

CeaseFire Maryland Bulletin

CeaseFire Maryland

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New Executive Director

Leah Barrett was appointed CeaseFire Maryland’s Executive Director in January, succeeding Ginni Wolf.

Leah was most recently the Vice President of the Montgomery County Chapter of the Million Mom March, a grass-roots organization. Prior to this, she lived for 14 years in London in the UK where she was Environmental Affairs Director for Tetra Pak, a large Swedish-owned packaging company. She has also held positions with The Economist and with Data Resources, Inc. Leah holds a bachelor’s degree in Economics from Carleton College and a Masters in International Affairs and Russian from Columbia University.

In 1997, Leah lost her older brother, Greg, to a senseless act of gun violence. “When I returned to the United States two years after my brother’s murder, I was determined to work to reduce the shocking levels of death inflicted on more than 30,000 Americans each year from guns. We lead the industrialized world in gun violence, a distinction of which we should not be proud. I look forward to helping to make Maryland a national model for gun violence prevention.”

Matt Fenton, President of CeaseFire Maryland, said: “We are excited to have Leah on board. We are confident she will help CeaseFire Maryland develop the progressive and life-saving gun safety policies that have made Maryland a leader in gun violence awareness and prevention.”

*Sonia Wills
 (mother of sniper
 victim Conrad
 Johnson), Leah
 Barrett, and Chief
 Charles Moose at
 the February 6th
 press conference in
 Annapolis to
 launch three gun
 safety bills (see
 story below).*

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Annapolis 2003

The Washington area sniper attacks last October transfixed the nation and traumatized many Marylanders, killing ten of our fellow citizens. It became clear in the aftermath of this terrible tragedy that our law enforcement community needed additional tools to help them prevent and solve gun crimes. With the help and support of law enforcement in Maryland, legislators are sponsoring three bills that are a package designed to assist our police forces.

Expanding Ballistic Fingerprinting (SB 208) (HB 696)

Senate Sponsor: Jennie Forehand (D-Montgomery County)

House Sponsor: Peter Franchot (D-Montgomery County)

Ballistic fingerprinting is a technique for identifying the specific gun from which a particular bullet or cartridge casing was discharged. It is a powerful tool designed to help law enforcement solve gun crimes.

Using sophisticated computer equipment, markings left on a bullet or casing when the gun is fired are scanned into a computer database. When bullets or casings are discovered at a crime

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Annapolis 2003, continued

Did you know?

Twenty-four states have passed laws shielding the gun industry from lawsuits, and another five states have such legislation pending. Maryland is not one of them!

*“Twenty-seven percent of gun crimes in Baltimore are committed with rifles and shotguns”
ATF report, July 2002*



(Continued from page 1)

scene, they can be compared with other images already in the database. Experienced firearms examiners then compare the marks on a bullet or cartridge casing discovered at a crime scene with those identified by the computer as a potential match.

Law enforcement agencies nationwide already use ballistic fingerprinting, through a federal system called NIBIN, to solve thousands of gun crimes. However, NIBIN only contains images of bullets or casings recovered from crime scenes. In 2000, Maryland improved upon that system by establishing a ballistic fingerprint database for new handguns sold in the State. Because the database also contains information about the gun that generated the image, a match can identify for police the specific gun used in the crime. With this information, police can run a trace as if they had recovered the gun itself. This database does not contain any ballistic fingerprints for rifles and shotguns, which are used in 27% of gun crimes in Baltimore.

SB 208 & HB 696 would expand Maryland’s ballistic fingerprint database to include new rifles and shotguns, as well as handguns.

Improving the Assault Weapons Ban (SB 494) (HB 844)

Senate Sponsor: Rob Garagiola (D-Montgomery County)

House Sponsor: Neil Quinter (D-Howard County)

Since 1994, Maryland has had a ban on assault pistols, but not on assault weapons. The Federal Assault Weapons Ban will expire in 2004 unless renewed by the Republican Congress. Maryland should ban these destructive weapons at the state level. The federal ban only covers specific assault weapons by name, but the gun industry has been good at evading the federal ban by creating copycat weapons that fall outside the scope of the federal law. This includes the Bushmaster weapon used by the Washington area snipers.

SB 494 & HB 844 would refine the definition of “assault weapon” to include specific military features common on assault weapons that are unnecessary for legitimate uses but attractive to criminals.

Theft and Loss Reporting for Handguns (SB 528) (HB 836)

Senate Sponsor: Verna Jones (D-Baltimore City)

House Sponsor: Salima Marriott (D-Baltimore City)

Current law does not require gun owners to report the theft of guns for which they are responsible. Without an accurate file of stolen guns, police often cannot return a recovered gun to its legal owner. Police also cannot confirm the accuracy of a gun owner’s claim of theft after a gun is recovered in a crime. This loophole allows illegal gun traffickers to avoid accountability for putting illegal guns on Maryland’s streets.

