



Public Safety &

Criminal Justice

in New Jersey

STEVEN
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DEMOCRAT FOR GOVERNOR

stevenfulop.com



In New Jersey, there are unique opportunities for a strong and committed executive to impact police, crime, and criminal justice matters. The Governor of New Jersey appoints the Attorney General and that Attorney General then sets policy with the force of law for all prosecutors and police agencies throughout the State. Importantly, the Governor also influences the members of the Police Training Commission, which controls academy curriculums throughout New Jersey.

As a mayor, Steven Fulop knows firsthand the needs and challenges of law enforcement and public safety. It is not an abstract or philosophical conversation for Mayor Fulop — it is something he has dealt with over three terms as Mayor of Jersey City.

IN JERSEY CITY:

Notable Accomplishments in Public Safety and Criminal Justice

Steven Fulop recognizes that crime is hyper-local. Statistics about crime going down statewide or citywide are meaningless if you live in an area where crime has been persistent. The state’s role must be to empower local law enforcement with proper resources to truly impact each individual community.

Fulop has a proven record of creating a safer Jersey City for all residents, in all wards and neighborhoods; while building an accountable and transparent police department which reflects the diversity of the City, is professionally led, and continues to improve for the betterment of its officers and the communities that they serve.

The events of the last four years have presented Jersey City with challenges and opportunities that no one could have foreseen:

An active mass shooter attack in Jersey City and a six hour standoff with high caliber assault weapons. Fulop and his team made split-second decisions to minimize death and neutralize the shooter.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges in delivering police services and keeping the work force and residents safe. As an executive managing the city’s response the decisions he made were not abstract policy decisions but rather decisions that impacted the day to day lives of every single resident.

The murder of George Floyd, due to excessive force by police officers in Minneapolis, caused

massive civil unrest and became the catalyst for a national conversation about policing. Jersey City’s response in the days and weeks after were crucial for every city and police department in the country and as a mayor, Fulop’s decisions mattered.



Homicides, shootings, and violent crime surged in cities all across America and how Jersey City responded are based on local decisions around policing and social services that were made by Mayor Fulop.

Through it all, Mayor Fulop has continued his mission to improve and professionalize the Jersey City Police Department (JCPD) while providing police services to the communities.



Police Reform

As Mayor, Steven Fulop is a committed leader in the area of police reform. The right to exercise police powers over our fellow Americans is a sacred trust and must always be accompanied by transparency and accountability. To these ends, the Fulop Administration has:

- Continued to diversify the JCPD at all ranks and been recognized as a national model
- Appointed a civilian Police Director in lieu of a Police Chief over two years in order to provide culture change, accountability over day to day operations and better officer accountability
- Created a Training Bureau and mandated training including de-escalation and tactical communication for all officers
- Purchased, assigned, and mandated the use of body worn cameras for all officers assigned to contact with the community
- Continue to expand and increase the use of our CCTV System to reduce police/citizen interactions
- Installed cameras in all police facilities in any area where interaction with the public, including prisoners, may occur
- Opened Jersey City's police training to clergy and community leaders for attendance so they can see exactly how our officers are training
- Continuing to limit police interactions with minor infractions that can be handled in other ways, and working to find ways to safely aid emotionally disturbed persons with a minimum of force necessary



Crime in Jersey City

For the last three years, under Mayor Fulop's leadership, Jersey City's shooting incidents dropped below 90 and total homicides dropped below 20. In 2019, Jersey City had a record-tying low of 13 homicides (including four in a single active shooter event). After the pandemic hit, causing city resources to be both depleted and diverted to other missions, Jersey City maintained most of the reduction in violence and avoided the large increases seen in most other U.S. cities.



nj.com
True
Jersey.

