



2021 Annual Report

Accomplishments and Initiatives

U.S. Attorney's Office
Middle District of Pennsylvania

John C. Gurganus
United States Attorney



Message from U.S. Attorney John C. Gurganus



I'm pleased to present the 2021 Annual Report of the United States Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Pennsylvania.

As public servants, we are accountable to the citizens we serve and our efforts at transparency include publicizing our work and accomplishments. The U.S. Attorney's Office, along with our partner agencies, had many successes in 2021. This Annual Report is a summary of those accomplishments and highlights the achievements in each major program of our office which seek to improve the safety and quality of life for the people of our district.

Over the past year, we successfully prosecuted numerous individuals engaged in drug trafficking, violent crimes, public corruption, fraud, human trafficking, child exploitation, civil rights violations, and various other federal crimes. Our office also successfully represented the interests of the federal government in various civil matters including representing numerous government agencies and officials in defensive litigation and obtaining significant monetary recoveries in affirmative civil litigation. We also supported various outreach programs designed to prevent violence and recidivism, and build community relations.

The accomplishments summarized in this report are due to the hard work of our 92 dedicated professionals, including the steady leadership of former United States Attorney Bruce D. Brandler.

It's an honor to work with the members of this office and with our federal, state, and local law enforcement partners to seek justice and make the Middle District of Pennsylvania safer.

I trust that the report will give you a fuller understanding of our mission. We invite you to read more and share your suggestions with us at <https://www.justice.gov/usao-mdpa>. Follow us on Twitter @MDPAnews.

John C. Gurganus
United States Attorney

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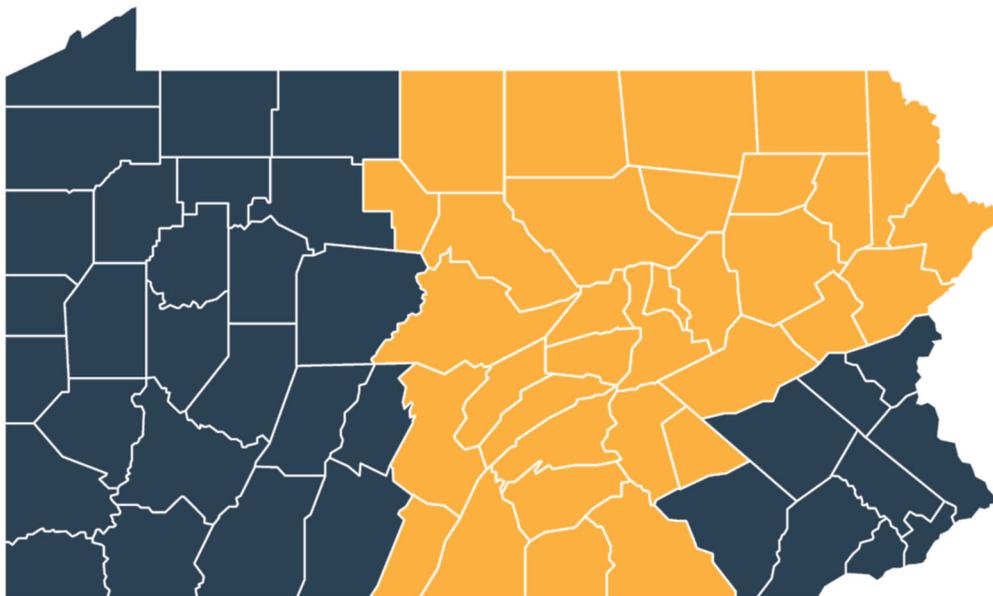
Our Mission & Geographical Area of Responsibility

The United States Attorney's Office represents the United States in the Middle District of Pennsylvania in the prosecution of criminal cases brought by the federal government, civil cases in which the United States is a party, and collection of debts owed to the federal government.

The Middle District of Pennsylvania extends over 21,907 square miles and contains 33 counties with over 3 million residents. The U.S. Attorney's Office is comprised of four offices located in Scranton, Harrisburg, Williamsport, and Wilkes-Barre.

The U.S. Attorney's Office represents the United States in legal proceedings for 14 federal institutions and enclaves within the Middle District of Pennsylvania. Federal institutions and enclaves within the district include: Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area; Steamtown National Recreation Center; Tobyhanna Army Depot; Wilkes-Barre Veterans Administration Medical Center; Tioga-Hammond Lakes Dams; U.S. Army War College and Carlisle Barracks; the Navy Inventory Control Point, in Mechanicsburg; the Defense Distribution Depot, Susquehanna (DDSP); Fort Indiantown Gap; Lebanon Veterans Administration Medical Center; Raystown National Recreation Area; Letterkenny Army Depot; and Gettysburg National Military Park.

A significant component of the office's civil workload arises from the presence in the district of four major federal correctional complexes: Allenwood, Canaan, Lewisburg, and Schuylkill. With a population of approximately 6,000 inmates, the facilities constitute one of the largest concentrations of federal inmate populations in the country. In addition, over two hundred immigration and customs enforcement detainees are presently housed in county facilities in our district.



U.S. Attorney's Office
Middle District of Pennsylvania

(717) 221-4482 Harrisburg
(570) 348-2800 Scranton
(570) 326-1935 Williamsport

U.S. Attorney's Office, Middle District of Pennsylvania – At a Glance

- The District is comprised of four offices: Harrisburg, Scranton, Williamsport and Wilkes-Barre (unstaffed)
 - 82 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions and 10 contractors
 - 1 United States Attorney
 - 39 Assistant United States Attorneys
 - 52 Support Staff

Classified as a Medium Size Office by the Department of Justice

Federal Law Enforcement Agencies

The Middle District works closely with many Federal Investigative Agencies:

- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)
- Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Homeland Security Investigations (HSI)
- Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
- U.S. Marshals Service
- U.S. Postal Inspection Service
- U.S. Secret Service
- Health and Human Services
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Fish and Wildlife Services
- U.S. Department of Labor
- U.S. Department of Transportation

Criminal Division

Criminal Assistant United States Attorneys

First Assistant U.S. Attorney:
Bruce D. Brandler

Chief:
Bruce D. Brandler

Deputy Chiefs:
Francis Sempa
Daryl Bloom

Appeals Chief:
Stephen Cerutti

Harrisburg:
John Baer
William Behe
Daryl Bloom
Michael Consiglio
Samuel Dalke
Scott Ford
Christian Haugsby
Jamie Keating
Carlo Marchioli
Paul Miovas
Joanne Sanderson
Ravi Sharma

Scranton:
James Buchanan
Sean Camoni
Phillip Caraballo
Todd Hinkley
Robert O'Hara
Michelle Olshefski
Jenny Roberts
Francis Sempa
Jeffrey St John

Williamsport:
Geoffrey MacArthur
Alisan Martin
George Rocktashel

The mission of the Criminal Division is to prosecute federal criminal cases. Within the Criminal Division are several specialized areas of concentration including:

- Terrorism and National Security
- Public Corruption
- Economic Crimes
- Government Program Fraud/Health Care Fraud
- Violent Crimes and Firearms Offenses
- Drug Trafficking
- Tax Fraud
- Environmental Crimes
- Computer Crimes
- Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking
- Immigration
- Civil Rights
- Appeals

Assistant United States Attorneys indicted approximately 335 cases involving 464 defendants, and handled 28 criminal trials in 2021, which is an increase from 9 criminal trials in 2020.

A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.



COVID-19. The U.S. Attorney's Office has prosecuted numerous fraud schemes targeting COVID-19 relief funds:

- *U.S. v. Jonathan Olivetti.* A 41-year-old Philadelphia attorney was charged on December 13, 2021, with wire fraud in connection with a scheme to obtain COVID-19 pandemic relief money he was not entitled to receive. Olivetti applied for two Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans and two Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) on behalf of Olivetti Law, LLC. With respect to the PPP loans, Olivetti made materially false representations by inflating the payroll of Olivetti Law, LLC in the on-line applications and received \$41,600 based upon those false representations. Olivetti made application for two Economic Injury Disaster Loans ("EIDL") which were to provide low-interest financing to small businesses experiencing substantial financial disruption resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Olivetti's EIDL loan applications each sought approximately \$62,500 on behalf of Olivetti Law, LLC. The applications contained inflated gross receipts of Olivetti Law and ultimately were not approved by the SBA. He is awaiting sentencing.
- *U.S. v. Luis Mercado.* A 44-year-old Lebanon man pleaded guilty to wire fraud for fraudulently claiming pandemic unemployment assistance funds on November 30, 2021. Mercado claimed Pandemic Unemployment Assistance despite being employed with the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a poultry inspector. Mercado falsely claimed that he was unemployed due to the pandemic and he received benefits based on this false claim. Mercado reaffirmed his unemployment status on a weekly basis and ultimately received \$37,555 in fraudulently obtained unemployment benefits. He is awaiting sentencing.
- *U.S. v. Julian J. Levons.* A 64-year-old Henryville man was charged on November 2, 2021, with perpetrating a wire fraud and money laundering scheme to obtain approximately \$450,000 in COVID-19 relief guaranteed by the Small Business Administration through the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program. Levons allegedly obtained two EIDL loans for a combined approximate \$300,000, and attempted unsuccessfully to obtain a third EIDL loan for approximately \$150,000. Levons allegedly falsified revenue and expense figures for two supposed small businesses that he and his wife owned. The money was used for Levons' personal expenses and pre-existing debt. He is awaiting trial.
- *U.S. v. Hayes D. Horner, Jr.* A 67-year-old Berwick man was charged on August 31, 2021, with perpetrating a wire fraud scheme to obtain and attempt to obtain over \$400,000 in COVID-19 relief guaranteed by the Small Business Administration through the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program. Horner aided his coconspirators in obtaining and attempting to obtain over \$400,000 in EIDL funds by opening two bank accounts that received EIDL funds obtained pursuant to fraudulent loan applications made in the names of other, unknowing individuals. Horner allegedly withdrew over \$58,000 in fraudulently obtained EIDL funds, and attempted unsuccessfully to wire approximately \$165,000 in EIDL funds to other accounts under his coconspirators' control.
- *U.S. v. Keith McConnell.* A 43-year-old Carlisle man was charged on June 4, 2021, with perpetrating a wire fraud and money laundering scheme that sought \$467,200.00 in COVID-19 relief funds guaranteed by the U.S. Small Business Administration through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). McConnell allegedly submitted fraudulent PPP loan applications and forged documents on behalf of his Carlisle-area trucking company, KB Transportation LLC. KB Transportation LLC was not in business, had no employees, and had no payroll expenses. McConnell falsely certified that KB Transportation LLC employed 26 employees and had monthly payroll expenses totaling \$124,800. As a result of the fraud, McConnell received \$312,000.00 in PPP loan proceeds. McConnell and his co-conspirators spent the PPP funds on unauthorized expenditures. McConnell used KB Transportation LLC to apply for a second PPP loan in the amount of \$155,200.00, and again submitted false and fraudulent loan applications and documents. The second PPP loan was never disbursed. He pleaded guilty and is awaiting sentencing.



