

Attorney General Christopher S. Porrino
Assembly Budget Remarks
Assembly Budget Committee
10 a.m. April 19, 2017
4th Floor, Committee Room 11
State House Annex, Trenton

- Thank you Chairman Schaer, Vice-Chairman Burzichelli, and members of the Assembly Budget Committee.
- With me are my executive and administrative staff.
- At the Department of Law and Public Safety, thousands of civilian personnel and sworn law enforcement members report for work each day ready to serve New Jersey citizens.
- But they cannot do their jobs in a vacuum. They need resources.
- As a department, we appreciate the Committee's continued support of our efforts to keep New Jersey safe.
- For example, this year's budget includes resources to support recruiting efforts for the 159th New Jersey State Police class.
- It also includes funding to support the purchase of new State Police vehicles, a much-needed appropriation.

- We welcome this funding, but at the same time, we recognize that every state agency has a duty to spend responsibly and achieve cost efficiencies where possible.
- I assure the Committee that, in acquiring equipment, staffing our divisions, and taking other action critical to our mission, we remain mindful of the need to make fiscal austerity part of the equation.
- As most of you know, my background includes service as Chief Counsel to the Governor, and as Director of the Division of Law.
- Certainly, working in these roles provided me insight as to the nature of an Attorney General's responsibilities.
- But, as with so many things in life, there is no substitute for hands-on experience.
- Today, having served as Attorney General for the better part of a year now, I'm possessed of a far deeper awareness of the mission's scope, its breadth, and its gravity.
- As I said when I was sworn in, you can experience the job in an intellectual sense, but there comes a time when it settles on you viscerally.
- That happens when a terrorist's pipe bombs have exploded in multiple locations and you're working urgently -- in

collaboration with your law enforcement partners at every level -- to quell the threat before innocent people are harmed.

- It happens when you see the drug crisis claim another life, and recognize that your office -- despite the best efforts of a so many dedicated people -- still has much work left to do.
- And it happens when you attend the funeral of a just-graduated New Jersey State Trooper and witness the outpouring of gratitude and respect for a young man who died while pursuing his dream of serving and protecting others.
- As Attorney General, I could not be prouder of our Department and the employees who staff it.
- On a continuing basis, we touch lives, save lives, and change lives.
- It is truly humbling to lead such a vital effort, and to work side-by-side with people so committed to helping others.
- At Law and Public Safety, our responsibilities include everything from protecting children to safeguarding our roads and waterways, and from combating discrimination to redirecting the lives of juvenile offenders.

- But perhaps the most visible aspect of what we do involves the crime-fighting efforts that protect countless people who live, work, and travel in New Jersey.
- For the fourth year in a row, we brought more criminal indictments and accusations in 2016 than in the previous year, and charged more criminal defendants.
- Among other efforts, we put violent gang members in prison and took fugitive felons off our streets.
- We broke up heroin mills, seized illegal firearms, and took carjacking rings out of circulation.
- We prosecuted and convicted corrupt public officials at the state and local levels.
- We charged dozens of child pornographers and other sexual predators.
- And we recovered millions of dollars in taxpayer money stolen by thieves -- including many who unlawfully pocketed funds intended for the victims of Superstorm Sandy.
- The list goes on but, in short, our work in the area of crime-fighting made New Jersey a safer place to live in 2016, and continues to do so today.
- Of course, the Department has many other critical responsibilities as well, including:

- Protecting consumers and holding accountable those who engage in deceptive business practices.
- Overseeing New Jersey's licensed professions.
- Discouraging drunk, distracted, and otherwise dangerous driving.
- Leading the State's emergency response efforts.
- And ensuring the integrity of New Jersey's casino gaming and horse racing industries.
- Our Department also serves as New Jersey's largest law firm, both advising and defending State agencies, and handling tens of thousands of civil matters each year.
- Through the efforts of our Division of Law in 2016, we obtained litigation settlements and judgments on behalf of the State totaling more than \$189 million.
- As everyone here recognizes, one of the most pressing issues facing our State is the alarming increase in recreational heroin use, the proliferation of deadly fentanyl and its derivatives, and the continuing misuse of illegally obtained prescription drugs.

