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PRESS RELEASE

Gang Legislation Passes

Chester County District Attorney Tom Hogan announced that the anti-gang legislation created in response to a gang-related double homicide in Chester County has been enacted.

District Attorney Hogan stated, "Out of the ashes of a tragedy, good things can grow. This legislation provides prosecutors with a vital tool to help protect our children from gangs."



"Tagging" by rival gangs in Southern Chester County.

Senate Majority Leader Dominic Pileggi of Chester County and Delaware County sponsored the legislation. Senator Pileggi stated, "Gang violence impacts communities all

across Pennsylvania: urban, suburban, and rural. I'm pleased that we will have a law on the books giving prosecutors powerful new tools to combat the spread of gang activity."

The legislation came about because of two murders. In December of 2011, two young men were killed in a fight between Sur 13 and Viking gang members in New Garden Township, Chester County. Eventually, 12 defendants were charged in the killings.



Knife used in New Garden homicides.

After the arrests, New Garden Township Police Chief Gerald Simpson approached District Attorney Hogan to discuss legislation to prevent gang violence. The Chief and the District Attorney looked at laws in other jurisdictions and considered what was needed in New Garden, as well as what was needed in the rest of Pennsylvania.

Chief Simpson stated, "Fighting gangs was an area that simply was not addressed by Pennsylvania law. After the murders, local parents were telling me that they were afraid that their kids would get pulled into gang life. We needed a way to prevent our young people from being lured into these violent gangs."

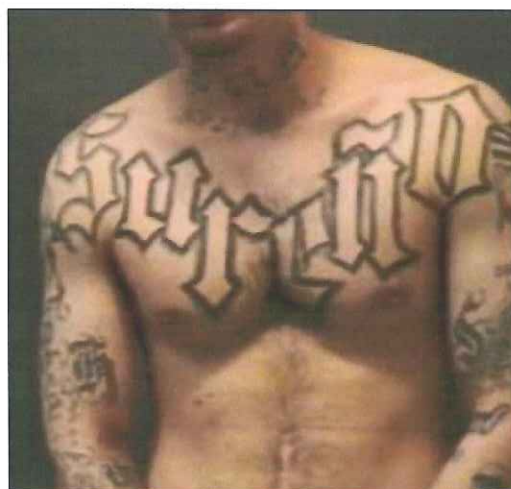
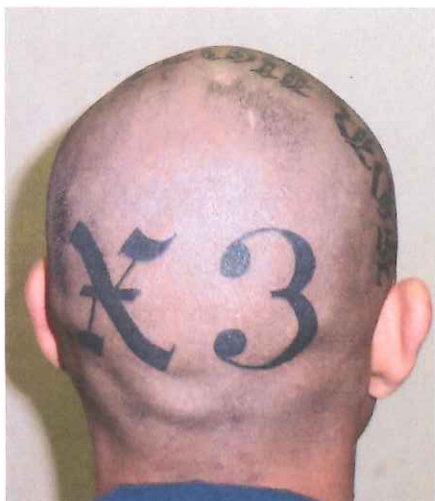
District Attorney Hogan then brought the proposed legislation to Senator Pileggi, the Majority Leader of the Pennsylvania Senate. The murders took place in Senator Pileggi's district.

District Attorney Hogan stated, "This was a simple meeting. I presented the legislation to Senator Pileggi and we talked about the reasoning behind it. The Senator said, 'This looks like a good idea. Let me take care of it.' And just a few months of hard work later, we had the completed bill passed."

Senator Pileggi, together with Senators John Rafferty and Ted Erickson, co-sponsored the legislation. The Pennsylvania Senate approved the bill 45-3; the Pennsylvania House approved the bill 195-0. All of the Chester County legislators voted for the bill. Governor Tom Corbett signed the legislation today.

The bill makes it a crime to recruit people into criminal gangs. The penalty increases depending on the level of force used. Using threats or intimidation is a misdemeanor, while causing injury to recruit for a criminal gang is a felony. The grading of the crime increases if the victim is a juvenile. The bill also adds sentencing enhancements for gang-related crimes.

Chester County Detective Joe Nangle, a recognized gang expert, explained, "In areas where gangs already exist, the gangs recruit juveniles to feed their ranks. In addition, gangs believe that juveniles face more lenient treatment in the criminal system, so the juveniles are sent to do the 'dirty work' for the gang. In areas where gangs do not exist yet, gangs often start recruiting by approaching juveniles, as they are most susceptible to the lure of gang life. So no matter where you live, this legislation gives law enforcement a weapon to prevent gangs from forming or to choke off existing gangs."



Gang-related tattoos.

District Attorney Hogan credited Chester County teamwork for getting this law passed. "In most places, it takes years to get any legislation through. In Chester County, Chief Simpson identified a problem and proposed a solution. We discussed the issue and brought it to Senator Pileggi. Senator Pileggi immediately recognized the merits of the bill and made sure that it became the law of Pennsylvania within months. Chester County is lucky to be served by talented law enforcement and strong legislators."

District Attorney Hogan summed up the sentiment of law enforcement, "For young men, gang life leads to prison or an early grave. Hopefully, this legislation will save a few lives."

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Approved for release:

Thomas P. Hogan