



PRESS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

**Hon. Lawrence K. Marks
Chief Administrative Judge**

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Court System to Expedite Resolution of Gun Cases in NYC

NEW YORK CITY—In response to the spike in shootings and gun arrests in New York City, Chief Judge Janet DiFiore and Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence K. Marks today announced the launch of a multi-prong initiative, to begin next week, to expedite the handling of felony gun cases in criminal courts throughout the City's five boroughs.

The new program—a collaboration of the Court System, the District Attorney's Office in each of the City's five boroughs and other stakeholders, including the Citizens Crime Commission—will target all new and pending cases in both Criminal Court and Supreme Court in New York City in which the top charge is criminal possession of a weapon in the second degree (NY Penal Law, Section 265.03). The Court System also consulted with members of the local defense bar regarding the program.

Presently, there are over 4,000 felony gun possession cases pending in the New York City courts—a backlog due largely to the constraints on adjudicating cases necessitated

by the pandemic. This initiative will focus both on reducing this backlog and ensuring that swift action is taken on all new arrests for top-count felony gun possession cases.

Among the key elements of the new program:

- The Court System, in coordination with the District Attorney's Office in each borough, will expand grand jury capacity as part of the citywide initiative, increasing the number of grand juries, starting in Brooklyn, the Bronx and Queens.
- Designated judges will be assigned in each borough to adjudicate newly-indicted cases charging felony gun possession. Each team of judges will work together, expediting pretrial hearings and presiding over pleas and trials. Where pleas are not obtained, Administrative Judges throughout the City's five boroughs will ensure that trials are given priority status.
- Gun possession cases that have already been indicted will be fast-tracked by the judge who is currently assigned to the case. The judge will prioritize the case in the same manner as the designated judicial teams.
- Cases will be closely monitored at every stage, with case management data evaluated to ensure cases are processed as quickly and efficiently as possible in accordance with due process. Additional resources will be added as needed.
- The Court System will closely analyze the effectiveness of the program, including rate of indictments, compliance with expedited discovery and motion practice, and number of hearings and resolution of cases, making adjustments with the other stakeholders to increase the efficacy of the program, if necessary.

Chief Administrative Judge Marks announced that Judge George Grasso, the Supervising Judge of the Criminal Court in Bronx County, will oversee day-to-day operation of the new program. Judge Grasso will monitor and assess the case data to ensure the optimal use of court resources.

"With the recent rise in gun cases in courts throughout the five boroughs, this citywide initiative will help ensure that these important cases are resolved as swiftly and effectively as possible. I am appreciative that Judge Grasso will be helping us implement this new program and am grateful to our New York City justice partners for their support of this effort," said Judge Marks.

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