



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PROJECT CEASEFIRE
ASSISTANT US ATTORNEY RECEIVES NATIONAL
ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Bradley J. Schlozman, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that Assistant U.S. Attorney Paul Becker received a Project Safe Neighborhoods Achievement Award during the national conference in Denver, Col., today.

Becker, chief of the Organized Crime Strike Force and the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) Coordinator for the Western District of Missouri, was recognized for Outstanding Individual Contribution to a Gun Crime Task Force.

“As a result of Paul Becker’s efforts,” Schlozman said, “this district led the nation in 2005 in the number of indictments returned against defendants who illegally possessed firearms. Both the law enforcement and the community outreach aspects of Project Ceasefire, the local PSN initiative, have expanded greatly under his leadership. He certainly deserves this prestigious national recognition for his work.”

In 2005, 373 defendants were charged in the Western District of Missouri with illegally possessing firearms. “That’s an increase from 352 defendants who were charged in 2004,” Schlozman said, “which was likewise the most indictments of any district in the nation that year.”

The award was presented during Project Safe Neighborhoods’ fourth annual national conference in Denver. Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales this week brought together over 1,300 federal, state and local prosecutors, law enforcement officials, community leaders and other members of PSN teams from across the nation to discuss efforts to reduce and prosecute gun crime. Ten local representatives are participating in the conference, sharing successful strategies for combating gun crime and gang violence. The Bush Administration has devoted more than \$1.6 billion to PSN since 2001, including nearly \$40 million that will be distributed to

local task forces this year.

Project Ceasefire, launched in Kansas City in October 1999, is a cooperative initiative by federal and local law enforcement and the Kansas City Crime Commission that targets for federal prosecution persons who unlawfully use or possess firearms.

Since the beginning of Operation Ceasefire, 918 defendants have been indicted and 786 defendants have been convicted. In addition to his supervisory responsibility, Becker has been personally responsible for prosecuting 240 gun crime cases, which is more than any other member of the unit.

“The partnerships created through the Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative have been essential to making our communities safer for our children, and they have helped fuel the lowest violent crime rates in over 30 years,” said Deputy Attorney General Paul J. McNulty in presenting the Achievement Awards. “The recipients of today’s awards are recognized for their selfless and steadfast commitment to the fight against gun crime and gang violence, and their efforts represent the heart of Project Safe Neighborhoods.”

Becker established a network of partners to engage in prevention and outreach strategies. This network includes various civic, law enforcement, and academic components that implement different strategies to reach the target audience and to measure the effect of these strategies. For example, he worked with a public relations firm to create television and radio ads, print ads and billboards aimed at pressing the message that “Felons with guns burn five years.” Research conducted by the University of Missouri-Kansas City through the PSN Task Force revealed that this message had a 95 percent awareness rate among felons and, furthermore, that this message affected their perception of the criminal sanctions that would be imposed upon them if they carried a firearm. Becker also participates in evening offender re-entry meetings with groups of felons as they are paroled or begin serving a period of supervised release to inform them of the grave consequences of carrying a firearm.

In addition, Becker has been integrally involved in the design and initiation of additional programs to reduce the incidence of firearm violence.

Becker was instrumental in establishing a program to combat crime in public housing by working with others to draft a plan to implement a Public Safety Housing Initiative, through the Office of Justice Programs and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. This program prosecutes crimes in and around public housing sites using the networks and model established in the PSN initiative. In addition, this plan encompasses a Crime Free Multi-Housing Program that targets crime reduction in public housing.

Becker is currently working on a program to combat gang violence and encourage gang reduction. It is anticipated that this program, like the PSN initiative, will involve the coordination of local law enforcement with federal agents to charge offenders with violations of federal law. In addition, because of the geographical confluence of public housing with many of the incidents of gang activity, it is anticipated that the resources of the Public Safety Housing

Initiative can also be brought to bear on the problem of gang violence.

“Project Safe Neighborhoods is a street-level partnership that helps local leaders solve local problems,” said Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. “Through this program, law enforcement at every level supports innovative strategies to combat gun crime and gang violence in communities across America.”

Since combating gang-violence can only be done by working in partnership with state and local law enforcement and community organizations, the Attorney General directed each U.S. Attorney to convene a Gang Prevention Summit in his or her district designed to explore additional opportunities in the area of gang prevention. These summits are to be held in the next eight months and will bring together law enforcement and community leaders to discuss best practices, identify gaps in services, and create a prevention plan to target at-risk youth within their individual communities.

The Attorney General announced that the Department of Justice released nearly \$30 million in grant assistance to support state and local anti-gang efforts of PSN task forces across the country. In addition, the Department will award \$10 million across the country to support PSN efforts to fight gun crime that is not necessarily gang-related.

PSN conference training topics range from enforcement strategies to remove violent gang members and gun criminals from the streets, to school violence prevention programs, and building community partnerships. The strength of PSN continues to be its strategic mix of federal, state and local agencies and community leaders focused on law enforcement and crime prevention. Prosecutors pursue the strongest possible punishment for those who violate firearms statutes, while community partners aggressively educate their constituents about consequence of illegal gun violence and gang activity through services and resources provided by PSN.

For more information, visit the PSN website at www.psn.gov.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow/index.html