SB 528 & HB 836 would require handgun owners to file a report to the State Police within 48 hours of discovering the loss or theft of a handgun.

Since 1986 when a small group of activists founded CeaseFire Maryland, education has been our biggest priority. CeaseFire Maryland fulfills the need to publicize the consequences of firearm violence and let people know that there are reasonable ways to prevent or lessen the likelihood that violence will happen.

In the past seventeen years, CeaseFire Maryland has led education programs in many schools including ones in Baltimore City, Anne Arundel and Howard Counties. We crafted a gun education program under contract for Montgomery County Government, and have provided a speakers’ bureau for civic groups, colleges and universities. In past years, we sponsored a successful youth program for middle and high school students, Students Against Handgun Abuse or SAHA that helped teach young people positive civic lessons.

Throughout its history, we have partnered with medical, religious and civic organizations to make our educational efforts more effective. Besides these classic ways to educate the public, we have also published public interest alerts, participated in radio and television talk shows, and answered

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Our Commitment to Education

(Continued from page 2)

numerous inquiries from the news media.

This year, CeaseFire Maryland, and the entire firearm violence protection movement face new challenges. But no matter what the challenges, the message CeaseFire Maryland teaches remains the same. Effective gun violence prevention is an important and economical way to reduce violent crime, prevent accidents and suicides and save lives.



Summary of Maryland Gun Laws

There was a lot of talk during the election of all the gun laws Maryland has on the books. It turns out there are not that many! Below is a summary list of Maryland's gun laws and what they do to keep us safe.

1966 Waiting Period/Background Check: Requires gun dealers to hold handguns for seven (7) days, while the State Police perform a background check on the purchaser to ensure that they are not prohibited by federal or state law from buying a handgun. Restrictions include those convicted of felonies, the mentally ill, and abusers of drugs and alcohol.

1972 Concealed Carry: Bars anyone from carrying a handgun outside of their home without first obtaining a special permit from the State Police. Applicants must establish a legitimate need to carry a handgun.

1988 Saturday Night Special Law: Created the Handgun Roster Board to determine which handguns can be sold in Maryland. The Board has prohibited more than 115 models of low quality Saturday Night Specials or 'junk guns' favored by criminals.

1989 Assault Weapon Waiting Period: Includes assault rifles such as the AK-47 in the 1966 waiting period law.

1992 CAP (Child Access Prevention) Law: Demands that gun owners keep their weapons outside of the reach of children under the age of sixteen (16).

1993 Gun Show Law: Subjects prospective buyers of guns at gun shows to the same waiting period and background check as those who purchase guns from licensed dealers.

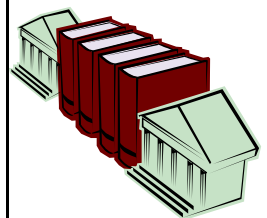
1994 Assault Weapons Ban: Prohibits the manufacture and sale of 18 models of assault pistols, including the TEC-9 and the MAC-10. Also bans gun magazines that can hold more than 20 bullets at one time.

1996 Gun Violence Act: Limits handgun purchases to one per person per month; regulates secondary or private sales to require same waiting period and background check as commercial sales; prohibits "straw purchases"; bars domestic abusers from purchasing handguns; increases the penalties for illegal sales, and imposes additional enforcement methods.

2000 Responsible Gun Safety Act (key provisions):

- Requires by January 1, 2003 any new handguns sold in Maryland to be equipped with an integrated mechanical safety device or other incorporated design technology to prevent children and other unauthorized users from firing the handgun.
- Enhance existing gun laws and increases enforcement to protect children by placing a mandatory minimum sentence of five years for the illegal possession of a firearm by a felon previously convicted for a violent crime or drug offense. This penalty is similar to the federal penalty used by federal prosecutors in Project Disarm and Project Exile.
- Requires ballistics fingerprinting of shell casings from new handguns prior to sale. Firearm dealers will be required to collect and provide certain handgun identification information to the Maryland State Police.
- Requires an applicant for a regulated firearms purchase, rental or transfer made on or after January 1, 2002 to complete a safety training course offered by the Maryland Police Training Commission OR by a certified individual or organization.

Did you know?
There are only 300 federal and state laws 'on the books' regarding guns, not 20,000, the figure claimed by the other side.



