

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

**Press Release
November 3, 2009**

District Attorney Sam Sutter delivered the keynote address at the Massachusetts Police Association's 109th Annual Convention in Springfield last Friday.

District Attorney Sutter---invited to speak before hundreds of police officers by the association's board of directors---discussed his office's successful crackdown on illegal guns in Bristol County, his continued push for legislation aimed at allowing prosecutors throughout the commonwealth to request dangerousness hearings when a defendant is charged with an illegal gun felony and his office's renewed partnership with local and state police departments.

His speech before the Massachusetts Police Association was his second major address to statewide law enforcement officials in as many weeks. District Attorney Sutter also addressed the Massachusetts Major Cities Chiefs Association on October 20th. At the conclusion of his speech, the major cities chiefs association announced its endorsement of Sutter's push for dangerousness hearing legislation.

District Attorney Sutter, shortly after being sworn into office in 2007, instituted a county-wide policy to request dangerousness hearings anytime someone was charged with an illegal gun crime and a felony. The newly elected district attorney also implemented a number of other policies aimed at reducing illegal gun violence in Bristol County including no reductions from the mandatory minimum sentence on the charge of carrying an illegal firearm; requesting a minimum of 10 years in state prison for defendants convicted of crimes involving a shooting; assigning assistant district attorneys to report to the scene of non-fatal shooting and investigate them just like a homicide; requesting consecutive prison sentences for those defendants convicted of both drug and gun crimes.

The results of the policy changes were dramatic. Shootings and reports of shots fired declined precipitously throughout Bristol County until on May 5, 2009 when the Supreme Judicial Court ruled that prosecutors could no longer request dangerousness hearings for defendants charged with illegal gun felonies.

After witnessing steady declines in illegal gun violence during the 29 months of the dangerousness hearing policy, Bristol County has now seen a sharp increase in the number of shootings, gun-related homicides and reports of shots fired since the SJC decision in May.

But thanks to support from the county's mayors, police chiefs and legislators, the 10 other district attorneys, community groups and the Major Chiefs Association, momentum is building for legislation to insert specific language into the state's dangerousness statute making it clear that defendants charged with illegal gun felonies can be subjected to dangerousness hearings.

Legislation has been filed by Gov. Deval Patrick, Rep. Antonio Cabral (D-New Bedford) and Sen. Mark Montigny (D-New Bedford). On Tuesday of last week, District Attorney Sutter and the mayors from New Bedford, Fall River and Taunton all testified in support of the legislation before the Joint Committee on the Judiciary.