



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Kennedy, Stewart-Cousins Lead Fight Against Gang Violence, Call for Anti-Violence Funds to Re-Launch Operation SNUG

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY February 23, 2013

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*Following Governor Cuomo's budget presentation at City Honors, Leader Stewart-Cousins visits Buffalo to outline Senate Democrats' budget proposal to curb gang violence.*

*Senators Kennedy and Stewart-Cousins lead push to reinstate funding for Operation SNUG programs in state budget.*

*Kennedy and Stewart-Cousins: In Communities across the State, Operation SNUG Helped Snuff out Gang Activity Until Funds Ran Dry. It's Clear this Anti-Violence Effort is Needed Once Again.*

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Following Governor Andrew Cuomo’s budget presentation at City Honors School, Senate Democratic Conference Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins joined Senator Tim Kennedy in Buffalo today to unveil a budget amendment that Senate Democrats are pushing to get included in the final state budget. Senators Kennedy and Stewart-Cousins want to reinstate funding for an anti-violence program known as Operation SNUG, which has helped curb gang activity in communities across the state.

Operation SNUG – which is guns spelled backwards – aims to reverse local trends in violent crime and gang activity. It’s designed to follow the successful CeaseFire model that was employed in Chicago, Illinois to cut down on street violence. Like CeaseFire, Operation SNUG puts violence interrupters to work in the community, intervening in potentially violent situations and striving to calm the situation before it turns deadly.

“Gang violence has taken hold of our streets. Gunfire has torn through our homes and parks. And local families have had to endure the devastating consequences of death and destruction. Enough is enough,” said **Senator Kennedy**. “With homicides up by nearly 40 percent in the City of Buffalo, action is urgently needed to stop the violence. That’s why we’re pushing the state to re-launch Operation SNUG. By amending the budget to reinstate resources for Operation SNUG, we will help cut down on gang activity and make Buffalo and cities across the state safer. It’s an innovative solution to a problem that needs a sustained and relentless focus. I thank Leader Stewart-Cousins for so relentlessly fighting to prevent violent crime across the state.”

“New York State must take an aggressive approach to keep our families and neighborhoods safe,” said **Leader Stewart-Cousins**. “The Senate Democratic Conference has been leading the fight against illegal guns and violent gangs, and we won’t let up now. A few years back, we launched Operation SNUG in cities throughout the state, and it helped cut down on gun crimes until funding ran dry. With gun and gang violence on the rise, it’s clear Operation

SNUG is needed once again. I'm proud to stand with Senator Kennedy to call for the reinstatement of funding for this critical anti-violence program. We intend to drive this cause forward during budget negotiations and beyond."

SNUG programs utilize grassroots neighborhood outreach, public awareness campaigns and community mobilization to engage youth, alter the mindset and transform local norms. It's a hands-on, street-level approach to prevent violence by shifting attitudes, changing ways of thinking and interrupting disputes before they spiral out of control.

In addition to the outreach workers and violence interrupters employed by the program, Operation SNUG partners community leaders, local activists, faith-based leaders and law enforcement officials in a cooperative effort to prevent violence.

It's an innovative idea, but it's not new to New York State. In 2009, the State Legislature allocated \$4 million to implement Operation SNUG in eight cities across the state. Buffalo was one of those cities. The program demonstrated initial success, but after the original funding allocation was depleted, most operations were forced to shut down.

In Albany, shootings dropped by 29 percent during the first eight months of Operation SNUG. In Rochester, there was a 40 percent decline in shooting victims over the course of SNUG's first six months, and violent altercations fell to a 10-year low in targeted neighborhoods. Officials from the Community Action Organization of Erie County say Operation SNUG led to a marked decline in street violence in the 14215 and 14211 zip-code areas in Buffalo. And In the Chicago neighborhood where CeaseFire (which has since changed its name to Cure Violence) was launched, shootings were decreased 67 percent in its first year.

“This up-front investment in violence prevention will strengthen our community and lead to substantial savings for taxpayers,” Senator Kennedy added. “It will reduce incarceration costs by stopping crime before it happens, boost property values by improving neighborhood safety and inspire young people to be forces of positive change here in the City of Buffalo.”

The Senators want a restoration of funds for Operation SNUG to levels that will ensure effective anti-violence programs in Buffalo and other cities in New York State.

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*Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate’s 63rd District, which is comprised of the towns of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.*