



The Onorato Plan for Safe Communities

Protecting the Public & Reducing Crime

Safe communities are a basic prerequisite for quality of life and economic vitality. Dan Onorato is committed to the safety of all Pennsylvanians: in their homes, neighborhoods and businesses; at their schools; and on the roads. With proven experience managing the state's second-largest county – which includes the City of Pittsburgh and 129 other municipalities – Onorato understands the fundamental importance of residents feeling safe in their daily lives and he knows how to achieve public safety and a strong criminal justice system. As Governor, Onorato will keep Pennsylvanians safe and ensure that career criminals receive the stiff punishments they deserve.

A Pennsylvanian is the victim of a violent crime once every 10 minutes; every day that passes includes an average of approximately two murders, 48 robberies and nearly 10 rapes – along with countless unreported incidents of domestic violence and sexual assault. Children must be protected from serious threats including sexual predators and bullying. And new technology has meant even greater challenges in keeping children safe from harm: from Internet chat rooms to cyber-bullying to “sexting.” All of these crimes are threats to the fabric of our society and the well-being of our communities, families and friends.

Residents of crime-plagued neighborhoods have been calling out for help, and perhaps no one feels the threat of this violence more than the law enforcement officers who risk their lives on a daily basis to protect the Commonwealth's residents. At least nine police officers have been killed in the line of duty in Pennsylvania since the beginning of 2009, including three Pittsburgh Police Officers murdered in a single tragic incident while responding to a domestic disturbance call. Of the 13 officers who have been shot and killed since 2005, more than half were shot with a stolen gun.

A comprehensive strategy to fight crime must include efforts to address this flood of illegal handguns; prevention efforts from early childhood education to economic and workforce development; effective policing and courts across Pennsylvania communities; and improved services and support for victims.

A Proven Track Record

As Allegheny County Executive, Dan Onorato has made his constituents safer by implementing effective strategies to reduce crime. Under Onorato's leadership, recidivism in the

Allegheny County Jail System is down by at least 15% – while communities across the nation are seeing the opposite trend – and municipal police efforts are more coordinated and efficient. Since Onorato took office, crime in Allegheny County has dropped 8%.

Onorato’s commitment to reducing recidivism has been a win-win for Allegheny County: fewer repeat offenders means less crime in neighborhoods across the county, while also saving taxpayers money by avoiding the costly “revolving door” of criminals who are re-arrested for new crimes shortly after leaving jail for a past offense. Onorato’s approach cuts through the rhetoric to focus on what works in preventing re-arrests – including education, job training, family reunification, treatment for mental illness and substance abuse and attention to successful reintegration into society.

Onorato’s track record of local government reform has also improved the criminal justice system. In taking on the political establishment and eliminating six unnecessary elected positions, Onorato brought more court administration under professional management instead of being subject to political patronage. In addition, Onorato helped local municipalities voluntarily merge their police forces to better serve the county’s residents.

A Vision for Pennsylvania’s Future

Dan Onorato will make Pennsylvania’s communities safer and improve the pursuit of justice. To achieve these goals, Onorato supports:

1. Getting illegal handguns off of our streets;
2. Strengthening local law enforcement;
3. Keeping minors safe;
4. Supporting victims of crime;
5. Reducing Corrections costs and creating a more successful society;
6. Ensuring appropriate sentencing when crimes are committed;
7. Promoting justice throughout the state’s courts; and
8. Promoting safety for all Pennsylvanians.

Getting illegal handguns off of our streets

Illegal handguns are tearing apart Pennsylvania communities. That is why at least 100 police chiefs and 285 religious leaders have joined municipalities from Duquesne to Norristown, Harrisburg to Erie, and Reading to Wilkesburg in calling for common-sense laws that will help remove illegal handguns from Pennsylvania communities. As Governor, Dan Onorato will:

- **Fight for common-sense handgun laws.** Onorato respects the right of Pennsylvanians to own firearms and recognizes Pennsylvania’s rich history of sportsmen, and he believes it is also possible to enact common-sense laws that save lives. He supports legislation requiring people to report when a handgun has been lost or stolen, which is an important tool for the police to use for stopping “straw purchases” – when someone buys a gun and illegally provides it to someone else – and in getting illegal handguns off of our streets. In addition, Onorato believes that local governments should have greater authority to enact further handgun legislation that is appropriate to their local needs. Onorato is in a unique position to build the coalitions necessary for common-sense handgun legislation to be enacted into law, including through an extensive communication effort to lawmakers and other stakeholders about the diverse needs of Pennsylvania communities

and the strong support among law enforcement leaders for measures to fight straw purchasers.