January 13, 2020

Jersey City shooters had massive bomb that could have killed people 500 yards away, feds say

The Washington Post

December 11, 2019

Jersey City shootout: Mayor says deadly attack on kosher deli was a targeted hate crime

Mass Shooting Readiness/Response

Since 2013, the Fulop Administration has devoted substantial resources to preparing Jersey City for a potential active shooter attack, as well as cyberattacks. Every year the Police and Emergency Services train and drill along with civilian, educational, and business partners. When the tragic mass shooting of December 2019 occurred, Jersey City was able to respond, isolate and contain the incident, and bring it to a conclusion without any further loss of life. After the initial attack, further investigation by State and Federal Authorities confirmed that the attackers were heavily armed with multiple assault weapons, handguns and explosive devices. The rapid and professional response of the JCPD prevented further attack and loss of life. As Mayor, Steven Fulop has experience with confronting some of the most significant public safety challenges in the United States.



Sentencing Alternatives

Jersey City expanded the use of sentencing alternatives including options around community court, mental health, and domestic violence. These models are based on restorative justice and free access to treatment and social services.

Jersey City is the only municipality in New Jersey that has instituted diverted processes for defendants in community court, drug court, and domestic violence.

For example, in domestic violence cases, Jersey City takes a 360 degree approach - working to support the victim, but also getting the abuser the help they need to prevent future violence. Jersey City is the only municipality to offer a free intensive program for domestic violence offenders. About 90% of all defendants are required to participate as a prerequisite to disposition of their case. Recognizing that many perpetrators of domestic violence suffer from mental health issues and/or substance abuse, cases are transferred to mental health court and defendants are offered additional services including substance abuse counseling, psychiatric evaluations, medication management, and counseling.

For the victims, Jersey City works with Women Rising which offers counseling for victims, relocation, temporary shelter, job training, and other support services.

Re-Entry

The New Jersey Reentry Corporation was founded using shared resources with the Jersey City Employment & Training Program. Since 2013, this second chance reentry program has grown into the largest such program in New Jersey. While the program is independent from Jersey City, its start and initial investment grew out of Mayor Fulop's 2013 campaign for mayor.



AS GOVERNOR:

Areas of Focus in Public Safety & Criminal Justice

As the three-term mayor of Jersey City, Steven Fulop knows firsthand what can and should be done to make our communities safer. These are not abstract ideas, but clear policy driven solutions that will make a meaningful difference in the lives of New Jersey residents and business owners.

Identify Persistent Repeat Offenders

Persistent, local crime destroys citizens' quality of life and is the reason businesses close and franchises will not open.

A small number of people commit the vast majority of crime. As Governor, Fulop will require that each county prosecutor identify persistent repeat offenders of all types - from gun possession, violent crime, car theft, robbery, all the way to shoplifting and package theft - and have a plan to prosecute these offenders seriously and in an escalating fashion.





Bail Reform

Fulop supports bail reform because no one should be in jail solely because they lack resources. Unfortunately, the current system has resulted in unintended consequences. Persistent repeat offenders have become more brazen because they know that they will be immediately released. The result is increased car thefts, burglaries, and other crimes that are endangering citizens, destroying communities, and taxing already stressed police forces.

The real problem is that all defendants, those with or without resources, are waiting too long to have their cases adjudicated. New Jersey needs to get serious about increasing the number of judges and the resources available to county prosecutors. In over 90% of all cases, all of the evidence is available almost immediately. The only reason for the delays in adjudication is that the system does not have enough capacity.

Once capacity is increased, prosecutors can prioritize the small number of criminals that do the most damage and destroy communities - violent criminals and persistent criminals.

It is important to identify recidivists and speed up their cases. Due to a lack of resources and full dockets, prosecutors and judges want to move what appear to be "minor" cases along. Package thieves, pickpockets, and those that break into/steal automobiles can commit 5-20 crimes a day. Yet, they are caught and immediately released because each arrest is treated as a distinct incident. If detainees are on a recidivist list they should not be eligible for release without bail and their cases should be prioritized for adjudication. That would have an immense effect on the overall crime rate.

Beyond bail reform, what has been successful in Jersey City is matching help for drug offenses and minor non recidivist crime with drug courts and community courts. Fulop would expand this success story to the rest of New Jersey.

Fulop knows that we can lower crime rates and create safer communities by dealing with repeat offenders, removing violent criminals from the streets, and getting first time offenders help within the criminal justice system.