Public Corruption. Combating public corruption in federal, state, and local government remains a priority for the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Middle District of Pennsylvania. Corruption in federal, state, and local government directly damages our citizens. The people of the district deserve honest government at every level.

- *U.S. v. Christopher Collare.* A former veteran detective for the Carlisle Police Department and FBI Task Force member, was convicted on July 16, 2021, for bribery, distribution of heroin, and making false statements. Collare used his official position to obtain sex from two women in exchange for agreeing to take actions in prosecutions. In 2015, Collare agreed to accept sex or money in exchange for not appearing at an evidentiary hearing so that a criminal charge would be dismissed. In 2018, Collare agreed to accept sexual favors in exchange for taking steps to help reduce a potential sentence. He also lied on a federal form he completed during the process of becoming an FBI Task Force Officer, and he made multiple false statements in an interview with federal agents in May 2018. Collare is awaiting sentencing.
- *U.S. v. Brian Buglio.* The Chief of Police for the West Hazleton Police Department pleaded guilty on June 22, 2021, to a deprivation of civil rights, after he threatened a private citizen with felony criminal charges, in retaliation for social media posts created by the private citizen that were critical of Buglio and of the West Hazleton Police Department. Buglio was sentenced on October 5, 2021 to two months of imprisonment and a one-year term of supervised release that includes four months of home confinement.
- *U.S. v. Thomas McDonald.* The former Scranton Police Officer pleaded guilty on June 14, 2021, to a federal bribery violation. McDonald, while working as a police officer for the Scranton Police Department

in April 2018, corruptly solicited sex and sexual favors from several victims intending to be influenced in official actions of the Scranton Police Department and the City of Scranton. McDonald was terminated from his position as a Scranton Police Officer in June 2020. McDonald was sentenced to six years of imprisonment.

- *U.S. v. Shelley A. Dreyer-Aurila.* The former Executive Director of the Perry County Family Center was sentenced on April 28, 2021, to 15 months’ imprisonment for embezzlement of funds involving federal programs. Between 2010 and 2017, Dreyer-Aurila embezzled more than \$150,000 that was under the care and control of the Center. During that period, the Center annually received more than \$10,000 in federal grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, through the Pennsylvania Department of Health and Human Services, to fund programs like its Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program and its Child Abuse Prevention program. Dreyer-Aurila was also ordered to pay \$127,764.56 in restitution. She had previously repaid \$22,520.



Clean Air Act. The Clean Air Act (CAA) is the comprehensive federal law that regulates air emissions from stationary and mobile sources. This law allows the U.S. Attorney’s Office to help protect public health and the public welfare from hazardous air pollutants.

- *U.S. v. Rockwater Northeast LLC.* A Pennsylvania-based company that provides water management services to companies in the oil and gas industry, was sentenced on April 20, 2021, to pay \$2 million in fines and \$12,400 in special assessments for violating the Clean Air Act, for tampering with the emissions systems on 31 heavy-duty diesel trucks owned by the company, and installing “defeat devices” that disabled emissions diagnostic systems on the trucks. Rockwater Northeast LLC also caused the trucks to pass annual vehicle safety inspections by the Department of Transportation (DOT), despite the modified emissions systems. Separately, Select Energy Services,

Inc., a Texas-based company and the successor in interest to Rockwater Energy Solutions, Inc., parent company of Rockwater Northeast LLC, entered a three-year non-prosecution agreement with the United States. The agreement resolves Clean Air Act violations for modified emissions systems on 29 additional heavy-duty diesel trucks that were owned by Rockwater Energy Solutions, Inc. Rockwater Northeast LLC agreed to pay a monetary penalty of \$2 million, and Select Energy Services, Inc. agreed to pay a monetary penalty of \$2.3 million. Six individuals have been prosecuted in connection to this investigation.

Clean Water Act. The Clean Water Act is the primary federal law in the United States governing water pollution. Its objective is to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters.

- *U.S. v. Bruce Evans Sr. and Bruce Evans, Jr.* Greenfield Township Sewer Authority (GTSA) employees were convicted by a jury on December 17, 2021, of Clean Water Act violations that occurred at the Greenfield Township wastewater treatment plant. Defendants knowingly failed to operate and maintain the municipality's wastewater treatment plant in accordance with regulations and limitations specified in a permit issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The permit required that the permittee at all times maintain in good working order, and properly operate and maintain all facilities and systems, which were installed and used by the permittee to achieve compliance with the terms and conditions of the permits. As a result of the defendants' failures, pollutants were discharged in violation of the permit on multiple occasions. The investigation uncovered repeated warnings about deficient facility inspections, permit non-compliance, community complaints about foul odors and visible raw sewage routinely overflowing from the Route 106 pump station, and false statements reported to the PADEP by both Evans Sr. and Evans, Jr. It was also learned that information concerning deficient plant operations and clean water act violations was routinely conveyed

directly to Evans, Sr. as the Greenfield Township Sewer Authority's (GTSA) responsible corporate officer from the PADEP, but Evans, Sr. concealed that information from his fellow GTSA board members over a period of many years.



Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

OSHA's mission is to assure safe and healthy working conditions for working men and women by setting and enforcing standards and by providing training, outreach, education and assistance.

- *U.S. v. Dana Container, Inc.* (Dana) A company headquartered in Avenel, NJ, was sentenced on June 7, 2021, to pay a fine of \$325,000 and to serve a two-year term of probation for willfully committing an OSHA violation that resulted in an employee's death. Dana contracted with another firm to clean crude oil residue from approximately 100 rail cars that were located at a rail yard in Pittston, PA. A Dana employee entered one of the rail cars at the Pittston site in order to scrape crude oil from the walls of the car. About 30 minutes later, the employee collapsed inside the car. He later died on scene, with the cause of death ruled asphyxiation. The atmosphere inside the car was determined to be oxygen-deficient and although Dana was aware of applicable OSHA regulations, the employee had not been outfitted with the proper OSHA-certified respirator.



Project Safe Childhood (PSC) Prosecutions.

Project Safe Childhood is a nationwide initiative to combat the epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District embraces its commitment to the protection of our children. Advances in technology over the past two decades have brought about new obstacles for parents, educators, and law enforcement. Our district is committed to aggressively targeting those who would harm children. The Office aims to investigate and prosecute those criminals vigorously, and protect and assist victimized children.

- *U.S. v. Dyllan Rose.* A 27-year-old Milan, PA, man was sentenced on June 3, 2021, to 348 months' imprisonment for sexually abusing a 5-year-old child and sending images of the abuse over the internet.
- *U.S. v. Scott Lane.* A 37-year-old New York, NY former executive director for a university's donor relations and fundraising programs was sentenced on April 2, 2021, to 35 years' imprisonment for multiple child exploitation crimes, including his participation in the sexual abuse of a 6-year-old. Scott Lane and others were on a video-conferencing platform when a man in Pennsylvania, co-conspirator William Augusta, began sexually abusing a 6-year-old boy. Lane and others encouraged Augusta to sexually abuse the boy for everyone to watch live. An undercover Toronto Police detective constable observed the sexual abuse via the video-conferencing platform, and the following day, law enforcement rescued the child and arrested Augusta, who had been sexually abusing the child for approximately two years. A subsequent search of Lane's electronic devices revealed that Lane possessed multiple videos of prepubescent child pornography. Fifteen individuals were charged with multiple child exploitation offenses, many of which related to 14 co-conspirators' involvement in using the video-conferencing website to produce, advertise, distribute, and/or receive child pornography. Twelve of the defendants pleaded guilty prior to trial, and two went to trial. The defendants were sentenced to between six and a half years and 60 years.
- *U.S. v. Michael Grenninger.* A 38-year-old Lock Haven, PA, man was sentenced on April 6, 2021, to 30 years' imprisonment for sexually abusing an eight-year-old child and photographing the abuse. Grenninger also produced videos of minors ranging from age eight through their early teens engaged in sexually explicit conduct. Additionally, Grenninger attempted to arrange meetings with 11-year-old girls in Virginia and New York City for sex, and sent a pornographic image of himself over the internet.
- *U.S. v. Daniel Palmitessa.* A 35-year-old Stroudsburg, PA, man was sentenced on March 25, 2021, to 240 months' imprisonment for producing images of child pornography and using the internet and a cellular phone to attempt to persuade a minor to engage in sexual activity.



Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN). Project Safe Neighborhoods Program is the centerpiece of the Department of Justice's violent crime reduction efforts. PSN is an evidence-based program proven to be effective at reducing violent crime. Through PSN, a broad spectrum of stakeholders work together to identify the most pressing violent crime problems in the community and develop comprehensive solutions to address them. As part of this strategy, PSN focuses enforcement efforts on the most violent offenders and partners with locally based prevention and reentry programs for lasting reductions in crime. The United States Attorney's Office for the Middle District of PA has in place a multi-faceted program to reduce violent crime within the district. Gun violence, driven mostly by drug trafficking or by neighborhood rivalries and gangs, is identified as the main problem in many of the larger, more populated counties within the district. The U.S. Attorney's Office endeavors to disrupt violent crime by pursuing appropriate prison sentences and seeking forfeitures of crime-derived assets to deter dangerous individuals from continuing to harm our communities. Through enforcement actions, prosecutions, and community partnerships, the U.S. Attorney's Office works to lower violent crime and make neighborhoods safer.