- **Prosecute straw purchasers and other violators to the fullest extent of the law.** Onorato will maximize the full power of existing laws to put handgun criminals behind bars, including by expanding Gun Violence Task Forces to other areas of the state in order to bring law enforcement and criminal justice agencies together to track and prosecute straw purchasers. Onorato will also bring federal, state and local law enforcement officials together to eliminate the silos that prevent sharing of important information in order to help bring straw purchasers to justice.
- **Toughen penalties for criminals who violate gun laws.** Onorato will close a loophole in the law to make it a felony to receive a stolen gun. Right now, this serious crime is only a misdemeanor for Pennsylvanians who have not already been labeled “career criminals.”

Strengthening local law enforcement

Pennsylvanians receive police protection from a combination of sources: while three-quarters of the state’s residents are protected by a local or regional police force, millions of residents in approximately 1,700 mostly-smaller municipalities are served locally by Pennsylvania State Police troopers. All of these forces are at the forefront of protecting Pennsylvanians where they live and work. As Governor, Dan Onorato will:

- **Assist communities in properly staffing their police forces.** Onorato will support efforts to restore funding for Police on Patrol, the state program designed to fund additional police officers in the state’s hardest-hit communities.
- **Ensure that law enforcement personnel are treated with the respect and dignity they’ve earned.** Onorato believes that compensation and benefit decisions should recognize the dangerous jobs that emergency service personnel perform protecting Pennsylvanians.
- **Fight the scourge of illegal drugs.** Onorato will ensure that law enforcement officials have the tools they need to rid communities of methamphetamine production and other illegal narcotics – including through directing adequate resources to these goals and any necessary changes in state law.
- **Encourage regionalization of police forces and other emergency services.** Onorato will provide financial incentives and technical assistances to help communities that choose to share police, fire and other emergency services – just as he has done as Allegheny County Executive. These shared services can provide better protection to the public and good jobs for law enforcement professionals while benefiting taxpayers.
- **Help law enforcement use data to improve public safety.** Onorato will provide technical assistance and support for law enforcement agencies to improve data-sharing, upgrade their technology, institute crime-mapping and adopt data-driven decision-making strategies that reduce crime. Onorato will also support continued use of the Pennsylvania Justice Network, or JNET, to securely share information among law enforcement stakeholders.
- **Support diversity in the State Trooper complement.** Onorato will continue and enhance minority recruitment for the Pennsylvania State Police through participation in minority job fairs and other recruitment strategies.

- **Promote effective policing strategies.** Onorato will support adequate state funding for municipal police training.

Keeping minors safe

One of the most fundamental responsibilities of government is to protect the most vulnerable citizens – including children. As Governor, Dan Onorato will work to:

- **Prevent accidental firearm deaths.** Onorato supports legislation requiring that homes with minors use effective child safety locks or other devices that keep children from being accidentally killed by firearms.
- **Keep children safe from sexual predators.** Onorato will expand the training provided in schools so that children have the knowledge and tools to be safe from sexual predators. He will also create a public awareness campaign to provide children and parents with essential information.
- **Reduce “sexting” among pre-teens and teenagers.** As technology develops, so do the risks that children face and the responsibility of adults to help them make smart long-term decisions. Onorato will emphasize public education to prevent the sending of sexually explicit photographs and messages using cell phones and other devices, as well as reasonable prosecution where appropriate.
- **Prevent bullying.** Onorato is a strong supporter of Pennsylvania’s anti-bullying law. He will ensure that the Department of Education provides technical assistance and enforcement of the state law in support of effective school policies and programs to prevent bullying and cyber-bullying.
- **Ensure that schools are safe places to learn.** Onorato will ensure that the Pennsylvania Department of Education makes school safety a high priority and that it provides the technical assistance that school districts need to improve safety. Onorato also supports the State Board of Education’s leadership in creating school safety standards. This issue is further addressed in the Onorato Plan for Pre-K–12 Education.