Sentencing Alternatives

Jersey City expanded the use of sentencing alternatives more than any other municipality in New Jersey, including options around community court, mental health, and domestic violence. As Governor, Fulop would fund state-based pilot programs replicating Jersey City's successful establishment of alternatives to incarceration, including models based on restorative justice and free access to treatment and social services.

Law Enforcement Accountability & Community Civilian Review Board (CCRB)

As Governor, Steven Fulop would push for a review and update of the Attorney General guidelines that govern a CCRB to reflect modern expectations of policing.

- Civilian oversight for each department
- Internal investigation should be made publicly available, rather than hidden from view which allows for cover ups and favoritism
- The law requiring municipalities to indemnify officers in all cases, even when off duty and clearly acting for personal reasons, should be revisited as this only serves to encourage bad police officers that abuse their authority.

There are many steps that can be taken to support good officers and prevent bad behavior by weak ones. No policy changes will matter if there is no accountability from law enforcement.

Changes to Public Defenders

Today, in New Jersey, the criminal justice system motivates our most vulnerable citizens to plead guilty and results in them incurring insurmountable debt. Our state's current approach to the Public Defender's office needs a significant overhaul - both in how attorneys are compensated and fees charged to underprivileged defendants.

Currently, the Public Defender's office is funded at a fraction of the compensation per lawyer of the prosecutor's office and, as a result, the representation of indigent defendants is often subpar. The fundamental presumption of innocence till proven guilty requires that equity exist in public representation. This will only occur with pay parity laws and increased funding of the Public Defender's office.

Furthermore, New Jersey state law requires that at a minimum, the public defender's office charge defendants at least \$150 and requires payment within six months of the case. Failure to pay in full causes a defendant to become in debt to the State, resulting in liens on assets, damage to credit, and garnishment of tax refunds or inheritances. Even worse, these fees encourage defendants to plead guilty, regardless of the facts of their case. And while the cost to indigent defendants can be insurmountable, the cash returns to the state are small.¹

The Fulop Administration is committed to eliminating all public defender fees and upholding the constitutional right to counsel through public funding.

Restoring Pension Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)

New Jersey's retired public sector workers - including the men and women of law enforcement - who faithfully devoted their careers to public service, have seen a deterioration in their pension benefits due to rising inflation. It's time for the state to correct this so that retirees can afford to stay in New Jersey near their families and communities.

The Fulop Administration would phase in a restoration of COLA starting with retirees who have been receiving a pension for ten years or more - providing relief to those who paid into a system that they believed would keep pace with rising costs. As retirees hit the ten year mark, they too would be eligible to receive COLA.

1. New Jersey Policy Perspective, <https://njpp.org/publications/blog-category/the-high-cost-of-representation-public-defender-fees>



Police Leadership Reform

As Mayor, Fulop has taken on police reform in Jersey City with a great deal of success, but the ability to bring this reform to the rest of the state requires eliminating the Police Chief Bill of Rights.

The intention of the Bill of Rights was to insulate police chiefs from the whims of local governing bodies. In practice, however, it gives a Chief of Police near complete impunity and allows them total control over a police force without any accountability to voters. The way it works now, a Chief of Police is hired by a municipality and given a long contract. Once under contract it is nearly impossible to remove a chief. In turn, the chief has sole responsibility for internal investigations and discipline and they are not required to disclose findings even to the elected officials. Without accountability, police reform is almost impossible.

Fulop submits that police chiefs are protected from improper interference from local governments because those municipal governments are accountable to voters.

Greater reform and accountability in policing is essential to restore trust. Repealing the Police Chief Bill of Rights and updating the Attorney General's guidelines governing policing can achieve this.

Closing Youth Prisons

Young people commit gun offenses in high numbers. In 2019, 28,568 young people between the ages of 10 and 21 were arrested for weapons offenses, such as illegally carrying or possessing a firearm. This group made up 26% of all arrests for weapons offenses that year.² Data also suggests that young people disproportionately commit gun homicides. For example, 18-20-year olds comprise just 4% of the U.S. population, but account for 17% of known homicide offenders.³ There has been much talk that gun violence is a public health epidemic. If so, then we should be treating the disease in its earliest stages (or symptoms) in order to have a chance at the best results.