PSN Target Areas:
Harrisburg, York, Wilkes-Barre, and Williamsport.



Enforcement Actions –Violent Crime Initiative. The MDPA adopted a renewed strategy for reducing and preventing violent crime in the Middle District focusing on the Harrisburg, York, Wilkes-Barre, and Williamsport areas. Federal, state, and local law enforcement officers joined forces to coordinate their activities in high-crime areas and vigorously enforce the laws, which punish gun offenses, gang activity, drug-related crimes, and other acts of violence. Since 2014, federal, state, and local officials have partnered and operated a program based in Harrisburg focusing on firearms offenses committed by recidivists or individuals using firearms in connection with drug offenses, or other violent crimes. Due to the success of that program, it was expanded to include firearms offenses in York, Williamsport, and Wilkes-Barre. Violent crime damages and destabilizes our neighborhoods, challenging our citizens as they strive to raise their families and be productive members of society. By coordinating efforts with our state and local law enforcement partners, we can ensure that limited law enforcement resources are being brought to bear in the most effective way possible to protect the people we serve.

Prosecution Activity. The U.S. Attorney’s Office remains active in the fight against violent crime through various enforcement actions, prosecutions, and sentencings, as demonstrated by the examples below:

- *U.S. v. David Rinehardt.* A 21-year-old North Carolina man was sentenced on December 21, 2021, to 111 months’ imprisonment for five armed robberies of stores and bars in Uptown Harrisburg and for robbing a Rite Aid pharmacy at gun point. His coconspirators have pleaded guilty and are awaiting sentencing.
- *U.S. v. Joshair Jones.* A 19-year-old Williamsport man was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment on December 7, 2021, for his involvement in a shooting and possession of a rifle with an obliterated serial number. At the sentencing hear-

ing, the court listened to recorded phone calls in which Jones acknowledged his role in the shooting and discussed a potential retaliatory shooting that individuals threatened would occur in a residential neighborhood in Williamsport. The United States also played a phone call in which Jones directed another individual to bring him a semi-automatic rifle on August 16, 2020. That rifle was recovered by law enforcement on August 19, 2020.

- *U.S. v. Michael Muse.* A 43-year-old New York man was charged on October 19, 2021, for armed bank robbery of the ESSA Bank in Middle Smithfield Township, Monroe County. He is awaiting trial.
- *U.S. v. Jimmy Carter.* A 56-year-old Erie man was sentenced on March 5, 2021, to 18 years’ imprisonment for discharging a firearm during a crime of violence. Carter, along with two others, robbed a Unimart convenience store in Ferguson Township. During the course of this robbery, Carter fired a handgun at the proprietor of the store.
- *U.S. v. Gerard Gaffney.* A 19-year-old Maryland man was sentenced on April 26, 2021, to 84 months’ imprisonment for his role as the driver in a 2019 armed robbery of a Rite Aid pharmacy in Dauphin County. Gaffney and his codefendants drove to the Rite Aid with plans to rob it. With Gaffney waiting outside in the getaway car, three masked robbers entered the pharmacy and pointed weapons at the heads of staff, forcing them to surrender drugs from the pharmacy. His coconspirator was sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment.
- *U.S. v. Aaron Johnson.* A 30-year-old Harrisburg man was sentenced on February 16, 2021, to 11 years’ imprisonment for committing four armed bank robberies in Cumberland County between February and September 2019. Johnson was ordered to pay over \$27,500 in restitution to the banks.

Heroin and Opioid Policy The MDPA continues a policy to prosecute heroin and opioid cases and request substantial sentences for individuals who traffic in these deadly drugs. Some cases that emphasize those efforts include:

- *U.S. v. Erwin Montes Deoca, et al.* On September 22, 2021, former Acting U.S. Attorney Bruce D. Brandler held a press conference announcing that three Wilkes-Barre men who were connected to the Mexican drug cartel known as “Montes Deoca” were charged with distributing thousands of fentanyl pills and over 10 kilograms of cocaine. Search warrants were executed at the three residences and agents seized fentanyl and cocaine worth over \$1 million, more than \$100,000 in cash, and two handguns. They are awaiting trial.



- *U.S. v. Donza Brown, et al.* A 58-year-old Harrisburg man was sentenced to 37 months’ imprisonment on October 25, 2021, for selling crack cocaine and maintaining a drug involved premises that was the regular location of drug trafficking, shootings, and murders. Members of the conspiracy were affiliated with a music group named “Never Forget Loyalty” or “NFL.” As announced at a press conference, as a part of their drug trafficking operation, the “NFL” posted videos on YouTube which were filmed in various Harrisburg locales. In the videos, the group brandished various weapons, flashed cash, and displayed drugs. In a yearlong investigation, ATF and local law enforcement conducted a series of searches. During these searches police recovered a machine gun, assault rifles, and various weapons with extended magazines. Eight NFL members were charged. One codefendant was sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment, three have pleaded guilty and three are awaiting trial.



- *U.S. v. Tysheen Gott, et al.* A 45-year-old Wilkes-Barre man was convicted of drug trafficking and possessing 400 grams of fentanyl, heroin, crack, cocaine, and tramadol in Luzerne County. Gott and his 10 codefendants were indicted after a year-long investigation, with operating a drug trafficking conspiracy. All other coconspirators have pleaded guilty and are awaiting sentencing.

Drug traffickers who are responsible for overdose deaths and non-fatal overdoses resulting in serious bodily harm caused by their product are aggressively prosecuted as demonstrated below:

- *U.S. v. Lamar Johnson.* A 34-year-old York man was sentenced on December 22, 2021, to 20 years’ imprisonment for trafficking kilos of cocaine and heroin laced with fentanyl. The investigation began with an overdose death in the City of York on December 2, 2017. Investigators identified the victim’s drug source as Johnson. They further determined that Luis Minier and Brandon Orr were bringing kilogram quantities of heroin and cocaine into York on a weekly basis from September 2017 until December 2017. Johnsons’ three coconspirators received sentences ranging from probation to over 18 years’ imprisonment.
- *U.S. v. James R. Bell.* A 30-year-old Newark, NJ man was sentenced on June 21, 2021, to 20 years’ imprisonment for conspiring to distribute fentanyl and heroin within the Middle District of Pennsylvania, which resulted in the death of a 22-year old Monroe County man in April 2018.
- *U.S. v. Raymond Howard.* A 46-year-old Williamsport man was sentenced on April 30, 2021, to 25 years’ imprisonment for conspiring to distribute heroin and a mixture of heroin and carfentanil. During a three-day period in June 2017, there was a rash of drug overdoses in Williamsport. At the time, UPMC Susquehanna in Williamsport and Wellsboro reported treating 51 such cases within a 48-hour period. Howard was determined to be the source of the carfentanil-laced heroin that led to the overdoses. In total, three coconspirators were charged with delivering the mixture of heroin and carfentanil that resulted in serious bodily injury to eight individuals. The three co-conspirators received sentences ranging from 192 to 210 months’ imprisonment.



The following are opioid cases relating to medical professionals, traffickers, and others who committed serious drug crimes in the District:

Medical Professionals

- *U.S. v. Kurt Moran.* A 69-year-old Scranton doctor pleaded guilty on December 6, 2021, for being paid approximately \$140,000 to prescribe Subsys (sublingual fentanyl) to his patients for pain not associated with cancer. Moran admitted he unlawfully distributed Subsys to patients, maintained a drug-involved premises, and committed health care fraud. He further admitted that he intentionally distributed oxycodone and fentanyl not for legitimate medical purposes, which resulted in the death of a person. Moran is awaiting sentencing.
- *U.S. v. Raymond Kraynak.* A 64-year-old Mt. Carmel doctor pleaded guilty on September 23, 2021, during his trial to 12 counts of unlawful distribution and dispensing of 9.5 million units of oxycodone, hydrocodone, oxycontin and fentanyl to patients between January 2014 and July 31, 2017 outside the usual course of professional practice and not for legitimate medical purpose. Kraynak also admitted that the Schedule II narcotic opioid drugs that he prescribed resulted in the deaths of five of his patients. Kraynak is awaiting sentencing.
- *U.S. v. Dana Aldinger.* A 55-year-old York County nurse was charged on December 10, 2021, with theft in connection with health care. On August 10, 2019, Aldinger stole and converted for personal use Oxycodone pills prescribed for a Medicare hospice patient residing at a personal care home where she was employed. Aldinger pleaded guilty and is awaiting sentencing.

Methamphetamines

- *U.S. v. David Jusino Ramirez.* A 65-year-old NJ man was convicted by a jury on October 29, 2021, of drug trafficking in connection with the largest seizure of

methamphetamine in the history of DEA's Philadelphia Division. Law enforcement agents seized 120 kilograms of methamphetamine, and three kilograms of fentanyl, and \$28,000 in cash (\$371,000 in cash was seized on a previous occasion during the investigation) during a drug transaction near Hazleton, PA, involving Ramirez and his codefendants. The street value of the drugs seized was in excess of \$2.2 million. His codefendants pleaded guilty to felony drug trafficking and are awaiting sentencing.



- *U.S. v. Michael Laury.* A 42-year-old Wilkes-Barre man was sentenced on July 30, 2021, to 15 years' imprisonment for assisting two drug dealers in running a methamphetamine laboratory in the basement of his residence. The FBI and PA State Police shut down the laboratory when executing a search warrant.
- *U.S. v. Shaquane Scott.* A 31-year-old Frackville man was sentenced on June 23, 2021, to six years' imprisonment for distributing between 50 and 150 grams of highly-pure crystal methamphetamine in the Schuylkill County area over a several-week period in February and March 2019.

Cocaine

- *U.S. v. William Barton.* A 40-year-old York County man was sentenced on October 26, 2021, to 180 months' imprisonment following a year-long investigation by ATF which focused on drug activity at a bar in York City. Using an undercover federal agent, federal law enforcement purchased more than 500 grams of crack cocaine from Barton and his co-conspirators in 2019. His coconspirators are awaiting sentencing.
- *U.S. v. Joe Willie Williams.* A 42-year-old Harrisburg man was sentenced on October 29, 2021, to 156 months' imprisonment for trafficking 500 grams and more of cocaine hydrochloride and 28 grams and more of cocaine base in the Harrisburg area. During a vehicle stop, the police seized 27 grams of cocaine. A search of his residence yielded additional cocaine and drug paraphernalia and a large quantity of cash.



