



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
Malcolm Smith

Senate Launches New Initiative to Cut Illegal Guns

MALCOLM A. SMITH April 28, 2009

| COMMITTEE: **CRIME VICTIMS, CRIME AND CORRECTION**

Operation SNUG to Launch in Eight Communities Across State

(Albany, NY) – In an effort to cut down on illegal guns and gang violence that plagues communities across the State of New York, the State Senate has announced a new initiative, Operation SNUG, that will help local law enforcement and anti-violence community groups engage innovative tactics to steer at-risk New Yorkers away from the culture of gangs and illegal guns.

The Senate secured \$4 million in the FY2009-10 State Budget for front-line anti-gun and gang violence prevention efforts that will benefit the hardest-hit communities across the state. As a result, the cities of Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Albany, New York City and Westchester County will receive new infusions of much-needed funding that will allow for better cooperation between police and prosecutors to keep our children safe and streets secure.

The funding will be evenly distributed throughout eight communities through a competitive grants process that qualified community-based organizations with after-school programs. The guidelines are currently being developed and will be announced shortly.

“Today marks a turning point in community safety,” said Senate Majority Leader Malcolm A. Smith. “Gun violence affects us all- white or black, rich or poor, illegal guns terrorize neighborhoods and tear apart families. For too long, the deadly specter of illegal guns has gone unchecked. In cities across the state, our children are dying at the hands of gun violence, but through our commitment to SNUG, we can put a stop to that deadly trend now and return our streets to their rightful owners, the people of New York.”

Senator Smith added, "30,000 people will likely die this year as a result of gun violence, and many of them will be young people. Operation SNUG is vital to a new age of community safety in the 21st Century . It will provide the support that our local anti-violence programs need and will help us save lives."

Governor David A. Paterson said: "The Senate's initiative recognizes the importance of fighting gun crime through a comprehensive and unified effort. As I have often stressed throughout the past several months, despite the economic downturn, we must not jeopardize public safety and we are committed to doing all that we can to ensure that our communities are safe places to live, work and raise our children. That is why I am pleased that we were able to provide additional funding for Operation IMPACT in this year's budget as well as support Operation SNUG. In addition, we have announced numerous initiatives to combat domestic violence and human trafficking and we are working hard to improve our juvenile justice system. New York is already the safest large State in America and my administration will do everything we can to improve upon our already successful programs."

Through outreach, prevention and intervention techniques, Operation SNUG will pay specific attention to ways in which we can keep young New Yorkers aged 14 to 25 out of gang life and away from illegal guns.

Every urban community in New York has fallen victim to the tale of children and guns. For instance, though Rochester has the third highest population in the state, in 2005 that city had the highest murder rate, with 8 of the 54 victims of gun violence aged 17 or younger.

Just last week in Brooklyn, 18-year-old Chad Wilkins was murdered by gang violence. Wilkins had planned on visiting a college campus the day he was killed

In downtown Albany last October, a Long Island SUNY Albany student was shot in the head, it appears at random. After a passing motorist found him, he was transported to a local hospital where he passed away.

Also last year, 10-year-old Kathina Thomas, a Guyanese immigrant, was killed when she was struck by a stray bullet in the back as she played in front of her First Street home. Investigators said then they suspected the .45-caliber bullet that killed her was fired during a fight between gangs in Albany's West Hill neighborhood.

Operation SNUG was born out of child gun violence in Senator Smith's community last summer when, within a three-day span in May of 2008, the Far Rockaway Peninsula became a violent battleground with five men shot and two teenagers killed.

Following these shootings, an initial "summit" of elected officials was held, led by Senators Smith, Eric Adams, Bill Perkins, Congressman Charles Rangel, Assemblyman Darryl Towns, and Brooklyn District Attorney Charles Hynes. Operation SNUG stands for:

S: *Street intervention and stopping the violence*

- violence interrupters and outreach to high-risk youth
- support for and coordination with police and law enforcement
- clearly communicating community values against shootings and violence
- engaging schools and educators as part of the solution

N: *National, state and local funding support*

- funding for all alternatives
- legislation to help implement solutions
- public and private support for intervention and prevention as part of the response

U: *Use of celebrities and centers*

- development of a comprehensive public relations effort, including celebrity PSAs and materials
- reopening and revitalization of existing community centers, creation of new bunkers and community "safe haven" storefronts for youth

G: *Gangs, guns, gainful employment*

- real-world gang awareness and prevention initiatives

- new efforts to stop the spread of illegal guns, including new law enforcement efforts targeting “middlemen” and gun-running
- connections to employment and economic alternatives

This initiative developed is modeled after the highly successful Cease Fire Gun Violence Prevention Model currently used in Chicago. That program directs very targeted outreach and prevention efforts to “high risk” communities, and works through existing and experienced community-based organizations. Through coordinated efforts between police, counselors, and community outreach specialists, this model has helped cut violence in Chicago, and has reduced the risk of “retaliation” murders, and helped students remain in schools and find jobs as they detach from gang life. Cease Fire will serve as a voluntary advisory to Operation SNUG-qualified programs.