Supporting victims of crime

An estimated one in four Pennsylvanians report being a victim of a crime. Crime prevention and effective criminal justice must be coupled with robust support for crime victims. As Governor, Dan Onorato will:

- **Support funding for victim services.** Onorato supports adequate resources for local domestic violence and rape crisis centers, which have been inadequately funded in the past.
- **Fight domestic violence.** In addition to supporting increased funding for programs that serve victims of domestic violence, Onorato will ensure that state and local police officers receive training in how to handle domestic violence and sexual assaults.
- **Protect against sexual assaults.** Onorato will support strategies that protect sexual assault victims from their attackers. He will also help prevent teen dating violence by working with schools to include age-appropriate education in their middle and high school curriculum. In addition, Onorato supports Pennsylvania’s emergency contraception regulations – which ensure that a victim of a sexual assault always has access to information and the option of emergency contraception.
- **Support witness protection programs.** Onorato will work with local enforcement and legislators to expand current laws and implement other strategies to ensure that witnesses

are not intimidated, and he will support additional resources for witness relocation programs and to prosecute witness intimidation at the state level.

- **Prevent hate crimes.** Onorato will call on the General Assembly to add sexual orientation, gender identity, gender, ancestry and physical and mental disability to Pennsylvania's hate crimes law, and he will strongly enforce hate crime laws. The Legislature has already passed this statute once, but it was thrown out by the courts due to the process the General Assembly used to enact the bill.
- **Ensure that victims have information on prisoner status changes.** Onorato will ensure that all counties continue to participate in the Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification (SAVIN) system, which provides automatic information about the transfer, release or escape of a prisoner. As costs increase, Onorato will ensure that this critical system does not become unaffordable to local criminal justice agencies.

Reducing Corrections costs and creating a more successful society

As Dan Onorato knows from his experience as Allegheny County Executive, being tough on crime must include a willingness to recognize and address some of the factors that are associated with increased criminal behavior and that keep people rotating through the criminal justice system at a massive cost to public safety and to taxpayers. As Governor, Dan Onorato will:

- **Support policies that keep Pennsylvanians from entering the criminal justice system.** The best strategy to reduce crime and cut spending on prisons is to intervene before criminal behavior begins. Onorato supports:
 - *Expanding access to pre-kindergarten.* Onorato will increase funding for high-quality early childhood education, which is proven to put children on a path to lifelong success and keep them out of the juvenile justice system.
 - *Preventing students from dropping out of high school.* Onorato's Plan for Pre-K-12 Education details his strategy for cutting the high school dropout rate by engaging students and improving connections between school and the workforce. Onorato's plan includes more effective truancy programs to keep students in school.
 - *Helping young adults who have already dropped out of school earn their diploma.* Students who drop out of school are far more likely to commit crimes and to require government support than their peers. Onorato will re-engage these teens and young adults through programs geared to their unique learning styles and needs, and closely linked to job training and workforce development.
 - *Launch an Adult Learning Initiative so working adults can complete their college degree.* One and a half million Pennsylvania adults have earned some college credit but did not complete a degree, and many more entered the workforce immediately after high school without the opportunity to pursue higher education. As described in his Plan for Higher Education, Onorato will double the percent of adults with only a high school diploma who are pursuing college degrees by providing college credit for applied learning, being flexible with when and where courses are scheduled, and ensuring access to adequate financial aid – which requires fixing the state's tuition grant program so that it works for adults.
 - *Increasing access to adult basic literacy programs.* Onorato will increase the number of adults who are able to enroll in the state's Adult Basic Literacy &

Education program, which is a critical element in the state's support system for adults with low literacy levels. Onorato will also improve the system's alignment with job training.

