

House Republican Press Release

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REP. ROWE COSPONSORS LEGISLATION TO FUND FIREARMS TASK FORCE



Bill aimed at stopping illegal sale of firearms to criminals

State Rep. T.R. Rowe, R-Trumbull, has cosponsored legislation to re-fund the dormant Gun Trafficking Task Force, a group of local law enforcement personnel charged with targeting individuals who purchase firearms legally and resell them to criminals. The proposed legislation would allocate \$1 million annually, beginning with the 2007-08 budget, for the initiative. House Bill 5271 is currently before the Legislature's Public Safety and Security Committee.

In 2000, Rep. Rowe cosponsored legislation that created the task force. However, funding for the program was discontinued in 2003. During its brief existence, the task force quickly proved its effectiveness. In its first 10 months, it removed nearly 400 illegal guns from Connecticut streets from a variety of sources, including gang members, illegal sales via the Internet, and stolen firearms.

A major effort of the task force involved "tracing" all seized firearms in the state, which provided real time information to investigators about the origin of guns seized. Investigators were then able to compare trace information with actual possession and identify those responsible for diverting a gun into the illegal market.

Those who strongly supported the task force included the late Chief State's Attorney John M. Bailey. In a 2001 news release, Mr. Bailey noted that the program was an example how much can be accomplished through the cooperation of Connecticut's law enforcement agencies. Bailey said the task force could serve as a model for the rest of the country.

"The task force was supported by both sportsmen and gun control advocates--with good reason," said Rep. Rowe. "It targeted guns acquired illegally and took them from criminals before they could be used in violent crimes. Unfortunately, we have continued to see crimes using illegal guns since funding was revoked, especially in our cities. This legislation would bring back a much-needed public safety investment to better protect our citizens."