Firearms. Reducing gun violence and enforcing federal firearms laws have always been among the office's highest priorities. Examples of this type of prosecution follow:

- *U.S. v. Lance Green.* A 43-year-old Bronx, New York man was sentenced on November 19, 2021, to 235 months' imprisonment for possession of a firearm by a convicted felon and possession of a firearm with an obliterated serial number. On March 18, 2021, following a four-day trial, a jury convicted Green of possessing and displaying a firearm that had an obliterated serial number during a neighbor dispute in Kingston, Pennsylvania, on October 5, 2017. Green had previously been convicted of multiple felony offenses and was on state parole at the time of the offense.
- *U.S. v. Diego E. Aleman-Lozano.* A 22-year-old Washington D.C. man was indicted by a federal grand jury on October 27, 2021, with possession of a firearm and ammunition by a prohibited person. The indictment alleged that Aleman-Lozano was in possession of a 9mm Self Made Firearm (SMF), Polymer80 Semi-Automatic Pistol, and various rounds of ammunition as a prohibited person. Aleman-Lozano is awaiting trial.
- *U.S. v. David DaSilva.* A 33-year-old Dallas man was indicted on September 14, 2021, by a federal grand jury for being an illegal alien in possession of firearms and ammunition. The indictment alleges that from July 2020 through September 1, 2021, in Pike County, DaSilva possessed two .22 caliber rifles and several rounds of ammunition while knowing he was illegally and unlawfully in the United States. DaSilva is awaiting trial.
- *U.S. v. Colton Oppel.* A 30-year-old Berwick man was indicted by a federal grand jury on September 14, 2021 for possessing 25 firearms including handguns, rifles and shotguns, including a

firearm with an obliterated serial number and a sawed-off shotgun, as a person who is prohibited from possessing firearms based on prior convictions. Oppel is awaiting trial.

- *U.S. v. Akee Ly.* A 32-year-old Lemoyne man was sentenced on August 25, 2021, to 262 months' imprisonment for possession of firearms during a drug trafficking crime. Ly had previously been convicted of a felony and was prohibited from possessing firearms and used a third party to purchase firearms on his behalf. During a search warrant of Ly's home in Lemoyne, officers found a SCCY Industries pistol, a Taurus pistol, a Taurus revolver, a Springfield Armory pistol, firearm magazines, assorted ammunition, 75 grams of cocaine, \$12,265, three bottles of promethazine, multiple Xanax bars, marijuana, eight Ecstasy pills, 200 THC vape bottles, and narcotics packaging material.
- *U.S. v. Walter Valdivia, Jr.* A 38-year-old Matamoros man was sentenced on June 21, 2021, to 33 months' imprisonment for possession of a shotgun with a barrel length of less than 18 inches. Valdivia was encountered by law enforcement officers when they served a search warrant in Matamoros on April 29, 2020, in an unrelated investigation. Valdivia was sitting on a couch in the living room of the residence and reached behind the couch. Agents located a sawed-off shotgun and a bag that contained shotgun shells behind the couch.
- *U.S. v. Richard Earl Davis.* A 28-year-old Harrisburg man was sentenced on April 1, 2021, to 144 months' imprisonment for aiding and abetting straw purchase of firearms, witness tampering, and discharge of a firearm in furtherance of drug trafficking. Davis was involved in a conspiracy in which an individual would purchase firearms that were ultimately sold to persons prohibited from possessing them, to include felons and drug dealers. After his arrest, Davis contacted a witness and told her how to testify at his upcoming bail hearing.



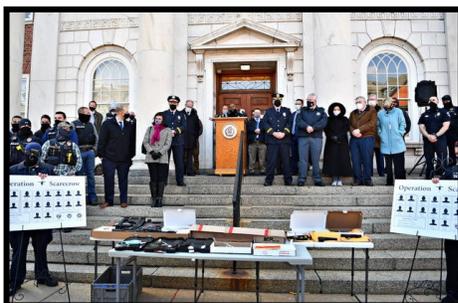


Operation Scarecrow. Is a joint initiative that targets individuals who illegally purchase and possess firearms. Operation Scarecrow focuses on individuals who are prohibited from possessing firearms due to a prior felony conviction who use third parties (“straw parties”) to purchase firearms on their behalf. Under federal and state law, such transactions are illegal and both the prohibited person and the straw party are subject to criminal prosecution for engaging in this type of behavior.

Operation Scarecrow has thus far conducted operations in York and Dauphin Counties and was spearheaded by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) along with York City Police and the Harrisburg Police Bureau. Both investigations are continuing, and other individuals are expected to be charged.

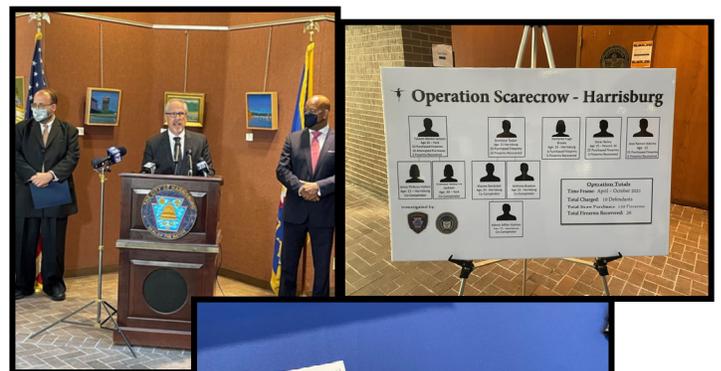
The Operation in York County began in January 2021, and resulted in 26 firearms being recovered. To date, seven individuals have been federally indicted with making false statements during the purchase of a firearm:

- Donte Christian, of Baltimore, MD, indicted on February 3, 2021;
- Jahzaire Gilliam, of York, indicted March 24, 2021;
- Hannah Lapham, of York, indicted March 24, 2021;
- Nijee Baskins, of York, indicted on March 31, 2021;
- Olivia Marie Johnson, of York, indicted on July 28, 2021;
- Alicia Lauren Butler-Sanchez, of Philadelphia, indicted on July 28, 2021; and
- Deontrae Marquis Jackson, of Philadelphia, indicted on July 28, 2021.



The Operation in Dauphin County began in April 2021, and resulted in ten individuals being charged and 26 firearms being recovered:

- Jamia Philecia Holton, of Harrisburg;, charged on September 21, 2021;
- Shadaya Nakeyma Jackson, of York, indicted on October 7, 2021;
- Tykeam Markel Jackson, of York, indicted on October 7, 2021;
- Dontrece Tasker, of Harrisburg, indicted on October 6, 2021;
- Yahmir Miller-Holmes, of Harrisburg, indicted on October 6, 2021;
- Khyree Randolph, of Harrisburg, indicted on October 6, 2021;
- Anthony Braxton, of Harrisburg, indicted on October 6, 2021;
- Destynee Lugo-Brooks, of Harrisburg; indicted on October 6, 2021;
- Davar Bailey, of Newark, NJ; indicted on October 13, 2021; and
- Jose Ramon Adorno, Jr., of Harrisburg, indicted on October 27, 2021.





Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF). OCDETF is a joint federal, state, and local cooperative approach to combat drug trafficking and is the nation’s primary tool for disrupting and dismantling major drug trafficking organizations, and targeting national and regional level drug trafficking organizations. The cases below illustrate this initiative:

- *U.S. v. Casey Seesholtz.* A 31-year-old Berwick man was sentenced on August 30, 2021, to two years of probation for conspiring to distribute and manufacture the anabolic steroids methylstenbolone (known as M-Sten) and dimethazine (known as DMZ). Seesholtz manufactured between 40,000 and 60,000 pills of the anabolic steroids at a warehouse in Berwick, PA. He sold some of the anabolic steroids through a storefront in Kingston, PA, while others were sold online by his coconspirators. Federal agents seized pill presses and encapsulating machines during the course of the investigation.
- *U.S. v. Dwayne Sherman.* A 47-year-old Lancaster man was charged on December 1, 2021, with drug trafficking and money laundering offenses. Sherman conspired to distribute more than 500 grams of cocaine between October 2015 and May 2018, in the Middle District of PA and California. Sherman is also charged with sending thousands of dollars in drug related proceeds to Mexico to pay for illegal controlled substances. He is awaiting trial.
- *U.S. v. William Battle.* A 29-year-old Stroudsburg man was sentenced on February 26, 2021, to 210 months’ imprisonment for participating in a conspiracy that forced or coerced women to engage in prostitution in Northeastern Pennsylvania, and that distributed more than a kilogram of heroin in Pennsylvania and Maine. Battle’s conviction and sentence resulted from an investigation into the activities of a street gang known as the “Black P-Stones.” Male gang members were “beaten-in” to the

gang and female members were “sexed-in” to the gang. Members of the Black P-Stones obtained heroin and other drugs, including “molly,” in New York and distributed the drugs in Stroudsburg and locations in the state of Maine. The leader of the Black P-Stones, Sirvonn Taylor, was sentenced to 20 years’ imprisonment. Other high-level gang members that have been sentenced include: Jose Velasquez—17 ½ years’ imprisonment; Jamiell Sims—12 ½ years’ imprisonment; Arthur Taylor—7 years’ imprisonment; and Jordan Capone—7 years’ imprisonment.

Domestic Terrorism. The U.S. Attorney’s Office aggressively prosecutes domestic terrorism to protect our neighborhoods:

- *U.S. v. Corbin Kauffman.* A 31-year-old Lehighton man was sentenced on July 13, 2021, to 18 months’ imprisonment, for posting threatening images and messages on a website. Kauffman used various aliases online to post hundreds of anti-semitic, anti-black, and anti-Muslim messages, images, and videos. Several of these posts included threats to various religious and racial groups, and one included a digitally created image of Kauffman aiming an AR-15 rifle at a congregation of praying Jewish men. Other posts expressed a desire to commit genocide and “hate crimes,” and called for or depicted images of the killing of Jewish people, black people, and Muslim people. Kauffman also posted pictures of acts of vandalism he committed, including anti-semitic graffiti at a public park, and the defacement of a display case at the Chabad Jewish Center in Ocean City, Maryland, with white supremacist and anti-semitic stickers.