- *Expanding substance abuse programs to provide additional drug and alcohol treatment.* Substance abuse is a barrier for many adults who are trying to lead healthy and productive lives, and Onorato will work to expand the number of treatment slots available to persons seeking recovery services.
- **Stop the jailhouse revolving door.** About half of inmates go back to prison within three years of being released – leading to more victims of crimes and a greater financial burden on taxpayers. Onorato's county jail system has become a national model for rehabilitation programs and for making recidivism significantly less likely. As Governor, Onorato will focus on re-entry preparation, job training and inmate education so that inmates have the skills to make better decisions when they rejoin society. He will also expand and coordinate the drug and alcohol and mental health services that inmates receive so that they are less likely to commit additional crimes as a result of addiction and mental illness.
- **Focus on economic and community development.** As described in his Plan for Economic Development, Onorato will establish a business environment that helps companies succeed in Pennsylvania and create new jobs, while focusing on workforce development and job training strategies that increase economic opportunities for the state's residents and include career pathways into jobs with a family-sustaining wage. Onorato also supports strategies like Weed and Seed that help strengthen communities.

Ensuring appropriate sentencing when crimes are committed

Pennsylvania must ensure that criminals are imprisoned when they are a threat to public safety, and that alternatives to incarceration are available when prosecutors and the courts conclude that other sentences are more appropriate. As Governor, Dan Onorato will:

- **Expand the use of specialized courts.** Onorato will build on the existing drug courts, mental health courts, DUI courts and veteran courts that have been proven successful in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia in addressing non-violent crimes and putting offenders on a pathway to rehabilitation.
- **Properly address drug and alcohol offenses.** County intermediate punishment provides judges with options for sentencing non-violent offenders to treatment and punishment without sending them to jail – particularly in drug and alcohol crimes. Onorato supports full and expanded funding for these programs.
- **Support effective probation and parole systems.** Onorato will ensure that the state has an appropriate number of parole agents and that state funding is sufficient for local probation officers. These resources directly result in safer communities and get criminals off of the street.
- **Protect communities from sexual predators.** Onorato will explore requiring that the Parole Board put Global Positioning System (GPS) devices on the most serious sexual predators if they are required to be released into society.

Promoting justice throughout the state's courts

The public must have confidence that Pennsylvania's courts will always be a source of justice. As Governor, Dan Onorato will:

- **Support local efforts to improve criminal justice systems.** Onorato will provide technical assistance and funding to assist local courts, prosecutors and other stakeholders to streamline the criminal justice system and make it more effective in supporting victims and putting criminals behind bars.
- **Prevent the abuse of justice.** Onorato will study the work of the Interbranch Commission on Juvenile Justice, as well as consult with other experts, advocates and criminal justice professionals, to ensure that the juvenile justice system has proper safeguards and protection.
- **Properly support county courts.** As the leader of a county, Onorato has firsthand experience with the unfunded mandate of court administration. Onorato will bring together state, county, court and other stakeholders to address proper court administration and funding within the parameters of the state budget. As budget conditions allow, Onorato will also support a program to increase the number of prosecutors in over-burdened communities by launching an initiative similar to "Police on Patrol" that uses state funding as a financial incentive to increase the number of prosecutors where they are most needed.

Promoting safety for all Pennsylvanians

In addition to the specific criminal justice issues detailed above, there are many other public safety issues facing Pennsylvanians. As Governor, Dan Onorato will:

- **Provide leadership to prevent and manage emergencies.** Onorato will ensure that the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency has the leadership and resources to help local communities prevent and prepare for terrorism as well as natural disasters. Because emergency management and preparation are so important, Onorato supports making the PEMA director a Cabinet Secretary subject to Senate confirmation.
- **Crack down on financial and consumer crime.** Onorato will charge his Cabinet members and state agencies with making financial and consumer crime prevention, education and enforcement a priority. An Onorato Administration will work closely with law enforcement in identifying suspected patterns of criminal misconduct and prosecuting violators.
- **Take a hard line against corruption.** Onorato will protect Pennsylvania from any threat of corruption throughout government. For example, he will carefully monitor the implementation of the gaming enforcement reforms in the state's newly passed law, and he will call for additional changes in policy, regulation and law if they are needed.

DAN ONORATO: KEEPING PENNSYLVANIANS SAFE

Dan Onorato's Plan for Safe Communities will protect the quality of life of the state's residents by getting illegal handguns off the streets and strengthening the ability of law enforcement to protect all Pennsylvanians.