

House Republican Press Release

January 9, 2008
Press Office: 860-240-8700

Rep. Greene: Boost Funding for Firearms Trafficking Task Force to Get More Guns Off Streets; Save Lives



Unit's Success in 2007 Could be Improved with Addition of More Officers

Impressed by the success the Statewide Firearms Trafficking Task Force had in 2007 with a larger operating budget than it has had for several years, state Representative Len Green said today he will work to increase the unit's special funding from \$400,000 in 2007-2008 to \$500,000 in 2008-2009.

"Early in the 2007 legislative session, the Public Safety Committee proposed restoring the task force's special funding to \$500,000, the amount it was allocated during the first two years of its existence," said Representative Greene, R-105th District, who serves on the Public Safety Committee. "By the time we approved the 2007 – 2009 state budget, the amount we wanted to allocate to the task force had been pared down to \$400,000. Even though the unit received less than we had originally proposed, it still enjoyed more success than it has had since 2003, when special funding for it was eliminated because of the budget crisis and not restored until last year."

The task force was funded at \$500,000 per year in 2000-01 and 2001-02 and during that time 450 illegal guns were taken off the street and nearly 100 people were arrested. Between January and November of 2007, after its funding was increased to \$400,000, the gun trafficking task force confiscated 656 illegal firearms and arrested 37 people on gun trafficking charges. That compares to 24 seizures and 33 arrests in 2005, when the unit was operating only on funding from within the Department of Public Safety's operating budget and on modest federal grants, said Representative Greene, who voted for the legislation (House Bill 5922) that established the unit during the 2000 legislative session.

"While I'm proud of the task force's record in 2007, I believe it could have had an even better year if it received the \$500,000 our committee had originally called for instead of the \$400,000 that eventually was provided. When the unit was originally created, it received \$500,000. Considering the success it has had so far in the 2007-08 fiscal year, it seems to me that an additional \$100,000 is a small price to pay to add a few more officers to the task force. It would mean more illegal guns taken off the street, more illegal gun traffickers arrested, and most importantly, more innocent lives spared," Representative Greene said.

"Even though Connecticut has some of the toughest gun control laws in the country on its books, criminals still have no difficulty illegally obtaining guns and using them to

commit violent crimes. The Firearms Trafficking Task Force targets the people who illegally sell guns to them and seizes the weapons they use to commit their crimes,” Representative Greene said.

“The task force has succeeded in getting illegal guns off the street and saving lives. It has done good work in our state’s efforts to reduce gun violence and should be expanded to enhance its effectiveness. That is why I will be supporting increasing its special funding to \$500,000 for the next fiscal year,” Representative Greene said.