Elder Justice Initiative. The Department of Justice Elder Justice Initiative promotes investigations and prosecutions of financial scams targeting the elderly, and the U.S. Attorney’s Office has prioritized the prosecution of crimes involving elder fraud and abuse. The cases below illustrate this initiative:

U.S. v. Jabin Godspower Okpako. A 36-year-old Nigerian man was sentenced on November 24, 2021, to 87 months’ imprisonment for conspiring to launder approximately \$1.89 million in mail and wire fraud proceeds. Jabin Okpako and his wife, codefendant Christine Bradley Okpako, age 54, of Sayre, PA, received approximately \$1,898,046 million in proceeds from a mail and wire fraud scheme, laundered the funds through numerous bank and wire transactions in multiple states, and transferred the funds out of the United States to three separate bank accounts in Nigeria. The mail and wire fraud scheme sought to defraud multiple female victims throughout the United States, ranging in age from 55 to 85. The victims had visited online game, relationship and dating web sites, including Instagram, Facebook, Words with Friends, and What’s App. The conspirators, located in the United States and West Africa, befriended the victims through interaction and exchanges of photos on the web sites via text and instant messaging. After cultivating online relationships with the victims, the conspirators fraudulently induced the victims to send and transmit funds for various fictitious reasons, including to assist a worker in Alaska who fell from a tower, to purchase an apartment in Washington, D.C., to assist the United Nations, to repair machinery and equipment on an oil drilling rig, to pay for medicine, to recover a \$6 million inheritance, and to make an investment in gold. After fraudulently inducing the victims to provide funds for these fictitious reasons, the conspirators instructed the victims to transmit checks and cash to Okpako and Bradley at their residence in Sayre, Pennsylvania. Okpako was ordered to make restitution in the amount of \$440,950 to victims and forfeit proceeds of the criminal activity. Christine Okpako was sentenced on December 15, 2021, to 37 months’ imprisonment.

- *U.S. v. Ibrahim Adam, et. al.* Two Ghanaian citizens were sentenced to prison for conspiring to commit wire fraud. Adam was sentenced on December 20, 2021, to 33 months’ imprisonment and Kelvin Aggrey-Arthur was sentenced to 40 months’ imprisonment. Both men previously admitted to perpetrating a romance scam in 2019 and 2020, in which they and other co-conspirators developed online relationships with victims and then requested that those victims send them money for various fraudulent reasons, including travel, medical treatment, housing, and schooling. Both men were also ordered to pay restitution to victims, \$94,100 for Adam and \$25,100 for Aggrey-Arthur.
- *U.S. v. Donna L. Summerlin.* A 62-year-old Fortville, Indiana, woman was convicted on June 4, 2021, of conspiracy to commit mail fraud and wire fraud and conspiracy to commit money laundering. Summerlin received over \$1.2 million from over 100 people across the country and, in some cases, other countries such as Canada and Australia in a cross-border scheme. Many of the identified victims were either elderly, deaf, or both. The victims were contacted through Facebook and told that they were winners of a “deaf lottery” or that they had been selected for special and exclusive government grants or other programs. In order to claim their supposed prize, grant, or other financial reward, victims were directed to prepay expenses such as taxes and customs fees. Victims were persuaded to do so with the false promise of a much larger payoff. After making an initial payment, victims were directed to make additional larger payments. Fraudsters contacting potential victims through Facebook, email, and text messages used fake names and photographs to disguise themselves. These fraudsters also took over the accounts of victims so that they could lure their friends into sending money and to reassure them of the scheme’s legitimacy when victims had doubts about participating. Victims were instructed to send these payments to Summerlin, who worked as a “money mule” or intermediary for these fraudsters for approximately four years, from 2012 to 2016. Typically, Summerlin wired a portion of the funds to coconspirators in Nigeria and Great Britain. She also made large cash withdrawals, that she sent to coconspirators or used for personal use. She is awaiting sentencing.



False Claims Against Government.

- *U.S. v. Raymond Lofthouse.* On August 26, 2021, a 59-year-old Florida man pleaded guilty to one count of filing false claims against the U.S. Government. Lofthouse was awarded a contract for \$60,000 to repair three electric motors for the U.S. Navy. Lofthouse billed the Navy for the contract, knowing the work was not complete and then never completed the work. Lofthouse is awaiting sentencing.

Social Security Fraud.

- *U.S. v. Virginia Hayden.* A 69-year-old Carlisle woman was indicted on February 3, 2021, on 14 counts of wire fraud related to the theft of her husband's social security benefits. The indictment alleged that Hayden failed to notify the Social Security Administration that her husband was missing and continued to receive his social security payments between 2011 and 2017. Hayden was charged with the murder of her husband in the York County Court of Common Pleas in April 2019 and is awaiting trial.



Threats. Threats to commit acts of violence against public officials or threats over the internet are prosecuted because of the risk to public safety that they pose.

- *U.S. v. Jess Alan Blake.* A 24-year-old New York man was sentenced to 48 months' imprisonment on March 4, 2021, for mailing a letter to FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C., threatening to kill President Trump and blow up the White House, Trump Tower, the Pentagon, and United Nations Headquarters.
- *U.S. v. Kenelm L. Shirk.* A 71-year-old Lebanon man was charged on January 27, 2021 for threatening to murder Democratic members of the United States Senate.

Shirk pleaded guilty and is awaiting sentencing.

- *U.S. v. Damian Smith-Birge.* A 26-year-old Neosho, Missouri, man was indicted on December 14, 2021, for making threats against the Pennsylvania State Police. The indictment alleged that on November 18, 2021, Smith-Birge telephoned the Pennsylvania State Police Stroudsburg barracks and made threats against law enforcement. Smith-Birge was arrested in Missouri on a federal criminal complaint on November 22, 2021. He is awaiting trial.

Immigration. The U.S. Attorney's Office prosecutes illegal reentry cases throughout the District. All of the defendants were previously deported one or more times from the United States. The criminal division prosecuted approximately 30 such cases in 2021.

- *U.S. v. Anthony Rodriguez-Ortiz.* A 33-year-old Dominican Republic man was charged on September 15, 2021, with illegal reentry into the United States by a previously deported alien, felon in possession of a firearm, illegal alien in possession of a firearm, possessing with intent to distribute controlled substances, and distribution of controlled substances. Rodriguez-Ortiz was previously deported from the United States to the Dominican Republic in December 2013. He is alleged to have illegally reentered the United States again sometime after December 2013, and was found in the United States in York County after eluding examination or inspection by immigration officers. When encountered, he, as an illegal alien and convicted felon, was in possession of a firearm, and fentanyl. He also had sold fentanyl on two previous occasions. He is awaiting trial.
- *U.S. v. Ramon Tavaréz-Ramírez.* A 49-year-old man was sentenced on November 30, 2021, to time served of eight months' imprisonment for having illegally reentered the United States sometime after his last removal in February 2003, following a conviction for a felony. In reentering the United States, Tavaréz-Ramírez eluded examination or inspection by immigration officers. He was found in Adams County on March 21, 2021, when arrested for driving under the influence by the Eastern Adams Regional Police Department.



Criminal Appeals. The United States has 94 judicial districts and there are 13 Appellate Courts that handle appeals from those districts. The United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit is the federal court with appellate jurisdiction over the Middle District of Pennsylvania.

- *U.S. v. Jesse Carey.* The Third Circuit upheld the defendant's 144-month sentence, holding that third degree Pennsylvania Robbery under Title 18 Pa. Con. Stat. 3701(a)(1)(v) substantially corresponds to the generic definition of robbery, and thus qualifies as an enumerated offense for the purposes of serving as a career offender predicate crime.
- *U.S. v. James Rought.* The Third Circuit upheld Rought's conviction for distribution of fentanyl resulting in death despite his claim that investigating agents violated his partially invoked right to remain silent. In doing so, the Circuit held that, after only a limited invocation of the right to remain silent, interrogation can continue on topics not covered by the invocation. If the suspect, without prompting from law enforcement, then voluntarily reinitiates discussion of a covered topic and waives her previously invoked rights, it "is quite consistent with the Fifth Amendment" for the suspect's statements about a covered topic to be admissible at trial.
- *U.S. v. Fosque Denmark.* The Third Circuit upheld the defendant's 135-month sentence, holding that a firearm need not be physically close to drugs or paraphernalia for a sentencing enhancement for possession of a dangerous weapon in connection with drug trafficking to apply. It will apply unless a connection is "clearly improbable" and here evidence showed a small arsenal of firearms was located in the home where the defendant arranged a drug deal a month earlier.

Financial Litigation Unit. The Financial Litigation Unit (FLU) is tasked with the collection of criminal and civil debts owed to the United States and federal crime victims. FLU strives to collect and enforce debts in an aggressive, efficient, and effective manner. Maximum asset identification is achieved through vigorous financial investigations.



Civil Restitution Recovered.

- *Select Energy Services, LLC.* \$1,150,000.00 - From February 2013 to December 2016, employees of Select Energy Services, Inc., successor in interest to Rockwater Energy Solutions, tampered with, modified and disabled emissions systems on heavy duty diesel trucks in violation of the Clean Air Act. A Non Prosecution Agreement was entered requiring the company to pay a monetary penalty of \$2,300,000.00 to the Department of Treasury. This case is related to *Rockwater NE, LLC* matter mentioned in the next section.
- *Perll Diagnostics.* \$350,000.00 - Nava Nawaz, M.D., President, Laboratory Director and majority owner to Perll Diagnostics submitted over 23,000 false and fraudulent travel reimbursements claims for payment to the Medicare Program, causing the federal government to make improper Medicare payments to her laboratory.



Criminal Restitution Recovered.