Young people carry weapons either because they intend to be an aggressor or to protect themselves from a threat. At this point the system (parents, schools, government, social workers) has already failed them. Thus, getting these young people into a more closely monitored situation - off the streets and into rehabilitation - is the most sensible solution. As Governor, Fulop will put the resources into making sure that juvenile monitoring at first offense is far more aggressive with home visits, monitored counseling, and mandatory school. Closing youth prisons will be part of this plan as the current structure only serves to further a culture of gangs and violence while totally disregarding the fact that rehabilitation and education should be paramount for youth.

2. 2019 Crime in the United States, Table 38, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, Washington, DC: Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/topic-pages/tables/table-38>.

3. https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/who-can-have-a-gun/minimum-age/#footnote_3_5627

Gun Violence Enforcement

As the mayor of New Jersey's second largest city, Steve Fulop has seen firsthand the devastation of everyday gun violence. Recognizing that shootings are committed over and over again by a very small number of offenders, Fulop would lead a statewide, coordinated attack on gun violence and focus all of the resources of the criminal justice system⁴ on these individuals.

Too often, gun violence prevention is measured by guns removed from the street, not shooters removed from the street. There are two problems with this metric: First, shooters can easily acquire new guns; and second, the tactics most departments use to seize the guns (plain clothes police, stop, question, and frisk, profiling likely gun carriers, etc.) are the police practices which most inflame communities and lead to disparate police practices.

There is a finite number of people who are willing to shoot another human being and there must be aggressive enforcement around this group. Both the perpetrators and victims of gun violence have disproportionate prior arrests and convictions.

Releasing a shooter into the same environment that incentivized them to carry a gun in the first place signals that there are no serious repercussions to carrying an illegal gun and continues the cycle of violence that terrorizes innocent people and entire neighborhoods.

Therefore, as Governor, Fulop would insist on a minimum jail term for illegally carrying a handgun. If that gun is used in the furtherance of a robbery or shooting, that minimum would be higher. Prosecutors or judges who do not follow the guidelines would not be reappointed. The goal should be to make accountability for possession of illegal guns so severe that all but the very worst offenders won't go near one.

Getting shooters off the streets protects not just the larger community, but the shooters themselves. Guns are replaceable, shooters are not.

4. Police, prosecutors, judges, juvenile justice officials, and parole officers

Universal Background Checks

Mayor Fulop has been a vocal advocate for universal background checks and this will continue as governor.

21+ to Purchase Firearms & Parental Responsibility

Current New Jersey law allows the purchase and possession of long guns at 18 years old and handguns at 21. Previous attempts in the New Jersey State legislature to change this law were defeated, Fulop, however would make raising the minimum age a priority. Research shows that the developing brains of adolescents and young adults may put them at higher risk of making risky decisions. Hormonal changes can have significant effects on self-control, decision making, emotions, risk-taking behaviors, and aggressive impulses.⁵ In addition, suicide involving firearms by minors has increased by 81% since 2012.

Most active mass shooting incidents are not done by career criminals but rather socially awkward loners who have no access to criminal networks that could provide firearms. Rather, they turn 18, legally buy a gun and use it to commit horrific crimes.

It is with these facts, Steve Fulop believes that 21 should be the age for purchase for all firearms. This is a clear area where making it harder to obtain guns would help with minimal effect on other constitutional rights.

Furthermore, strong civil and criminal penalties must hold parents responsible for safeguarding firearms from minors. As for hunting, those under the age of 21 can do so with family members.

5. https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/who-can-have-a-gun/minimum-age/#footnote_1_5627

A photograph of a crime scene is shown in the background. A person wearing white gloves is using tweezers to pick up a small object from the ground. There are several evidence markers on the ground, including one labeled '3' and another labeled '4'. The scene is outdoors on a dirt or gravel surface.

