

PO BOX 004
TRENTON, NJ 08625

Office of the Governor
NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Rae Hutton or Kristin Zebrowski
609-777-2600

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DIFRANCESCO SIGNS LAW TO KEEP GUNS OUT OF THE HANDS OF VIOLENT CRIMINALS, Establishes Mandatory Minimum Five-Year Prison Terms

Acting Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco signed legislation today banning violent criminals and drug traffickers from purchasing, owning or possessing a firearm. Those criminals who break this law will receive a five-year mandatory minimum sentence without the possibility of parole.

"This legislation will keep us moving forward in the fight against crime. Assembly Bill 11 puts violent criminals or those convicted of drug offenses on notice that they can't purchase, own, possess or control a firearm. And someone who has been convicted of homicide, aggravated assault, robbery, arson, drug trafficking or similar offenses isn't entitled to own or possess a firearm. Period. No exceptions. No excuses," said the acting Governor.

"We continue to see our overall crime rate drop. It's now at the lowest level in almost three decades. This means that we have fewer citizens falling victim to crime. It means our neighborhoods and streets are safer. It means that our quality of life continues to improve," said DiFrancesco.

Federal legislation known as "Project Exile" would provide \$100 million in firearms enforcement grants to states that require a mandatory minimum sentence of five years without parole. Under this new law, the State will qualify for any Project Exile funding that may become available under federal law.

"It's clear that the best way to reduce crime is to ensure that we keep guns out of the hands of those who shouldn't have a gun in the first place. This law puts us one step closer to achieving that goal," said DiFrancesco.

A-11 was sponsored by Assemblymembers Paul DiGaetano (R-Bergen/Essex/Passaic), Jim Holzapfel (R-Monmouth/Ocean), Rose Heck (R-Bergen), Ken LeFevre (R-Atlantic), Herb Conway (R-Burlington/Camden) and Senators Andrew Ciesla (R-Monmouth/Ocean), Lou Kosco (R-Bergen), Norm Robertson (R-Essex/Passaic), Tony Bucco (R-Morris) and Dianne Allen (R-Burlington/Camden).