- As I alluded to earlier, there's a lot of great work being done at every level in the fight against this epidemic, but we're clearly not where we need to be.
- Families are still being torn apart. Young lives are still ending too soon. Crimes are still being committed to pay for one more high. And our State Troopers, local police, and EMTs are still responding to more and more overdose calls.
- Clearly, the status quo is not an option.
- We need to act and we need to innovate, and that's what our Department is doing in collaboration with Governor Christie.
- One example: Studies show that four out of five new heroin users begin their addiction with prescription painkillers. Seeking to protect people from the disease of heroin addiction before they even begin, our Department has aggressively pursued doctors who indiscriminately prescribed pain killers.
- Our Prescription Fraud Investigation Strike Team has criminally charged numerous doctors and pharmacists with illegally distributing opiates.
- In the past year we took more licensing actions in the area of opioids than in any prior year in the history of the Department of Law and Public Safety.

- Recent investigations into the unlawful distribution of CDS resulted in the surrender, revocation, and “retirement” of twenty-three medical licenses, five pharmacist’s licenses, one dentist’s license, and a psychiatrist’s license. It also resulted in the closing of a pharmacy and revocation of one printing company’s status as a New Jersey Prescription Blank vendor.
- As part of our comprehensive effort to address the drug crisis, we’ve also formed a specialized team within the Department to focus exclusively on the opioid problem.
- Among other things, that team played a key role in implementing regulatory amendments that limited to five days an initial prescription for acute pain, and conditioned subsequent prescriptions on supplemental consultation with the patient and a demonstrated need for additional painkillers.
- Of course, we’ve taken into account that there are patients whose specific diagnoses may warrant an exception to this limit.
- However, it is our view that reducing the existing, 30-day initial prescription standard to five days goes a long way toward reducing the risk of opioid addiction, and of having these powerful drugs fall into the wrong hands.
- In line with our efforts to counter the drug epidemic, I’m also pleased to note that our Prescription Drug Monitoring Program or “PMP” continues to run strong, and at this

point contains data on nearly 68 million prescriptions written since 2011.

- In addition, we collected more than 68,000 pounds of unused, unwanted, and expired medication in 2016 through our Project Medicine Drop program.
- Also in 2016, we made the opiate-overdose antidote Naloxone more widely available -- by securing an extension of the discount rebate program with manufacturer Amphastar Pharmaceuticals -- and continued to save lives.
- As you know, the timely administration of Naloxone can be the difference between life and death. In 2016, Naloxone deployments by police and other first responders across New Jersey rose from about 7,000 to 10,000.
- Time does not permit me to discuss all of the other programs and initiatives our Department is pursuing on behalf of New Jersey citizens. But before answering your questions, I'd like to highlight just a few:
- **Violent Crime Initiative:** More than 150 fugitives were rounded up by the New Jersey State Police, working in cooperation with our federal law enforcement partners, in an operation designed to take some of the State's most dangerous felons off the streets. Included among those captured were two suspected murderers and an escaped state prisoner. In the course of this effort, 11 firearms, more than 600 decks of heroin, and 60 vials of crack cocaine

were confiscated. Those focused efforts continue as the State Police work to keep our streets safe. At the same time, our office rolled out a directive to help prevent witness intimidation by, among other things, mandating greater sharing of information among law enforcement where such intimidation is suspected.