Ceasefire Units

As Governor, Steve Fulop will insist that every county impacted by gun violence establish the equivalent of the Jersey City ceasefire unit. This is a ready, investigative group focused on immediately apprehending and prosecuting every gun crime that occurs. In the case of gun violence, the minutes after a shooting are of the utmost importance and this unit must be investigative, not enforcement focused. This approach allows detectives to identify patterns, predict possible attempts at retaliation, and discover gaps in resource deployment as an effective approach to stopping future gun violence.

Re-Entry

Continued state support here is essential and continuing partnerships with the private sector.

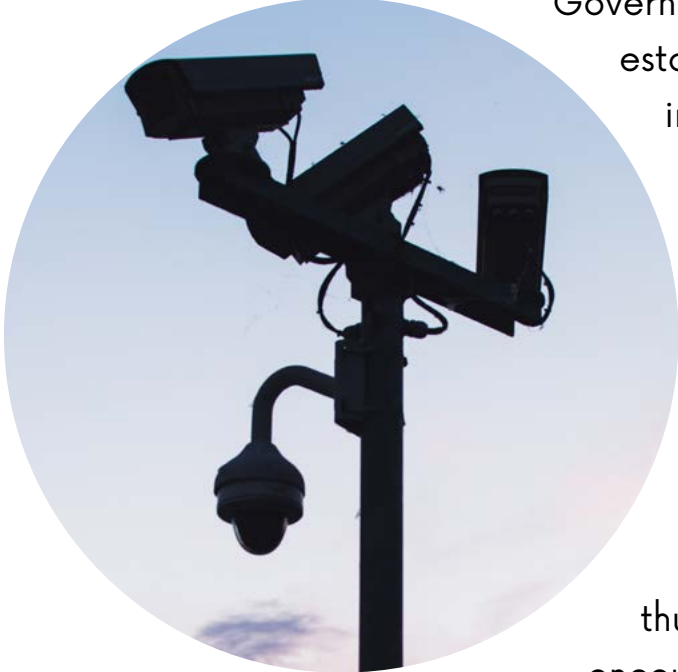
Expanded Commitment to Violent Crime Initiative (VCI)

This is an existing cooperative effort between State and Federal Authorities to pool resources and concentrate on violent repeat offenders with a goal of using whichever jurisdiction would provide a more swift and effective prosecution. In theory it is simple, but it requires strong leadership, cooperation, and follow through or else it just becomes lip service.

As a state, New Jersey needs to reinforce its commitment to VCI in cooperation with the U.S. Attorney's office to provide more federal enforcement options for the worst violators. These are the incorrigible who are luring younger, less committed youth down the path of gun violence. We cannot allow the federal government to back away when new priorities arise and this cannot be just "lip service" to this concept. The Fulop Administration will commit to making local law enforcement provide what is necessary for the partnership.



Technology Investment



Governor Fulop will require communities to establish CCTV systems in the areas most impacted by gun violence. This allows for increased and more effective prosecutions and lessens the need for witnesses from the community who are vulnerable to intimidation and shaming. It also allows local police to observe and investigate suspicious persons and behavior without personal interaction until a crime is confirmed, thus reducing negative police/citizen encounters and providing visual evidence for the community of why law enforcement took steps that it did. Funding would come through grants and the use of the county prosecutors' forfeiture funds.

Active Shooter Training

As Governor, Fulop will mandate that on a municipal or county level, as appropriate, there be training and testing on the ability to respond to and address a disaster or active attacker. Constant practice and testing for these hopefully rare events is costly, but necessary - a lesson Fulop learned firsthand in December 2019 in Jersey City.



CONCLUSION:

Steven Fulop has been mayor of New Jersey's second largest city and a city that is often recognized as the single most diverse city in the country. This experience has given Mayor Fulop a strong understanding of the challenges communities face around public safety and the challenges in the way New Jersey laws hamper safety at the local level.

**Under Fulop, Jersey City has seen
an unprecedented renaissance and
has been a leader on public safety
improvements and police reform.**

The Fulop for Governor campaign is committed to the most robust detail oriented policy agenda from any candidate that has run for higher office.

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