

**Bristol County District Attorney's Office**  
**C. Samuel Sutter**  
**District Attorney**

**Press Release**  
**November 23, 2010**

The Massachusetts District Attorneys Association has elected Bristol County District Attorney Sam Sutter its new President for the term, which began on November 17<sup>th</sup> and runs until the same time next year. Sutter is currently completing the final months of his first term as Bristol County District Attorney, which began on January 4, 2007 after he defeated a 16-year-incumbent in the election of 2006. Sutter has recently been elected to a second term as district attorney.

"I am truly honored to have been elected by my fellow district attorneys," District Attorney Sutter said. "I look forward to a productive year where we make tangible progress in our budgetary and legislative goals."

Sutter said that those goals will be his priorities as president: increasing district attorneys' budgets, which were cut nearly 10 percent during the last two years, and new public safety legislation in view of the new legislative session beginning in January.

After graduating from Vanderbilt Law School in 1983, Sutter began his legal career in private practice on Cape Cod. He joined the Bristol County District Attorney's Office in 1991 and served four years in the district court and four years in the superior court. In 1999, he left the office to reenter private practice and for the next seven years built a prominent practice in southeastern Massachusetts. In February of 2006, he announced his decision to run for district attorney.

During his first term in office, Sutter has employed a series of new and aggressive strategies to attack the problem of gun violence, which he has characterized as one of the two, along with child abuse, most pressing public safety issues in the nation. From his first day in office, Sutter implemented an array of new policies regarding illegal gun use. These policies centered on the use of dangerousness hearings to keep gang members and other criminals arrested with illegal firearms behind bars for 90 days while his office rapidly prosecuted the case. Dangerousness hearings were created by the Legislature in 1994 to prevent dangerous offenders from returning to the streets to terrorize their victims, and until four years ago, were most often employed in cases of domestic violence, sexual assault and other cases of threatened physical force. In Bristol County, Sutter used dangerousness hearings to "change the landscape"---in other words, to get immediate practical results and to demonstrate our country's growing intolerance of gun violence caused by illegal firearms. The results were transformative. Shootings declined in New Bedford from 38 in 2006 to 13 in 2007 and, county-wide, from an average of four to five shootings per months in 2006, to less than one per month during the six month period prior to May 4, 2009 (The Day the SJC Ruled on Dangerousness Hearings). Reports of shots fired also fell an average of 33 percent in the county's three major cities.

Then, on May 4th of 2009, the state Supreme Judicial Court ruled, in a Bristol County case, that the Legislature had not made it clear that dangerousness hearings could be used on illegal gun possession felonies and therefore, District Attorney Sutter could no longer use the statute for these cases until the Legislature amended the statute. Immediately after the SJC's ruling, Sutter began leading a state-wide effort to get the dangerousness statute amended. He enlisted the support of every district attorney in Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Major City Chiefs Association, the mayors of Bristol County and state representatives and senators from across the Commonwealth. His persistent efforts paid off in July of 2010 when the House and Senate passed an amendment to the Dangerousness Statute, which once again gave prosecutors the authority to request dangerousness hearings in illegal gun felony cases. The new law was signed by Gov. Deval Patrick and went into effect earlier this month.

Although the dangerousness hearing initiative is the best known tool Sutter has employed to reduce gun violence, it is just one piece of a larger plan the district attorney developed to tackle this destructive problem. Since taking office, Sutter has created a Gun Crime Unit for superior and district court; he has assigned prosecutors to respond to the scenes of non-fatal shootings and investigate these cases just as prosecutors investigate homicides; he has consistently refused to reduce charges against those who are caught carrying illegal firearms on the county's streets and has repeatedly asked for sentences of 10 years or more for shootings. Angel Peralta, for example, received a 27 to 33 year prison sentence for a multi-victim shooting in Fall River and Nigel Vaughn received an 18 to 20 year prison sentence for a similar multi-victim shooting in Fall River. Sutter has also led a high profile publicity campaign to make the criminals more aware of the consequences of carrying illegal firearms.

Additionally, Sutter has followed through on his campaign promise to solve cold homicide cases and improve the office's homicide solve rate; he has cracked down on major drug dealers through a firm no plea bargaining policy on the most serious cases; implemented a one of a kind office-wide volunteer initiative; modernized case management and budget management at the office and reorganized the office in order to put more prosecutors in the county's courtrooms. He has also kept his campaign pledge to forge a much closer relationship with local police departments and has fostered greatly enhanced cooperation and information sharing amongst law enforcement agencies through multi-jurisdictional crime fighting initiatives and innovative technology.

During his first four years in office, Sutter's Cold Case Unit has solved ten previously unsolved homicides, one of which dated back to 1986. His Homicide Unit has brought charges in more than 75 percent of the homicides that have occurred since he became district attorney, a solve rate that far exceeds the national average of around 60 percent.

Sutter also brought back court-ordered wiretap investigations to Bristol County after a 16 year absence, in order to carry out his commitment to cracking down on the county's biggest drug dealers. His office has already undertaken three large-scale wiretap investigations which resulted in the arrests of several leaders of organized drug trafficking rings.

In October 2007, Sutter announced the formation of a unique volunteer initiative within his office. He redesigned the Community Affairs Division and made the centerpiece an inter-office volunteer program. Since then, more than 80 prosecutors, managers and other staff have contributed more than 9,000 hours of community service, after their work hours, through mentoring at risk youth, tutoring, coaching and other needed community activities. Sutter has also offered free basketball, baseball and tennis clinics to hundreds of Bristol County youngsters to emphasize the benefits of sports and a healthy, active lifestyle.

Sutter is a graduate of Brown University and Vanderbilt Law School. He lives in Fall River with his wife, Dottie, his two sons, Cliff and Alex, and his daughter, Ava.