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Testimony of the City of New Haven to the Judiciary
April 10, 2007

The City of New Haven Police Department and Mayor John DeStefano *support House Bill 6901 Senate Bills 903 and 904.* All three bills relate to reporting lost or stolen firearms. House Bill 6901 and Senate Bill 903 require any individual who has had a gun stolen or lost to report it to the local police department or resident trooper within 72 hours. Senate Bill 904 requires firearms dealers to report lost or stolen inventory within 72 hours.

These bills would allow prosecution of individuals and dealers for failure to report lost or stolen firearms. Under the proposed law, the failure of an individual to report a lost or stolen firearm within 72 hours would constitute an infraction for the first offense, a class C misdemeanor for a second offense and a class A misdemeanor for any subsequent offense. The new law would also provide for stiffer penalties for individuals who intentionally fail to report a lost or stolen firearm within the specified time period. Under the proposed law any dealer who fails to make a report of lost or stolen firearms within 72 hours would be guilty of a class A misdemeanor for the first offense, and a class D felony for any subsequent offense.

These laws would be helpful in two important ways: they would assist the police in tracking the number of stolen or lost firearms and it would help reduce the number of “straw purchasers”—individuals who buy legal guns and sell them to those who cannot attain them legally. In New Haven we see a high proportion of gun crime being committed with lost or

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stolen guns. This legislation would cut down on the number of lost or stolen guns used in illegal activity, which would lead to less gun violence in our city and state. We understand that this is not a cure-all, but even if it reduces the number of illegal guns on the street by a modest percentage it would be of great assistance to law enforcement officers.

We urge the passage of this legislation as it would be a step in the right direction to reduce gun crime across the state of Connecticut.

Attached you will find some examples of cases in which this legislation could prove helpful in making sure people report their lost or stolen hand guns.

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The following summaries are examples of some, but not all, of the investigations where an individual failed to report a stolen firearm(s), and the results of said investigations. All of the individuals were valid State of Connecticut Pistol Permit holders, and the original purchase of the subject firearms was lawful:

- 1) In 1998, a Branford resident had been buying cocaine on a regular basis. During this time, he had been buying firearms and trading them for drugs with New Haven based street gang members. By the time it had been discovered by police he had bought over 80 handguns, which have since been linked to several shootings in New Haven. A shooting in New Haven that occurred earlier this month recovered a Glock 45 caliber pistol from a convicted felon. This weapon was one of the handguns that was bought and traded for drugs by this subject. At no time did he ever report any of these weapons stolen. Most of these weapons are still on the streets.
- 2) In the early winter of 2003, New Haven Police executed a search warrant and recovered a handgun with an obliterated serial number. The State of Connecticut Forensic Science Laboratory was able to restore the serial number, and it was determined that the firearm was registered to an individual from Whitney Avenue in New Haven. Subsequent investigation revealed that the individual had previously reported to police being the victim of an armed robbery in August of 2003. At that time, the individual failed to report a firearm taken from him during the robbery. Subsequent to the firearm being recovered, the individual was interviewed again concerning the robbery, and admitted that the firearm was also taken during the robbery. This individual was then charged and arrested for Interfering With an Officer, and his State of Connecticut Pistol Permit was revoked.
- 3) In 2005, New Haven Police investigated a New Haven resident who had made several multiple sales of handguns in a one-month period in July of 2005 for a total of 10 high-end handguns. Within 48 hours of his last purchase, investigators approached him about his acquisition of the weapons. During the interview, he explained that he was just buying the guns and not until asked to see the weapons did he reveal that they were stolen during a burglary the day before. He did not report the theft because he "didn't think the police would investigate his burglary to find his guns." No sign of forced entry was located and he claimed no other items were taken. None have been recovered to date.
- 4) In the Spring 2005, a Hamden resident had reported a single handgun stolen from his vehicle while dining at a New Haven restaurant. An investigation by New Haven Police uncovered that this subject had become addicted to cocaine and had traded several other handguns to pay off his dealer. Upon discovery of the illegal sales, his permit was revoked and he was no longer able to purchase handguns. One of his weapons was recovered from a convicted felon in November of 2005 and has been linked to five separate gunshot complaints in New Haven, two of which resulted in persons receiving gunshot wounds. A report issued from the

Connecticut State Police Forensic Lab linking the weapon to the shootings showed that one of the incidents had occurred prior to the subject reporting the weapon stolen. A second firearm sold by this subject was recovered during the month of February 2006 during a firearms investigation by New Haven Police. The weapon was seized from a convicted felon and the results of an examination by the Connecticut State Police Forensic Lab are pending. All but one handgun is still unaccounted for.