

June 29, 2005

Hon. Simon L Leis  
Sheriff, Hamilton County  
1000 Sycamore Street  
Hamilton County Justice Center  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

Re: Unprecedented gun violence in Hamilton County

Dear Sheriff Leis:

I write in connection with the unprecedented gun violence we are witnessing playing out on the streets within Hamilton County. The level and magnitude of attacks on persons and property and its jeopardizing of public safety is a major concern to our constituents and to visitors of Hamilton County alike. I am formally requesting the assistance of you and your Department.

As I see it the gun violence plaguing our county is straining the financial capacity and physical resources of local jurisdictions. The Sheriff's Office has jurisdiction under Ohio law to be able to play a constructive role in the success of this community to curb this violence. As a Member of the Policy Board of Hamilton County I respectfully request that you develop a strategy that will complement, aid, support and, if necessary lead, the combined efforts of local governmental bodies and law enforcement in making our streets safe and as free from these unwarranted attacks as possible.

Traditionally issues of this are handled by local jurisdictions with the exception of several of Hamilton County's townships and certain other jurisdictions under agreement. I am aware that seeking the involvement of your office may be met by others with skepticism or concern. I hope that is not the case and would encourage any jurisdiction in which your Department's efforts as requested above are necessary to welcome your assistance with open arms.

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Nonetheless, the problems we are witnessing are too important to ignore – especially when county Departments have both the ability and the authority to make a difference. Moreover, Hamilton County’s taxpayers have made extraordinary financial contributions to a number of the areas most affected and are about to make more. We owe it to our taxpayers to protect those investments through our own actions.

My understanding is that such an effort may require financial resources above and beyond your present appropriation. I have consulted with our budget analysts and am happy to report that because of your efforts and that of other county elected officials and department heads we are tracking about \$5 Million in reduced spending below budgeted amounts for the year. That translates into the availability of additional resources for this effort without compromising any county service or impacting any of the policy decisions previously made by the Board of County Commissioners including keeping overall spending below last year’s amount.

By copy of this letter I am alerting my colleagues on the county commission of this request and I will also notice other local elected officials, including those from the City of Cincinnati. I have, as you know, previously discussed this issue with your Chief Deputy Sean Donovan and am proceeding in making this request based upon my conversation with him and understanding that your office will welcome such a request.

Thank you for all that you are doing for the benefit and safety of citizens of this community. I look forward to your reply and suggestions on ways in which your office will be able to make a meaningful difference in the safety of our county and in curbing the violence we see happening today.

Sincerely,

Todd Portune

Cc: Hon. Phil Heimlich  
Hon. Pat DeWine  
Suzanne Burke, Acting Hamilton County Administrator  
Hon. Charlie Luken, Mayor of Cincinnati  
Members of Council, City of Cincinnati  
Chief Tom Streicher, Cincinnati Police Department