



# Lieutenant Governor **Austin A. Davis**



Governor's Advisory  
Commission on Women



Governor's Advisory  
Commission on  
African American Affairs



Governor's Advisory Commission  
on Next Generation Engagement



Governor's Commission on  
**Latino Affairs**



Governor's Advisory Commission on  
**AAPI AFFAIRS**



Governor's Commission on  
**LGBTQ Affairs**

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Tuesday, June 10, 2025

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### **During Gun Violence Awareness Month, Lt. Governor Austin Davis and the Governor's Advisory Commissions Open Art Exhibit at the State Library to Honor Lives Lost to Gun Violence**

*The Souls Shot Portrait Project exhibit will be on display at the Pennsylvania  
State Library until June 30<sup>th</sup>.*

**Harrisburg, PA** – Today, **Lt. Governor Austin Davis** and the six [Governor's Advisory Commissions](#) celebrated the opening of the [Souls Shot Portrait Project](#) exhibit at the Pennsylvania State Library to help commemorate Gun Violence Awareness Month. They were joined by surviving family members of gun violence victims, artists, and policy makers to remember the hundreds of Pennsylvanians lost each year to gun violence and continue the push for smart investments that make our communities safer.

The [Souls Shot Portrait Project](#) connects artists with the families and friends of victims of gun violence to create portraits that memorialize the lives lost and tragically altered due to gun violence. This travelling exhibit was on display in the lobby of the Pennsylvania State Library since June 4<sup>th</sup> and will be open to the public until June 30<sup>th</sup> to view at no cost.

“In many counties across the Commonwealth, gun violence is down, thanks to the good work of state and local law enforcement, as well as community-based violence prevention organizations,” said **Lt. Gov. Austin Davis**, who leads the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). “However, there is much more work to be done. Gun violence isn’t just a Philadelphia or Pittsburgh problem – it’s a Pennsylvania problem, and it’s uniquely an American problem. But it’s a problem we can, and must, do something about.”

“Bringing art and storytelling to our policy influencers transforms personal narratives into catalysts for collective progress, ensuring that policies are not just informed by data, but also by the realities behind statistics. We are so grateful for those willing to share with us,” said **Ashley Walkowiak, Executive Director of the Governor’s Advisory Commission on Women**. “Over 50% of domestic violence homicides involve a firearm which is one of the reasons why the Governor’s Advisory Commission on Women is launching a new workgroup focused on violence against women and prevention strategies.”

“Black Americans are thirty-one times more likely to die by gun homicide than our white counterparts, a devastating disparity fueled by systemic racism and deeply rooted in social inequities” said **Sierra Dunn, Executive Director of the Governor’s Advisory Commission on African American Affairs**. “It’s critical to hear from those who have been directly impacted to ensure that policies are not only theoretically sound but are rooted in the everyday realities of those they intend to serve.”

“The Souls Shot Portrait Project is a moving illustration of the utility of art—the way it can be used to connect, to heal and to communicate a lasting narrative of a powerful and heartbreaking story,” said **Karl Blischke, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts**. “On behalf of the Council and staff, I am honored to have the opportunity to experience the exhibit firsthand and learn about the project’s mission.”

PCCD is now working to staff up Pennsylvania’s [newly funded Office of Gun Violence Prevention](#), which will create one comprehensive, coordinated strategy for the Commonwealth to reduce gun deaths, injuries and crime by using evidence-based practices to improve existing state programs and implement new violence prevention initiatives.

PCCD recently approved \$45 million in Violence Intervention and Prevention (VIP) grants to support community-based organizations that are working every day to make Pennsylvania safer. **Governor Josh Shapiro’s [proposed 2025-26 state budget](#)** includes a \$10 million increase for the VIP program, as well as \$10 million more for the Building Opportunity through Out-of-School Time (BOOST) program, which provides funding for afterschool programs that help keep kids safe and give them enrichment opportunities.

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