Summary of Maryland Gun Laws, continued

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- A Cease Fire Council in the State Police Department to administer grants for innovative gun violence reduction initiatives.
- Denials of permits to carry concealed handguns to former violent juvenile delinquents and those convicted to drug related offenses or those determined to have a propensity to be violent or unstable.
- Prohibits possession of handguns by those convicted of a felony or any misdemeanor with a statutory penalty of more than two years, and by those under the age of 30 who have previously been adjudicated delinquent by a juvenile court for a violent crime.
- Denial of permits to carry concealed handguns to former violent juvenile delinquents and those convicted of drug related offenses or those determined to have a propensity to be violent or unstable.



Ballistic fingerprinting has proven effective time and again in solving violent crimes.

“In March 2002, the Prince George’s County Police Department used ballistic fingerprinting information to tie a single gun to 5 unsolved violent crimes.”

Maryland and Gun Violence—Some Facts...



Good data assist in the making of good policy.

The following are taken from the latest fact sheet from the Johns Hopkins Gun Policy and Research Center at the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

Number and Distribution of Firearm Injuries and Deaths

- In 2000, there were 617 gun deaths in Maryland—the equivalent of fifty per month. Of the total gun deaths, 353 were homicides, 245 were suicides, 4 were shooting of undetermined intent, and 13 were in the category of “legal intervention.”
- Guns are the most frequently used weapons in Maryland homicides. In 2000, 70% of all homicides in the state were committed with firearms.
- In 2000, homicide was the second leading cause of death for Maryland youth ages 15-24 years, followed by suicide. Eight of every ten homicides and half of all suicides for this age group were committed with guns.

Maryland and Gun Violence, continued



- In 1999, almost 60% of Maryland's gun homicides occurred in Baltimore City while only 12% of Maryland gun suicides occurred in the city.
- Hospitalization costs for treating Maryland residents with gunshot wounds in 1994-95 were over \$37 million. Each Maryland shooting victim generated an average of \$36,000 in lifetime medical costs.

Sources of Guns

- There are 1,482 federally licensed firearm dealers (FFLs) in Maryland.
- Maryland federally licensed firearm dealers (FFLs) represented the largest original source of traced gun used in Baltimore crimes in 2000, accounting for 62%.
- In 2000, 26% of Baltimore crime guns traced were purchased less than three years before being used in a crime, and 11% were purchased within one year. This short "time to crime" is considered an indicator for illicit gun sales of new guns for criminal purposes.
- Nine out of ten Baltimore crime guns traced in 2000 changed ownership at least once from the time of purchase by the original possessor to the time of crime.

Effects of Gun Laws

- A 1988 law banning the sale of "Saturday night special" handguns in Maryland was associated with reduced access to criminals for these types of gun, and a 9% decrease in firearm homicides in the state between 1990-1998. The post-law decrease in gun homicides translates to 40 lives saved per year that the law was in effect.
- State that require *both* mandatory licensing of handgun owners and registration of handguns make it harder for criminal and juveniles to obtain guns from within the state. However, there is no significant effect of having *only* licensing *or* registration (i.e., not both) on the source state of crime guns. Maryland requires new handgun registration but does not license handgun owners.

Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research is Resource for Maryland

We are fortunate to have the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research here in Maryland. The Center is located at the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University. The School of Public Health is the oldest and largest school of public health in the country, and is an academically-acclaimed international resource with 400 full-time faculty and 1,800 students a year from eighty countries worldwide. For over ten years, the Center for Gun Policy and Research has been dedicated to reducing gun-related injuries and deaths through the application of a *public health perspective* and sound research to the issue of gun violence prevention.

The Center engages in a broad range of activities including original scholarly research, policy analysis, and agenda-setting public discourse. Its activities bring public health expertise and perspectives to the complex policy issues related to gun violence prevention. By translating scientific research into information useful to policymakers, the media, advocates, lawyers and the general public, the Center serves the cause of gun violence prevention in Maryland.

Priority areas of activity include:

- Guns as consumer products.
- Reducing Illegal Firearm Trafficking
- Restricting gun access among youth and other high-risk users
- Monitoring the effectiveness of gun laws
- Firearm litigation
- Technology for 'safer' guns

For more information, see: www.jhsph.edu/gunpolicy.org or call Nancy Lewin, Communications Director on (410) 614 3243.

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Working to free Maryland from gun violence

WE'RE ON THE WEB!
WWW.CEASEFIREMD.ORG

An International Comparison of Gun Violence

The US gun murder rate is 48 times greater than Britain's. The difference can partly be explained by the vastly larger number of guns in America and their easy availability. Since 1997 when the UK passed a law banning handguns, overall crime has decreased by 27%. The US should take a cue from its cousin across the ocean.

	Great Britain <i>(2001 figures)</i>	United States <i>(2000 figures)</i>
Gun Murders	73	10,801
Total Firearm Deaths	97	28,663
Instances of Gun Crime	9,974	1.3 million
Gun Murders per 100,000	.13	6.24