

Governor Markell Announces Gun Investigations Unit at State Police

Fulfills State of the State proposal to address illegal gun sales

Wilmington, DE – Joined by leaders from the City of Wilmington, New Castle County, various law enforcement bodies, and anti-violence community groups at a news conference in Freedom Plaza, Governor Markell today announced the formation of a new Gun Investigation Unit at the Delaware State Police to focus on better prevention of and ensuring punishment for illegal gun sales.



Governor Markell announced a new Gun Investigation Unit at the Delaware State Police.

This guns task force, originally proposed in Markell's State of the State address and funded by \$265,000 in fiscal year 2015 budget, is a partnership between the state, New Castle County, and the City of Wilmington to address gun violence throughout the state and specifically the wave of shootings that has claimed a record number of lives in Wilmington this year. Markell emphasized the unit is an important part, but only one part, of what must be a comprehensive effort to reduce gun crimes.

"Far too often, gun violence is committed by shooters prohibited from owning guns, so it's critical that we more effectively trace the sources of these weapons and punish those involved in illegal sales," **said Markell.**

“As we mark the formation of the unit, we are also mindful that better firearm investigations are only one part of what it takes to make our neighborhoods safer. When combined with efforts to provide opportunities to disadvantaged youth, ex-offenders, and other at-risk Delawareans, today’s announcement marks an important step – a step toward stopping the shootings that have caused so many tragedies and that have impeded progress in Wilmington and throughout our state.”

Standing with law enforcement officers and community leaders from the Wilmington Peacekeepers and Sweep the Streets, Wilmington Mayor Dennis Williams, New Castle County Executive Tom Gordon, Department of Safety and Homeland Security Secretary Lew Schiliro, State Prosecutor Kathleen Jennings, Colonel Nathaniel McQueen Jr. of the Delaware State Police, and Wilmington Police Chief Bobby Cummings spoke after the Governor to offer their support. ([Watch here](#))

One Officer with the Division of Alcohol and Tobacco Enforcement (DATE) will be assigned to the unit, joining a State Trooper, an intelligence analyst, and one representative each from the Wilmington and New Castle County police forces. All members will be full time and permanently assigned to the unit.



Department of Safety and Homeland Security Secretary Lew Schiliro spoke about gun violence in Delaware.

“Of all of the issues surrounding gun violence in our State the one thing we do know is that these guns are not manufactured in the State of Delaware,” **said Department of Safety and Homeland Security Secretary Lew Schiliro.**

“Today we are adding a resource that will begin to answer the question as to how a 15 year old ends up with a firearm to

commit a felony and also when an innocent woman is leaving a grocery store the gun that was used to end her life, where did it come from. It is my firm belief that having a statewide unit dedicated to truly understanding the illegal trafficking of firearms used in the commission of a crime will go a long way in cutting it off.”

The new team at the State Police will focus on in-depth reviews of firearms transactions as well as developing a statewide strategy to better enforce our gun purchasing laws. That includes working to prevent and uncover straw purchases, weapons trafficking, and all illegal sales. They will operate statewide in cooperation not only with Wilmington and New Castle County, but also with ATF, Dover, and other municipal police departments.

“The teamwork, collaboration and information sharing by this unit will be key to investigate the firearms traffickers responsible for putting guns on the street that end up at crime scenes,” **said Col. McQueen.** “This effort is a critical part of our goal to reduce gun crimes in Delaware.”

The unit is specifically tasked with investigating crimes related to firearms transactions, including violations of laws regarding:

- Possession/purchase of firearms by persons prohibited from owning them;
- Providing a firearm to a person prohibited;
- Criminal history record checks required to be conducted on firearms sales;
- Private sales requirements for Federal Firearms background check;
- Engaging in a firearms transaction on behalf of another person (straw purchases); and
- Mandatory reporting of a lost or stolen firearm that was [signed into law by Markell in 2013.](#)

In his remarks, Markell spoke about other ongoing efforts to address root causes of crime by working to steer our most at-risk citizens away from criminal activity. He referenced [reforms to the criminal justice system enacted this year](#) to help reduce recidivism by giving ex-offenders a better chance to productively contribute to their communities after they've served their time. And he noted the state's increased investments in after-school and summer programs that [provide a safe haven for youth](#) while offering [recreational opportunities as well as anti-bullying and anti-violence activities](#).

"There is no quick fix to the violence in Wilmington," said Markell. "It takes all of us doing our part—all levels of government, neighborhood leaders, faith communities, businesses – all of us – to tackle this imposing challenge."

[Video of the full event](#)

[Photos from the event](#)