

**Oral Statement of Bryan Miller  
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Treasurer, States United to Prevent Gun Violence  
Before the US House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and  
Science  
Washington, DC April 24, 2007**

Good morning.

I am Bryan Miller, Executive Director of Ceasefire NJ, New Jersey's leading organization devoted to reducing gun violence, and Treasurer of States United to Prevent Gun Violence, the national coalition of 27 independent state-based gun violence prevention organizations.

I have submitted written testimony on behalf of States United.

Thank you for allowing me to make an oral statement this morning, as well.

Today I want to speak of a particular instance which demonstrates how the so-called Tiahrt Amendment to appropriations of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) damages the public safety.

I live in Camden County, New Jersey, a suburb of Philadelphia.

The county's largest city is Camden, which was deemed 'America's Most Dangerous' for 2004 and 2005.

Camden dropped a few places for 2006, but it remains among the most dangerous in the land.

As you might imagine, the prevalence of guns and gun violence are at the heart of Camden's difficulties.

But, there are no gun stores located in the municipality, and New Jersey has, in most analysts' views, a handgun purchase system that severely limits the 'straw purchasing' of handguns that feeds the trade in illegal guns.

So, where do the illegal guns that are a prime component of Camden's horrific violence come from?

Ceasefire NJ and States United would maintain that this question is critical to law enforcers, city administrators, policy makers and legislators and the public.

How else to create, adjust and maintain successful public safety policies and laws?

And herein is a tale:

According to the most recent publicly available data from ATF, the year 2000 Youth Crime Interdiction Initiative report, over 30 percent of the guns recovered from crime in Camden that year were originally purchased in states in the American Southeast.

New Jersey and Pennsylvania, meanwhile, each accounted for 23 percent of Camden's recovered crime guns in 2000.

Without new data, which has not been freely available for the period since 2000, concerned parties might reasonably conclude that this preponderance of illegal guns from southern states would maintain to the present and beyond.

They would be wrong.

For, according to more recent ATF data, not available to the public or media, the very data that the Tiahrt Amendment denies, the flow of illegal guns that devastates Camden has changed dramatically.

By 2004, ATF data showed that the South and New Jersey had steadily declined as sources for recovered crime guns in Camden, to 23 and 16 percent respectively.

This decline was most marked for Virginia, which has a One Handgun A Month law intended to cut the interstate trafficking of illegal guns, whose portion of Camden crime guns dropped from over 15 percent in 2000 to less than 4 percent in 2004.

But the big news was the momentous growth of the illegal handgun market in Pennsylvania, right across the bridge from Camden...a growth that has impacted every city of any size in the Keystone State, all of which have witnessed rising tides of gun violence.

And Camden?

By 2004, illegal guns from Pennsylvania accounted for 40 percent of crime guns recovered in Camden.

All indications are that this remarkable and swift shift in the illegal trade in guns that impacts Camden continues apace.

But remember, under the Tiahrt Amendment we would not know this.

And, if law enforcers, city administrators, state officials and the public can't know such critical information, how can they know to shift resources, or develop effective regional law enforcement alliances, or budget to properly direct available funds, or legislate useful policies, ordinances and laws, or, for voters, be able to hold elected officials and their appointees accountable?

The fact is, they can't.

And, the fact is that because they can't, the Tiahrt Amendment, which causes this lack of crucial knowledge, cripples law enforcers, municipal authorities, policy makers and the public.

For what?

To further protect the country's most protected industry?

You must not allow this unbalanced and severely damaging situation to continue.

States United to Prevent Gun Violence and Ceasefire NJ implore you to place the public safety above protection of an industry.

We implore you to eliminate the Tiahrt Amendment from 2008 ATF appropriations.

Thank you.