number one cause of death for young people in America, and we need to be doing more to keep our young people safe and help them make better choices,” said **Lt. Gov. Davis**, who chairs the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). “That’s why I’m proud of the bipartisan state budget, which includes more resources for community-based programs that reduce violence and a new statewide program to fund afterschool programs that can provide kids with learning and enrichment opportunities in a safe, supportive environment. We’re taking a comprehensive approach, that addresses the root causes of violence, to make Pennsylvania communities safer.”

Earlier this month Gov. Josh Shapiro signed the 2024-25 state budget, which:

- Invests **\$45 million** in proven community-based programs to reduce violence through PCCD, including doubling state funding for the successful Violence Intervention and Prevention (VIP) program with a **\$5 million increase**, which supports a wide range of models focused on reducing community violence and relies on community groups that are most in tune with specific local needs;
- Invests **\$11.5 million** to create a statewide Building Opportunity through Out of School Time (BOOST) program through PCCD, which will aim to reduce community violence by providing more afterschool learning opportunities for young people;
- Includes a **\$5 million increase** for the Nonprofit Security Grant Fund at PCCD, which provides resources for places of worship, community centers, and other entities to equip themselves with security measures;
- Increases funding for domestic violence services by an **additional \$2.5 million** through the PA Department of Human Services (DHS).

The bipartisan budget also includes an infusion of **\$5 million** in state dollars into the Crime Victims Compensation Fund, which PCCD administers. Over the past five years, PCCD has paid more than 76,000 claims through its Victims Compensation Assistance Program totaling more than \$65 million in eligible expenses.

Gun violence and group-related violence among young people is a growing concern in northeastern Pennsylvania. In January, Scranton Police Detective Kyle Gilmartin was shot in the

head by a 20-year-old and nearly died, but the officer has made a remarkable recovery in recent months.

“Unfortunately, gun and gang violence are on the rise in Lackawanna County, but it is not a problem we are going to solve overnight, and we can’t do it alone,” said **Lackawanna County District Attorney Mark Powell**. “It is going to require a well-funded team effort focused on prevention, intervention and enforcement to make our communities safer and provide our youth with positive opportunities. I want to thank Governor Shapiro and Lieutenant Governor Davis for providing us with the funding we need to combat gang violence in Lackawanna County. It’s a huge step in the right direction.”

“We are honored to have Lieutenant Governor Davis in Lackawanna County today to continue our discussions on protecting our children and families from gun violence,” said **Lackawanna County Commissioner Matt McGloin**. “His willingness to hear about the critical issues in our community demonstrates his accessibility and commitment as Lieutenant Governor. It is crucial that every family in Lackawanna County feels safe in their community and homes. We are actively developing new initiatives to combat gun violence here in Lackawanna County. We must continue to rally together as a community to educate our youth on the dangers of gun violence and the tragedy that follows it.”

“While we have a lot of challenges in front of us, we have to be proactive with preventive action, and it starts with education and having safe places and positive activities to occupy and engage our children,” said **state Rep. Bridget Kosierowski**. “We are surrounded by a really good team of elected and appointed officials that care deeply about these issues and are going to move forward to protect our children and protect our communities.”



Lt. Gov. Austin Davis speaks at roundtable on gun violence in Scranton; additional photos/video available at [PACast.com](https://www.pacast.com)



Lt. Gov. Austin Davis tours the Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeastern Pennsylvania; additional photos/video available at PACast.com

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