- **New Directive on Police Training:** In October of last year, my office issued a new Directive requiring every police officer in the State to receive annual training on de-escalation, cultural awareness, mental health training, implicit bias, and other related topics. The Directive also creates a new training institute, to be housed within our Division of Criminal Justice, to develop and provide required curriculum.
- **Body-Worn Cameras:** Our aggressive campaign to help equip as many police officers as possible with body-worn cameras continues. In January of this year, we announced the award of a total of \$566,000 in grant funds to 37 law enforcement agencies across the State. Since 2015, we've provided more than \$4.5 million in funding for body-worn cameras. Through our efforts, the number of police agencies using body-worn cameras has increased from 50 to more than 240 -- nearly half the law enforcement agencies in New Jersey. And as you may be aware, the State Police are presently in the Initial Deployment phase of a program to equip Troopers with body-worn cameras.
- **Support for Crime Victims:** In Fiscal Year 2016, our Victims of Crime Compensation Office awarded

approximately \$8.24 million to the victims of crime or their loved ones. The VCCO paid out claims to the victims of a gamut of crimes, including robbery, assault, rape, and homicide.

- **“Safe Care Cam” Initiative:** As part of our ongoing effort to protect some of New Jersey’s most vulnerable citizens, we’ve launched a new program designed to ensure that anyone who suspects a loved one is being abused by home health care providers has access to readily concealable micro-surveillance cameras that can document abuse without detection. Our initiative makes these micro-surveillance cameras available for free, offering 30-day loans to anyone who suspects a loved one is being abused by a home health aide or other in-home caregiver. Footage captured by the hidden device will either quell people’s fears or provide them with proof that abuse is taking place, and that immediate, protective intervention is needed.
- **Community Outreach:** Our Community Outreach section continues its vital work in keeping the Attorney General’s Office connected with, and working substantively on issues important to, the diverse populations we serve. Among other efforts, our Community Outreach staff regularly convenes meetings involving law enforcement, faith leaders and other community stakeholders. They also host community meetings and forums on such topics as bail reform, bias crime, and issues that can arise relative to the interaction between police and citizens -- including those citizens with mental health issues or developmental disabilities. Our community outreach effort enables us to

keep a vital “ear to ground,” which is critical in these times. Through sustained outreach, we believe we’re building relationships of reciprocal trust with all of New Jersey’s diverse communities.

- **Promoting Diversity:** Consistent with our commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce, we’ve created and filled the position of a full-time Chief Diversity Officer, a first for the Department of Law and Public Safety. Our Chief Diversity Officer, Lora Fong, is a well-respected attorney with considerable expertise in this area, and reports directly to me. Working together, we’ve embarked on many immediate and longer-range efforts designed to ensure equal opportunity, promote diversity, and provide a family-friendly workplace.
- **Protection of Civil Rights:** We will continue to promote equal treatment and vigorously enforce New Jersey’s Law Against Discrimination. Among other noteworthy efforts in 2016, the Division on Civil Rights took action against a landlord who made plain his refusal to rent to Muslims, a national rental store chain that tolerated a manager’s use of racial slurs in the workplace, and a national pre-school chain that expelled a little girl from one of its New Jersey schools because of her disability (Down syndrome).
- **Dangerous Driving Initiative:** As we formally announced two weeks ago, we’ve launched a new initiative whereby citizens can report all forms of dangerous driving -- from driving while texting to driving while impaired, etc. -- by dialing #77. A unique element of this program -- in fact one

of the first of its kind in the nation -- is that motorists whose vehicles are reported to be operating dangerously will receive a formal warning letter. In conjunction with this new highway-safety effort, traffic enforcement measures are being stepped up on our roads. As you may be aware, New Jersey witnessed an 8 percent spike in traffic fatalities in 2016, and we attribute much of that increase to a trend toward distracted driving. Drivers need to remember that, when operating a motor vehicle, their phones and other gadgets can wait. We believe this new initiative will, over time, help to reinforce that message, encourage greater focus by drivers, and save lives.

- **Better Communication through Use of Social Media:** To better apprise the public of the important work we're doing, we have launched a new social media campaign. Using platforms like Twitter and Facebook, we are now able to provide real-time updates on the Department's many activities, thereby increasing transparency and promoting greater public awareness about our daily operations.
- Once again, I want to thank the Committee for its continuing support of our Department, and for the opportunity to discuss our work here this morning. I will now be happy to answer your questions.