

House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Williams: Increase Funding for Firearms Trafficking Task Force to Take Guns off Streets; Save Lives



More Funding for Unit Means More Officers, Investigations, Fewer Guns in Criminal Hands

Following up on the Connecticut General Assembly's action last week to approve tough new anti-crime measures in response to last summer's home invasion murders in Cheshire, state Representative Sean Williams said today he also will be working to secure more funding for the Statewide Firearms Task Force.

The task force, a unit within the state Department of Public Safety that enforces state gun trafficking and possession laws, is having one of its most successful years ever, thanks to the largest infusion of special state funding it has received since it was created in 2000, said Representative Williams, R-68th District.

"The two-year budget we approved last year provided the Task Force with \$400,000 in special funding for both the 2007-08 and 2008-09 fiscal years. The additional funding enabled the unit to seize 656 illegal firearms and arrest 37 people on gun trafficking charges between January and November of 2007," Representative Williams said. "However, if its funding had been set at \$500,000, as the Public Safety Committee originally proposed early last year, it could have been even more successful."

"During the first two years of its existence in 2000-01 and 2001-02, when it was funded at \$500,000 for each year, the task force seized more than 450 illegal guns and arrested almost 100 individuals on gun-related charges," Representative Williams said. "If we up its funding to \$500,000 for 2008-09, the task force can hire more officers, arrest more illegal gun dealers and take more guns off the streets. At a time when the state legislature already has enacted tough anti-crime laws in response to the home invasion murders in Cheshire, providing more dollars for the task force clearly is the right thing to do."

"It is a more effective way to reduce the violent crime rate in Connecticut than putting more gun control laws on the books because it targets unscrupulous people who sell firearms to criminals rather than making life more difficult for law-abiding citizens who happen to be gun owners," Representative Williams said.

"The Statewide Firearms Trafficking Task Force has been one of the most potent weapons we have at our disposal in the war on crime. Legislation to strengthen it will complement the anti-crime package we passed last week," Representative Williams said.