“The proliferation of illegal guns in our streets has made crime deadlier than ever,” said Senator William T. Stachowski (D-C, Lake View). “That is why disarming criminals has been and must continue to be a top priority in our criminal justice system. We have a responsibility to the victims of crime and violence. And we must continue to support law enforcement in every possible way. Operation SNUG will greatly help in this effort.”

“Operation SNUG is a VIP, a violence intervention program. A vital program that will silence the violence, and save lives. I am proud to join my fellow colleagues in this movement to make our communities and our families safe,” said Senator Bill Perkins (D- Harlem).

“Operation SNUG is a response to tragic shooting deaths like we have suffered here in Albany--and it's designed to prevent other tragedies before they happen. I am proud that the Senate has taken the lead in developing and funding a crime and gun violence prevention model that will save lives in our communities,” said Senator Neil Breslin (D-Albany County).

“This initiative takes a smart approach to reducing gang violence and removing illegal guns and drugs from our streets,” said Senator Eric T. Schneiderman (D-Manhattan/Bronx).

“Modeled on effective initiatives across the country, this evidence-based program equips both law enforcement officers and community groups with the tools they need to steer at-risk individuals away from violence. New Yorkers deserve nothing less than the most innovative efforts to rid our communities of crime.”

“Since the beginning of the year in Yonkers alone, there have over twenty incidents of gun violence,” stated Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins (D – Westchester County). “Gun and gang violence is on the rise and aggressively addressing this issue through prevention efforts is in everyone’s best interest. I am pleased to support and advocate for this Senate initiative to help local law enforcement and anti-violence groups prevent more violence and keep our children and families safe.”

"Gang violence and illegal gun use has been a problem in Buffalo and across the state for too long. Operation SNUG will hopefully cut down on excessive gang violence that many communities face," stated Senator Antoine Thompson (D- parts of Erie and Niagara Counties).

“The purpose of SNUG is to curtail the amount of gun violence associated with gangs in many communities, particularly urban communities throughout our state. Community members that have a vested interest in ensuring the longevity and stability of their community must be in collaboration with law enforcement, affirmatively establish community standards and expectations, and begin a dialogue with gang members in an open forum, with the assistance of law enforcement,” said Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson (D-WFP-Bronx/Westchester). “For too long, the false colloquialism of ‘Stop Snitching’ has been a mantra in many of our urban communities. It is critical for community members to feel safe enough to voice their concerns and have those concerns addressed without fear of retaliation. The dialogue between law enforcement and the community will also lead to an increased level of trust between community members and law enforcement through the efforts of Operation SNUG. As our young people say, ‘It is time to Bury Da Beef’”

“Gun violence is a cancer: left untreated, it will spread throughout our neighborhoods. It is essential to provide adequate support to areas of our state hardest hit by illegal firearms and gang violence. I am proud to support this initiative to help local law enforcement and anti-violence community groups utilize all resources at their disposal to dissuade those who might use violence from any tragic decisions and associations,” said Senator Eric Adams (D-Brooklyn).

“The \$4 million in the state budget that will be utilized in this effort to deter gun violence will benefit regions most affected by the ravages of that plague, including my home area of New York City,” Adams said. “The cooperation that results from this initiative will help law enforcement and prosecutors keep our streets safe for everyone.”

“We must use the full power of our words, deeds, and funds to protect our citizens from the disastrous effects of gun violence. The bullet from a weapon pierces more than the flesh of the body. It resonates through our state’s communities and neighborhoods as well,” said Adams. “The voices of our constituents call for legislators to help prevent gun violence. Today, we have again responded.”

***Satellite coverage of the event will be available at 2:30 P.M. COORDINATES:

Satellite	Horizon 2 (Ku Analog)
Location	74 degrees west longitude
Transponder	12
Receive frequency	12160 MHz
Audio	6.2/6.8 MHz (discrete wide)
Polarity	Horizontal