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2007 CRIME RATES IN QUEENS COUNTY REMAIN AT HISTORIC LOW

Year-End Statistics Show Homicides at Forty Year Low and Over 90% Drop in Auto Theft Over Last Sixteen Years; More Than 74,000 Arrest Cases Processed During 2007

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced that, according to preliminary statistics compiled by the New York City Police Department, crime in Queens County continued its long-term historic decline in 2007 while, in terms of prosecutions, Queens continues to lead the City in many significant categories. The downward turn includes a 20 percent drop in homicides from 84 in 2006 to 68 in 2007 – the lowest number in more than forty years – and a 92 percent drop in auto theft over the last sixteen years.

District Attorney Brown said, “Fifteen years ago, there were 341 homicides committed in Queens County. Today, despite a 15 percent spike in the county’s population during the intervening years, we have actually witnessed the number of violent deaths plummet by 80 percent since 1992. Moreover, in terms of the City’s boroughs with populations exceeding one million people, Queens remains the safest county with a per capita murder rate of 3 per 100,000 people – well below the City’s per capita rate of 5.62.”

District Attorney Brown continued, “The overall reduction in the level of serious crimes in the county has also seen a decline of 7.6 percent over the previous year with significant decreases in the areas of rape (15.9 percent) and robbery (11.1 percent). Overall, the major crime categories have seen a reduction of 31.9 percent over the past six years and 75.9 percent since 1993. Clearly, these figures – showing that the levels have remained near or below their historic lows – offer clear and compelling evidence that our law enforcement initiatives continue to have a profound impact in making Queens County one of the safest counties not just in the city but in the nation.”

The District Attorney attributed the dramatic reduction in serious crime to several factors, among which are:

- Criminal prosecutions in Queens County have now exceeded the 70,000 mark for the second year in a row;
- Queens County continues to have the best arrest to arraignment time in the City, and the highest number of cases arraigned within 24 hours;
- Queens handles only 20 percent of the City’s violent felony prosecutions but is responsible for 27 percent of New York City’s violent convictions;
- Queens has reduced its Supreme Court caseload over the past ten years by almost 66 percent; and
- Misdemeanor pleas in Supreme Court are down from 13 percent to 2 percent.

The District Attorney added, “Auto theft statistics – which are probably among the best quality of life indicators around and a relevant barometer for measuring our effectiveness in combating crime – continue to show the most consistent and dramatic decline of any crime over the past two decades. Auto theft is down more than 19 percent from last year, and over 92 percent since 1991 when I first took office. Back then if you had lined up all the vehicles stolen that year in Queens – some 52,000 – they would have stretched from the Queens Midtown Tunnel out to Montauk. This year, the line of stolen vehicles – less than 4,000 – would barely stretch from the Midtown Tunnel to the courthouse here in Kew Gardens.”

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The District Attorney additionally noted that Queens has the highest conviction rate and the lowest dismissal rate of domestic violence cases in the City. “We have more domestic violence convictions than Manhattan, Brooklyn and Staten Island combined – even though Brooklyn, for example, has twice as many domestic violence arrests as we do,” said District Attorney Brown.

District Attorney Brown further noted that his office’s felony conviction rate remains the best citywide – 94.6 percent – and that its dismissal rate of felony complaints and indictments was the lowest. “Despite budget cuts, our prosecutors are continuing to make major cases against drug traffickers, organized crime mobsters and criminals involved in auto theft, auto insurance fraud, crime at our airports, gun trafficking, credit card fraud, identity theft, money laundering and all sorts of other types of criminal activity,” he said.

As its chief law enforcement officer, District Attorney Brown leads the fight against crime in Queens County by prosecuting criminals and protecting the rights of crime victims. In addition to investigating and prosecuting criminal activity, District Attorney Brown has established cutting-edge intervention and prevention programs to reduce crime throughout Queens County. These initiatives reflect his belief that community mobilization and involvement are critical to reducing crime and revitalizing the community.

Among those initiatives are the Queens Drug Treatment Alternative to Prison (DTAP Program) and the Queens Treatment Court (QTC), which both carefully select non-violent, jail-bound, drug-addicted defendants and divert them into community-based residential and out-patient treatment programs as an alternative to incarceration. Defendants selected for the DTAP Program are required to plead guilty with the condition that they enter and successfully complete a rigorous long-term – 15-24 months – residential treatment program. Since 1993, Queens County has among the highest, if not the highest, retention and successful completion rates in New York State of defendants who complete DTAP, 75 percent and 70 percent, respectively. QTC gives first time non-violent, drug-addicted felony offenders the opportunity to defeat addiction by participating in a highly structured, court-supervised program, with dedicated judicial personnel and court staff and a philosophy which incorporates systems of graduated sanctions and rewards. To date, the Queens Treatment Court has placed over 1,500 defendants with a retention rate of 75 percent and a successful completion rate of 71 percent – rates among the best in the country.

District Attorney Brown said, “I am optimistic that by continuing the very successful strategies that we have employed in recent years we, together with our law enforcement colleagues, can make Queens County even safer in 2008.”

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Note to Editors: E-version of this press release posted at www.queensda.org.