

Governor Christie and Acting Attorney General Hoffman Announce Statewide Body Camera Initiative For Law Enforcement

Christie Administration Body Camera Initiative Strengthens Policing & Community Relations

"That's why I've been an advocate for body cameras for law enforcement. I think law enforcement should want to have what they do recorded. For their own safety and protection and for the safety and protection of the people they serve. In Camden...we've really had a renaissance there not only in terms of reduction of crime...but also a new approach to policing. We're really doing community policing in Camden. We have more police officers on the street and on foot and on bicycle. They're interacting with the public in a much different way and we're seeing the police force and the community, predominantly minority community in Camden, really working together to reduce crime. I think Camden is a great example of what can be done across the country. But it's going to take work."

– Governor Christie, May 12, 2015

Governor Christie announced today that the Attorney General's Office will be fully equipping the New Jersey State Police force with body cameras and offering local police grant funding to purchase these devices to strengthen community policing. In conjunction, the Acting Attorney General issued a statewide policy establishing guidance for proper use of the devices. Provisions of the new initiative include:

- Purchase by the New Jersey State Police of approximately 1,000 body cameras for State Troopers through \$1.5 million in funding.
- Allocation of \$2.5 million in criminal forfeiture funds to help local police departments buy body cameras.
- Authorization of an offset of up to \$500 for each body camera or camera "package," including body camera and related equipment.

Acting Attorney General Hoffman also issued a new directive today to make commonsense changes that build on New Jersey's widely respected use of force investigation practices. These changes will continue to ensure independent and impartial investigations and bring greater transparency to all police-involved shootings and deadly force incidents in New Jersey.

Throughout his Administration, Governor Christie has encouraged community policing across all New Jersey municipalities, most notably in Camden. Combating a public safety crisis, Governor Christie has taken aggressive action to bring about a sweeping reformation of their police services. With the support of the Christie Administration, the City and County of Camden implemented a ground-breaking reform by creating a county-wide force that is putting more officers on the streets of Camden, and more resources at their disposal. Governor Christie has been an advocate for continued discussion on positive engagement and outreach by law enforcement to the communities they serve.

- **More Officers On The Streets:** Under the reorganization, the number of police officers patrolling Camden's streets has already increased from 160 to 376. With another class of cadets already in training, the force will increase to over 400 officers.
- **Cutting Edge Crime-Fighting Technology:** The new Camden County Police Force is utilizing state-of-the-art technology and techniques to combat the city's crime epidemic. From its Real-Time Crime Center, the new force can monitor over 120 city-wide cameras and 35 microphones that can

instantly pinpoint the exact location of a gunshot.

- **A Focus On Community Outreach:** City and police officials are emphasizing outreach to community leaders and one-on-one interactions between officers and residents as a cornerstone to integrating the new police force within the neighborhoods they patrol and making the people partners in the effort to curb violence.

Early Signs Of Progress:

2012 was the most violent year in the City of Camden's history, when it ranked as the most violent city in the nation. While there is more work to be done, there have already been signs of progress in curbing crime in the city. As of July 2015, Camden experienced sharp reductions in crime compared with the same point in 2012:

- **57%** Percent Reduction In Homicides
- **42%** Percent Drop In Robberies
- **24%** Percent Reduction In Aggravated Assaults
- **30%** Percent Overall Drop In Violent Crime
- **30%** Percent Reduction in Non-Violent Crime

New York Times: "[Camden Turns Around With New Police Force](#)":

"But mostly, the police have changed their culture. Officers have been moved from desk jobs and squad cars onto walking beats, in what Chief J. Scott Thomson likens to a political campaign to overcome years of mistrust. ...

"And while the unrest in Ferguson, Mo., has drawn attention to long-simmering hostilities between police departments and minority communities, Camden is becoming an example of the opposite.

"We're not going to do this by militarizing streets,' Chief Thomson said. Instead, he sent officers to knock on doors and ask residents their concerns. He lets community leaders monitor surveillance cameras from their home computers to help watch for developing crime..

"The police have held meet-the-officer fairs at parks and churches, attended baseball games and sent Mister Softee trucks into neighborhoods. Officers stand at school crossings and on corners where drugs and violence flourished. Chief Thomson's theory is that in a city of 77,000, there are thousands more well-intentioned people than bad, and that the police must enlist them to take back the streets."