

TheJoyceFoundation



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Midwest Police Chiefs Gather in Chicago to Fight Gun Violence

Chicago, IL– Law enforcement leaders from across the Midwest gathered today in Chicago for the first-ever Great Lakes Summit on Firearm Violence. Armed with first-hand accounts of the devastation guns have wreaked on their communities and their police officers, law enforcement leaders, elected officials, healthcare professionals, and others are working to turn the tide on gun violence.

Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, and IACP President Chief Joseph Carter addressed the summit, held by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and sponsored by the Joyce Foundation. Top law enforcement officials, including police chiefs, district attorneys, and attorneys general, developed strategies to address firearms trafficking, domestic violence, firearm suicide, drug markets, gangs, and officer safety.

"Gun violence is on the rise in the Midwest and across the United States, devastating families and taking lives," said Joseph C. Carter, Chief of the MBTA Transit Police Department and President of the IACP. "By convening this summit to consider the issues plaguing our communities like illegal gun trafficking and gang violence, we are focused on developing and implementing effective ways to protect our communities from gun violence."

"Gun violence can destroy families and ruin the quality of life in our neighborhoods," Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley said of the challenges facing today's mayors. "We need to work together to enact common-sense legislation to keep guns off the streets of our cities and out of the hands of those who would misuse them."

Mayors Daley and Barrett have been active in Mayors Against Illegal Guns, a group calling for stronger laws to deal with illegal guns and gun trafficking.

Gun violence takes 30,000 lives each year, including victims of domestic violence, bystanders caught in the crossfire of gang warfare, teens who commit suicide with a family-owned firearm, and police officers killed in the line of duty. Fatal injuries caused by firearms are the second leading cause of injury death for adolescents ages 15-19, second only to injuries from motor vehicles, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics.

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Law enforcement officials are the first, and sometimes only, line of defense against gun crime and gun violence. In 2005, the FBI reported that 55 law enforcement officers were feloniously killed in the line of duty. Another 5,000 officers were assaulted by firearms while performing their duties.

The police chiefs have joined together to develop strategies and recommend stronger public policies to make communities safe from gun violence in all its forms: to protect officers from being outgunned; to prevent criminals from trafficking in illegal guns; and to protect youth and families from the devastation of intentional and unintentional gun injury and death.

"This is an issue that should transcend politics," said Ellen S. Alberding, president of the Chicago-based Joyce Foundation, which is supporting the summit. "We applaud law enforcement for coming together on common strategies to fight gun trafficking and prevent violent gun crimes that bring tragedy to too many Midwest families and communities. It's time for state and federal elected officials to step up to the plate as well, and give them the tools they need to get the job done."

Polls have consistently shown overwhelming support for common-sense gun laws and stricter enforcement of current laws. For example, a bipartisan 2007 poll of Illinois voters found that eight out of ten state residents support mandated background checks for the purchase of firearms by private individuals. Almost all voters surveyed (96%) would support a law to require gun owners to report the loss or theft of their firearm.

The same poll found that a majority of gun owners themselves voiced support for changes in state laws that would reduce illegal gun trafficking and require background checks for all gun purchases.

Following the summit's conclusion, the IACP will release recommendations and an action plan to help curb gun violence and provide for the safety of law enforcement officials and their communities. Some recommendations will be implemented immediately, and others will necessitate changes in policies and procedures.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)

Founded in 1893, the International Association of Chiefs of Police is the world's oldest and largest association of law enforcement executives with more than 20,000 members in nearly 100 countries. For more information, visit www.theiacp.org.

The Joyce Foundation

Based in Chicago with assets of \$900 million, the Joyce Foundation supports efforts to strengthen public policies in ways that improve the quality of life in the Great Lakes region. Since 1993, The Foundation has made more than \$42 million in grants to groups seeking public health solutions that offer promise of reducing gun deaths and injuries in America. For more information, visit www.joycefdn.org.

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