- *Rockwater NE, LLC.* \$2,000,000.00 - From August 2013 to June 2014, employees of Select Energy Services, Inc., successor in interest to Rockwater Energy Solutions, tampered with, modified and disabled emissions systems on heavy duty diesel trucks in violation of the Clean Air Act. A guilty plea was entered and the company was sentenced on April 20, 2021. The company paid a \$2,000,000.00 fine and \$12,400.00 in a special assessment. This case is related to *Select Energy Services, LLC.*
- *Michael Buchanan.* \$429,741.36 - The defendant was the vice president, secretary and treasurer of Actuaries, Consultants and Administrators, Inc, which was a third party administrator to the Pennsylvania Faculty Health and Welfare Fund. The Fund provides dental and vision benefits to members of the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties. The defendant defrauded the Fund by inflating the number of claims which resulted in an overpayment of \$1,493,629.00. The \$429,741.36 collected is from two payments - \$331,772.15 was a result of forfeiture in which restoration was granted; the second payment, \$97,969.21, was from the sale of his house in which our lien was encumbering the property and we took half of the proceeds from the sale.
- *Larry Nuckols.* \$3,312,601.24 - The defendant was the owner of Nuvision, who was a vendor with Rite-Aid. Nuvision was hired by co-defendant, James Pilsner, who was the Vice President of Advertising at Rite-Aid. Pilsner received kickbacks from Nuvision starting in 1995 until 2017. Nuckols would submit invoices to Rite-Aid claiming the money was for equipment or contractors. Nuvision would receive checks from Rite-Aid and then the checks would be deposited into an account at Wells Fargo. Nuckols and Pilsner used this money for their own personal use. The payment received was a result of forfeiture in which restoration was granted.



Asset Forfeiture Judgments.

- *U.S. v. Natural Advantage.* The government forfeited a total of \$1,938,650.10 in cash seized from corporate bank accounts and in a forfeiture money judgment as criminal proceeds of a drug trafficking violation. The settlement was part of a deferred prosecution agreement resulting from a criminal investigation led by the DEA.
- *U.S. v. Fuhai Li.* The government forfeited a total of \$2,222,781.80 as criminal proceeds of drug trafficking violations. Fuhai Li was a doctor running his office as a “pill mill,” and the forfeitures consisted of his business property, two residences, and a substantial amount of seized funds from bank accounts and cash, almost \$1 million of which was found hidden under his bed.

The USAO MDPA collected over \$12 million in criminal and civil actions in Fiscal Year 2021. Of this amount, \$8,037,586.68 was collected in criminal actions and \$4,189,510.08 was collected in civil actions.

Working with partner agencies, \$10,213,652 was obtained in criminal and civil forfeiture actions in Fiscal Year 2021, including both physical assets and forfeiture money judgments.

Civil Division

Civil Assistant United States Attorneys

First Assistant U.S. Attorney:

Bruce D. Brandler

Civil Chief:

Joseph Terz

Deputy Chief:

G. Michael Thiel

Appeals Chief:

Navin Jani

Harrisburg:

Bryan Craig Black

Michael Butler

Joanne Sanderson

D. Brian Simpson

Melissa Swauger

Richard Euliss

Harlan Glasser

Tamara Haken

Navin Jani

Scranton:

Timothy Judge

G. Michael Thiel

The Civil Division represents the United States and defends federal agencies and officials against civil claims. The Civil Division also works to ensure the civil rights of all Americans, enforcing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Fair Housing Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Voting Rights Act among other federal civil rights laws.

The Civil Division's work is far ranging and includes the areas of:

- prisoner litigation
- immigration
- defensive and affirmative cases
- bankruptcy
- social security
- mortgage foreclosures
- healthcare fraud
- qui tams
- civil rights
- appeals

The Civil Division handled approximately 796 cases in 2021. A sample of these cases includes approximately 157 First Step Act cases; approximately 224 Social Security cases; approximately 161 prison litigation cases including habeas petitions and Constitutional Claims; approximately 27 Federal Tort Claims Act cases including medical malpractice cases; and approximately 9 employment discrimination cases. Highlights of the Civil Division's work in 2021 follows:

Immigration. The U.S. Attorney's Office handles a number of immigration detainees who file habeas petitions challenging their detention status and seek immediate release. The Civil Division handled approximately 40 such cases in 2021.



Civil Rights. MDPA works closely with the Department of Justice, Civil Rights Section, to investigate allegations of civil rights violations within the district. The civil rights matters involve allegations of denial of equal access to persons with disabilities, employment discrimination, fair housing, discrimination, denial of religious freedom, violations of the rights of institutionalized persons and investigating allegations of denied access to polling sites for those with mobility impairments.



Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

The ADA is a transformative law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in places of public accommodation, including all hotels, restaurants, retail stores, theaters, health care facilities, convention centers, parks, and places of recreation (Title III), in all activities of state and local governments (Title II), and in employment (Title I). The ADA empowers the Department of Justice to investigate, litigate, and resolve complaints of discrimination as well as authorizing the Government to conduct compliance reviews of covered entities.

- *In re RC Theatres Management LLP.* A letter of resolution with RC Theatres Management LLLP, the owner and operator of Queensgate RC Theatres located in York, Pennsylvania was obtained in July 2021. The United States Department of Justice received a complaint that the Queensgate RC Theatre was not accessible to individuals with visual impairments, namely the movie theater did not have descriptive audio headsets. After an investigation with the owner’s cooperation, the United States Attorney’s Office determined that the Queensgate RC Theatre failed to have the required descriptive audio headset for the visually impaired complainant.

Soon after RC Theatres received notice of the complaint, it took steps to come into compliance with the ADA by purchasing audio descriptive devices and by training employees on the use of the devices at this location. RC Theatres will continue to annually train theater employees. RC Theatres will also provide notice about the availability of these devices on their webpage.

- *In re Rite Aid Corporation.* An ADA settlement agreement with Rite Aid Corporation (Rite Aid) was obtained in November 2021, to ensure that people with disabilities can get information about COVID-19 vaccinations and schedule their vaccinations online. A department compliance review discovered that individuals with vision and mobility impairments could not access a portion of Rite Aid’s website known as the COVID-19 Vaccine Registration Portal, currently located at <https://www.riteaid.com/covid-19>. For example, those who use screen reader software and those who have difficulty using a mouse could not successfully select a date and time for their appointment and were unable to make some “yes” or “no” selections during the appointment registration process. Title III of the ADA requires public accommodations like drugstores and grocery stores to provide individuals with disabilities with full and equal enjoyment of goods and services. The ADA also requires public accommodations to provide effective communication with people with disabilities, including through auxiliary aids and services like accessible technology. Under the terms of this agreement, Rite Aid must conform its online COVID-19 vaccine content to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), Version 2.1, Level AA. WCAG is a set of industry guidelines for making information on websites accessible to users with disabilities. Rite Aid will also have to regularly test and quickly correct any issues with its COVID-19 Vaccine Registration Portal.
- *In re Hazleton Police Department (HPD).* A settlement agreement with HPD and the City of Hazleton, PA was reached to help people with limited English proficiency (LEP) communicate with the police. The Justice Department initiated its review after receiving a complaint from the Community Justice Project on behalf of an LEP Hazleton resident who, on two separate occasions, within days of each other, had been forced to rely on his young son and then a co-worker to communicate with the police. HPD has since agreed to secure appropriate and reliable means of communicating with the City’s large Spanish-speaking community.

Civil Defensive. Defending Federal Agencies and Employees.

- *Gvazdauskas v. United States.* The U.S. Attorney's Office successfully settled the case for \$200,000 where plaintiffs sought \$402,000 in their administrative claim. The case involved a vehicle accident with a Department of the Army vehicle. Plaintiff asserted that she suffered from intractable pain and was permanently disabled as a result of the accident. This settlement represented a fair and reasonable amount to compensate the defendant for her injuries.
- *Bowers v. United States.* The U.S. Attorney's Office successfully settled this medical malpractice/wrongful death case involving the Wilkes-Barre Veterans Affairs Medical Center for \$400,000. The case involved a claim that a WBVA radiologist missed a cancerous lung mass resulting in a delayed diagnosis of cancer, lost treatment options, and contributing to the death of the veteran.
- *Arthur Smith v. United States.* District Court granted summary judgment to United States in a slip and fall action. Defendants argued Plaintiff was not paying attention to where he was walking, knew about the raised area of the sidewalk and failed to take the necessary precautions to avoid an open and obvious condition. The Court agreed and dismissed the case.
- *Gorney v. DeJoy.* A retired USPS window clerk brought suit under the federal employee provision of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act alleging that he had been issued a notice of suspension because of his age (64 at the time) and not because he had repeatedly failed to follow the required script in dealing with customers. After a two-day trial, the district court ruled from the bench in favor of the government.
- *Boczkowski v. United States Postal Service.* Elderly couple was rear-ended by a USPS truck coasting downhill and sued under the FTCA. At trial, the district court ruled from the bench and found that USPS was liable, but awarded only \$1,000 for out-of-pocket medical costs and nothing for pain and suffering because plaintiffs' injuries were "in line with the normal and expected result of a slow-moving fender bender" and they received only "routine chiropractic care." They have appealed.
- *Graham v. Bradley.* The U.S. Attorney's Office successfully obtained summary judgment in this deliberate medical indifference/medical professional negligence case involving a failure to diagnose hip dysplasia. With the support of a highly qualified orthopedic surgeon, the court concluded the medical care provided by the BOP was commensurate with the plaintiff's constitutional rights and the standard of care.



Affirmative Civil Enforcement (ACE). The Affirmative Civil Enforcement unit within the Civil Division exclusively handles ACE matters such as health care fraud, violations of the Controlled Substance Act, defense procurement fraud, COVID relief fraud, as well as various grant program frauds. The ACE team is comprised of two AUSAs, however some ACE matters are handled by other AUSAs in the Civil Division. In addition to the AUSAs working these types of matters, the office also has an ACE auditor, a contract investigator and a contract financial analyst to support these investigations. The ACE unit currently has 41 open investigations. In 2021, the ACE team opened 28 new investigations (5 of those new cases were identified by the ACE Team without assistance of any federal agency).

- *USA v. The Prescription Center.* The U.S. Attorney’s Office reached a \$57,073 settlement in a civil enforcement matter arising from recordkeeping violations under the Controlled Substances Act. The pharmacy had failed to keep complete, timely, and accurate inventories and records regarding the receipt and dispensing of Schedule II-IV controlled substances, which permitted thousands of doses to be unaccounted. While there was no evidence these missing doses were diverted to the community, the ACE unit enforced DEA registrant’s independent obligations as required by law.
- *U.S. v. Kate Cordisco.* The U.S. Attorney’s Office reached a \$21,000 settlement with a Certified Nurse Practitioner to resolve civil liability for alleged violations of the False Claims Act. Cordisco accepted consultation fees for ordering Durable Medical Equipment (DME) for patients with whom she did not have an established provider-patient relationship. She attested to the medical necessity of the orders for pre-selected products without any physical examination of the patients. Cordisco played a key role in a larger telemedicine scheme that resulted in Medicare paying hundreds of thousands of dollars to DME companies for unnecessary medical equipment.

- *U.S. v. Gina Sohn.* The U.S. Attorney’s Office reached a \$100,000 settlement in a civil enforcement matter arising from fraudulent claims for payment from a healthcare program. Sohn, a dentist practicing in South Korea serving military service members and their families, submitted false or fraudulent claims for payment to the TRICARE Program for services not rendered to her patients, specifically for fillings not provided to patients.
- *U.S. v. Geisinger Community Health Services GCHS.* U.S. Attorney’s Office reached a \$18,513,621.05 settlement to resolve allegations of civil liability for submitting claims to Medicare for hospice and home health services that violated Medicare rules and regulations. GCHS submitted claims to Medicare for hospice and home health services that violated Medicare rules and regulations regarding physician certifications of terminal illness, patient elections of hospice care, and physician face-to-face encounters with home health patients. After it discovered the problems, GCHS took corrective action and disclosed the matter to the United States Attorney’s Office.
- *USA v. American Zinc Recycling.* The U.S. Attorney’s Office assisted EPA and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection in resolving an affirmative case asserting violations of the Clean Air Act, Clear Water Act, Resource Conservation & Recovery Act, and other environmental statutes arising from the improper discharge and disposal of hazardous waste from zinc processing facilities operated by the defendant. The settlement required the defendant undertake an estimated \$4.3 million in measures to comply with federal and state environmental laws, along with a \$3.3 million penalty to be divided between the United States and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.



Prison Litigation. The MDPA houses four major federal correctional complexes: Allenwood, Canaan, Lewisburg, and Schuylkill. With a population of approximately 6,000 inmates, the facilities constitute one of the largest concentration of federal populations in the country. These inmates are a constant source of complex litigation including, habeas corpus challenges, general torts, and Constitutional claims alleging excessive force, failure to protect, retaliation, and other damages and constitutional claims. Named as defendants are multiple federal employees and institutions.

- *Doe v. United States.* Inmate claimed that he was subject to injury based on being called a “rat.” Inmate filed numerous actions and numerous motions within those actions. District Court concluded that summary judgment was appropriate based on statute of limitations. The Third Circuit affirmed.
- *Hill v. Lappin.* The U.S. Attorney’s Office successfully obtained summary judgment in an excessive force case brought against the former Warden at the United States Penitentiary at Lewisburg and four lieutenants. The inmate claimed that he was placed in four-point restraints for more than 43 hours and he was required to urinate and defecate on himself and not provided food or water with no justification. The allegations were vigorously denied and the defense focused on whether such claims could be brought in federal court. The Judge agreed and granted the government’s motion for summary judgment holding that excessive force claims that the plaintiff asserted have not been previously recognized and there are special factors that preclude the court from recognizing them in this case. The case is significant because it was the first in the Middle District of Pennsylvania where a district judge applied the Supreme Court’s 2017 precedent of *Ziglar v. Abassi* to an excessive force case.
- *Williams-Bearden v. Clouser.* Three inmates alleged that their placement in the Special Housing Unit was cruel and unusual punishment and false imprisonment, and that their Eighth Amendment rights were violated. The district court granted Defendant’s dispositive motion and found inmates did not prosecute this matter.



USP Lewisburg—High security U.S. Penitentiary with an adjacent minimum security satellite camp.



USP Allenwood—High security U.S. Penitentiary which is part of a correctional complex including a medium and low security institution.



USP Canaan—High security U.S. Penitentiary with an adjacent minimum security satellite camp.



FCI Schuylkill—Medium security federal correctional institution with an adjacent minimum security satellite camp.



Civil Appeals.

- *Holland v. Warden Canaan USP*. An inmate who had been convicted for using a firearm during a drug-trafficking crime when he accepted a gun from a woman as payment for drugs filed a fourth habeas petition challenging his conviction and citing *Watson v. United States*, 552 U.S. 74. The district court found it had jurisdiction and denied the petition on the merits because Holland had at least aided and abetted the drug purchaser in her using a gun during the drug purchase and so was rightly convicted. In a precedential decision, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals agreed that there was jurisdiction because *Watson* was an intervening statutory decision that might make Holland innocent but was not a new rule of constitutional law that would warrant a successive motion, and also because successive §2241 petitions are not barred. It nevertheless remanded because it could not decide if the drug purchaser herself had violated the statute such that the inmate could be found guilty of aiding and abetting.
- *Mammana v. Barben*. A Bivens suit by inmate alleging an Eighth Amendment violation for deprivations of warmth and sleep while he was in administrative segregation for three days was dismissed under *Abbasi*. The Third Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed because “his confinement in a chilled room with constant lighting, no bedding, and only paper-like clothing” presented a new factual context that bore little resemblance to either a failure to offer medical care or to prevent prisoner-on-prisoner violence and because Congress’s omission of a standalone damages remedy against federal jailers when it passed the Prison Litigation Reform Act counseled hesitation in recognizing a new cause of action for unconstitutional conditions of confinement.
- *Lamoureux v. Commissioner Social Security*. An applicant for disability benefits who injured his hip in the Army challenged the ALJ’s reliance on a vocational expert’s testimony in finding the applicant could perform work existing in significant numbers in the national economy and so was not disabled. The applicant argued that the expert did not show that the relevant jobs were available where the applicant lived, that the number of jobs identified was too few, and that the very regulation that governed the query was invalid because the word “significant” was unconstitutionally vague. The Third Circuit Court of Appeals rejected the challenge because the Commissioner is not required to introduce regional-level job data (as opposed to national-level data) in every disability proceeding as a matter of law, the ALJ was justified in considering 36,000 jobs to be a “significant number[,],” and the void-for-vagueness doctrine does not apply to public-assistance statutes.
- *Smith v. Sec’y United States Navy*. The Third Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed a district court decision granting summary judgment against plaintiff, previously employed by Navy Supply Systems Command (NAVSUP). Plaintiff claimed he was discriminated based on his race. Court found he had not substantiated his allegations.



Administrative Division

Administrative Division. The Administrative Division is responsible for planning and executing a comprehensive range of administrative services that support the mission of the U.S. Attorney’s Office. The Administrative Officer is the principal advisor to the United States Attorney and the District on all administrative matters.

The Administrative Division continues to support the overall mission of the office by working jointly with other agencies and offices, including the General Services Administration, Justice Management Division, the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys, the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, and the U.S. Marshals Service.

Our seven-person staff has continued to provide services to staff in all three offices including staffing, classification, benefits management, retirement counseling, new employee orientation, leave administration, position management and classification, payroll, contracting, purchasing, document management, case management, records management, budget, financial management, construction and facilities management, space planning, mail services, shipping and receiving.

During 2021, the Administrative Division continued their efforts to streamline document management by working with the Civil and Criminal Divisions and Information Management staff to develop a common file structure for the Civil and Criminal Divisions.

The Administrative Division is also extremely involved in the preparations for our anticipated move to a new federal courthouse in Harrisburg in late 2022.



Community Outreach

Reentry Programs.

The Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative also called for greater attention to other major components of the federal criminal justice system. The initiative proposed changes to the traditional role of the federal prosecutor, calling for sustained involvement in matters related to crime prevention and offender reentry programs, in part to help reduce recidivism. A primary focus of our reentry efforts is to remove or reduce barriers to successful reentry, so that motivated individuals - who have served their time and paid their debt to society - are able to compete for a job, attain stable housing, support their children and their families, and contribute to their communities.



CARE (Court Assisted Re-Entry Program).

The United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania conducts a Court-Assisted Re-Entry Program (CARE), a four-phase program designed to aid the rehabilitation and re-integration of persons recently released into the community under federal supervised release and who face a moderate to high-risk of recidivism. The CARE Program relies upon support from public institutions and agencies as well as volunteer private entities and individuals. The MDPA CARE Program began in 2009. The U.S. Probation Office, the Federal Public Defenders and the U.S. Attorney's Office participate in the program. The CARE Program offers an alternative program of supervision and a blend of treatment and support to effectively address offender behavior and rehabilitation. Most CARE participants have served multi-year

prison sentences and face barriers to reintegration to the community.

The CARE Program is an intensive voluntary program in which criminal justice professionals who comprise the "CARE Team," encourage and assist participants to seek educational, employment, health, family counseling and other opportunities to aid in their successful return to the community as productive and law abiding citizens.

Persons recently released from federal prison and serving a period of supervised release under supervision of the U.S. Probation Office are eligible to apply for admission. Each applicant is considered based on the totality of his/her individual circumstances, including a Risk Prediction Index and Post-Conviction Risk Assessment scores.

The U.S. Probation Office considers each applicant and then makes a recommendation to the Court and to the participating Federal Public Defenders and Assistant United States Attorneys as to whether or not an applicant would likely benefit from the program. Before making recommendations, the Probation Office also consults the federal judge who imposed the original prison sentence and term of supervised release and the federal prosecutor who handled the case. While the Assistant United States Attorneys and Federal Public Defenders who participate in the CARE Program are consulted regarding an applicant's suitability for participation, the judge who oversees the program makes the final decision as to whether or not to admit an applicant. The CARE Program operates in the Court's Harrisburg, Scranton and Williamsport venues. There is no set number of allowable participants. However, experience suggests that multiple groups that meet separately and consist of approximately 10 participants per group leads to ideal circumstances for interactions between participants, the Court and other CARE partners.





WVIA produced a documentary on the CARE Court Program in the Middle District. The documentary explores the CARE Program’s comprehensive rehabilitative process and its healing resonance in the community. Several members of the U.S. Attorney’s Office who play an important part in the program were interviewed. Our CARE program was one of the first to operate in the nation and has been a leader in this area, particularly in developing public-private partnerships to help returning offenders reintegrate into society. The Documentary Trailer “A Call to CARE” aired on October 14, 2021 and can be seen at: <https://www.wvia.org/tv/a-call-to-care/> Encores of the film are available to watch on-demand at wvia.org.



CARES.

In the summer of 2015, an innovative public/private partnership between the CARE Program and ESSA Bank & Trust, Northampton Community College, and Pyramid Healthcare, Inc. local, regional, and national nonpartisan private business interests, whose goals and missions, among other things, are to be involved in their respective communities, was established. Each of these entities has demonstrated a commitment to support the reentry efforts of the CARE Program through a focused set of activities called, collectively, Cooperatively Arranged Re-Entry Services “CARES.” Each participating entity has entered into a written agreement to provide the services. The CARES providers have expressed common goals for their investment of resources and services: to enhance crime prevention, deter crime, help families, save costs to taxpayers, and reduce recidivism. The purpose of this public-private collaborative arrangement is to provide services to CARE Program participants that will aid and assist in reaching its goals and objectives. One of the most innovative aspects of the CARES Agreement is

that the services provided are available, not only while a CARE participant is enrolled in the CARE Program, but also after the participant graduates from the Program and is no longer under court supervision.

Another key component of CARES is participation of individual community volunteers who provide mentoring services to some CARE participants.

The CARES partnership provides a continuum of services to participants and graduates of the CARE Program, including scholarships, grants, and loans for education, job training, transportation, housing, healthcare, drug and alcohol counseling.



Keeping Children Safe & Secure Online. AUSA Fran Sempa, DHS Special Agent Trac Huynh and FBI Special Agent Daniel Johns gave a presentation on Keeping Children Safe & Secure Online to parents and teachers in the York County School District on May 5, 2021. Topics covered included social media apps, gaming, cyberbullying, sexting, sextortion, internet predators, and being safe and secure online.

The School Superintendent invited the speakers to give the same presentation in October 2021 at the PASA-PSBA School Leadership Conference. Due to Covid restrictions, Fran Sempa and Daniel Johns presented their presentation virtually.

To watch the presentation go to York County DA’s website link at: <https://yorkda.com/newsroom/>





Group Violence Initiative Call in Program

In 2016, the U.S. Attorney's Office joined community and law enforcement partners in York as part of the York Group Violence Initiative (GVI). GVI is designed to reduce street group-involved homicide and gun violence. GVI was pioneered by the National Network for Safe Communities at John Jay College.

As the National Network's website notes, GVI has repeatedly demonstrated that violence can be dramatically reduced when a partnership of community members, law enforcement, and social service providers directly engages with the small and active number of people involved in street groups and clearly communicates a credible moral message against violence, prior notice about the consequences of further violence, and a genuine offer of help for those who want it. A central method of communication is the call-in, a face-to-face meeting between group members and the strategy's partners. The aim of the GVI strategy is to reduce peer dynamics in the group that promote violence by creating collective accountability, to foster internal social pressure that deters violence, to establish clear community standards against violence, to offer group members an "honorable exit" from committing acts of violence, and to provide a supported path for those who want to change.

In 2021, GVI continued to develop the Community Moral Voice of the GVI strategy. GVI hired, through our Support & Outreach partner Friends & Neighbors of Pennsylvania, Inc., an individual as our first "Credible Messenger." This was made possible through GVI's work with the WellSpan Health System and York Hospital, who provided grant funding for the position. Tiffany Lowe, our Credible Messenger, has been responding to our shooting victims and families as well as working closely with the high school and in the neighborhoods on a daily basis to bring the "We want you safe, alive, and Free" message to group members. WellSpan has fully implemented the Hospital Based Violence Intervention program in partnership with GVI to actively engage gun violence vic-

tims and their families. The Hospital based strategy engages them at a vulnerable point where they are more receptive to accept the help GVI offers.



York County Mayor Michael Helfrich speaks to attendees of the call-in in York City.

Feds Feed Families Food Drive. Feds Feed Families is an annual government-wide campaign that encourages Federal employees to give in-kind contributions - food, services, and time - to food banks and pantries. This year the office donated pantry items to the Harrisburg Bethesda mission Men's Home and the St. Joseph The Worker Food Pantry in Williamsport.



37th Annual National Night Out



National Night Out August 3, 2021

The United States Attorney's Office joined law enforcement partners, community leaders and residents on Tuesday, August 3, 2021, at four event locations to celebrate the 37th Annual National Night Out. National Night Out is a community-building campaign that promotes collaborative law enforcement-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie. Communities nationwide participated in neighborhood festivals, block parties, and cook-outs, which provided a great opportunity to bring police and neighbors together under positive circumstances. The U.S. Attorney's Office attended events with Harrisburg Bureau of Police, Lebanon City Police Department, Derry Township Police Department, and York City Police Department.



Public Affairs

Violence in York City Press Conference. Former Acting U.S. Attorney Bruce D. Brandler joined York City Mayor Michael Helfrich, York City District Attorney David Sunday, York City Police Department Commissioner Michael Muldrow, and Jim Tyson, Group Violence Intervention Initiative Manager on June 24, 2021, to address the violence in York City, Pennsylvania.



See press conference here: <https://www.yorkdispatch.com/story/news/local/2021/06/24/u-s-attorney-york-city-ground-zero-gun-violence/5336209001/>

witf Live inspired® **Covid 19 Fraud and U.S. Capital Riot.** In June 2021, Former Acting U.S. Attorney Bruce D. Brandler interviewed with Sam Dunlau of WITF to discuss how the U.S. Attorney's Office is handling Covid-19 fraud in the Middle District during a pandemic. He went on to discuss the office's part in prosecuting defendants involved in the U.S. Capital Riot.

To read the article and listen to the radio version go here: <https://www.witf.org/2021/06/25/the-midstates-u-s-attorney-had-prosecuted-it-all-then-came-the-pandemic-and-an-insurrection/>

"I think people in general have pulled together in a time of crisis to make sure that our job gets done and the mission gets completed," said Bruce Brandler, Former Acting U.S. Attorney.



Kids for Cash. Former Acting U.S. Attorney Bruce D. Brandler was interviewed in August 2021 by Andy Mehalshick for a "This Week in PA" four-part series featuring the Kids for Cash case.

Former President Judges of the Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas, Mark A. Ciavarella and Michael Conahan, were charged for accepting millions in bribes and kickbacks from the owner of a privately held juvenile detention facility.

The judicial scandal, described as the worst in Pennsylvania's history, and the federal prosecutions have had major consequences: Ciavarella and Conahan resigned from the bench in 2009. The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania vacated thousands of juvenile convictions in Luzerne County as a result of Ciavarella's conduct as a Juvenile Court Judge. A State Interbranch Commission on Juvenile Justice recommended changes aimed at safeguarding the constitutional rights of juveniles and improving the oversight and disciplinary process for judges in Pennsylvania. In June 2011, a committee of the American Bar Association reviewed and made recommendations to improve procedures in the state's Judicial Conduct Board. A procedure was established in Luzerne County for compensation of victims of the activities of Ciavarella and Conahan.

Ciavarella is serving a 28 year sentence and is scheduled to be released from prison in 2035. Conahan is serving a 17-year sentence. He was recently released to home confinement due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Series can be found here:

<https://www.abc27.com/news/this-week-in-pennsylvania/this-week-in-pennsylvania-august-1-pt-1/>





Monroe County Children and Youth Services Presentation.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Jenny Roberts gave a presentation on August 4, 2021, to Monroe County Children and Youth Services caseworkers regarding federal sex trafficking and child pornography statutes and the differences between federal and state statutes. AUSA Roberts also discussed ways that parents and guardians can more closely monitor internet use by children in an attempt to minimize victimization.



FBI's Community Awareness Program.

U.S. Attorney John Gurganus and Deputy Criminal Chief Fran Sempa spoke at the Community Awareness Program hosted by the FBI. The Program is designed to promote a partnership between the FBI and the community. The Program had seven sessions that took place at the Lackawanna College in Scranton from September 14, 2021 through October 26, 2021. They discussed with the participants how this office approaches violent crimes, including sex trafficking offenses in the district. They discussed how our office partners with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to further that effort, and explained the TFO program and meeting with District Attorneys throughout the district. They talked about the Project Safe Neighborhoods program and our office's focus on gun crime and drug-related gun offenses. They also noted the greater penalties for federal drug and gun offenses.

The Scranton Police Department presented on their K-9, SWAT, and explosives programs and offered ride-alongs and use of their firearms simulation system for those members of the community that wanted to participate. The FBI addressed business and community concerns as the FBI's responsibilities in the areas of terrorism, violent crime, civil rights, human trafficking and public corruption.



New Federal Courthouse

The new Harrisburg Federal Courthouse located at 6th and Reily Streets in Harrisburg, will be a 243,000 square foot 11 story modern building. The Federal Courthouse will house 8 courtrooms, 11 judges' chambers, the U.S. Marshal Service, U.S. Probation, the U.S. Trustees Office, and the U.S. Attorney's office, that will be located on the 2nd Floor. Our Administrative Division is working hard to ensure a smooth transition to our new workplace.

The Federal Courthouse will include an open green space on the 3rd floor providing several spaces for outdoor dining and a café located on the 1st floor.



The new Federal Courthouse is currently scheduled to open in early 2023.



U.S. Attorney's Office Middle District of Pennsylvania

Scranton Office

William J. Nealon Federal Building and Courthouse
235 N. Washington Avenue, Suite 311
Scranton, PA 18503
Main Phone (570) 348-2800
Fax (570) 348-2037
TTY (570) 341-2077

Harrisburg Office

Harrisburg Federal Building and Courthouse
228 Walnut Street, Suite 220
P.O. Box 11754
Harrisburg, PA 17108-1754
Toll Free (866) 673-7340
Main Phone (717) 221-4482
Fax (717) 221-4493
TTY (717) 221-4452

Williamsport Office

Herman T. Schneebeli Federal Building
240 West Third Street
Williamsport, PA 17701-6465
Main Phone (570) 326-1935
Fax (570) 326-7916
TTY (570) 326-9843

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