

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Date: **December 12, 2011**

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# **State and City Officials, Clergy and Law Enforcement Join Together to Announce Gun Buy Back**

**Citizens can turn in firearms anonymously for bank gift cards**

Wilmington – A Gun Buy Back program planned for Saturday in Wilmington provides an easy and safe way to turn in unwanted firearms.

Today Gov. Jack Markell joined with Wilmington Mayor James M. Baker, State and City officials, law enforcement and Wilmington clergy to announce a “Gun Buy Back” program that will allow citizens to turn in unwanted weapons in exchange for bank gift cards. Citizens can exchange a handgun for \$150; an assault rifle for \$200; and a rifle or shotgun for \$100.

"We're doing everything we can to keep people safe, and the gun buyback is an important step," said Governor Markell. "This is the state, the city and the community working together with law enforcement. If we take one gun off the street and save one life by doing this, it will be worth it."

The Department of Safety and Homeland Security (DSHS), in partnership with the Delaware State Police, Wilmington Police Department, local pastors in the Wilmington community and City officials, will host a “Gun Buy Back” to collect unwanted weapons in exchange for bank gift cards. On Saturday, December 17, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Delaware State Police and Wilmington Police officers will man the following two locations to collect unwanted weapons and distribute the bank gift cards:

- Ezion Fair Baptist Church, 1400 B Street, Wilmington
- Canaan Baptist Church, 3011 New Castle Ave., Wilmington

A new law was passed this year, establishing the Community Firearm Recovery Program, to provide a mechanism to safely remove illegal, unsecured, abandoned or unwanted firearms from local communities. The legislation allocated \$100,000 for the program and designated DSHS as the program administrator.

“Citizens can turn in guns anonymously with no questions asked. Our gun buy back program makes it easy for Delawareans to safely get unwanted weapons out of their home,” said Lewis D. Schiliro, Secretary of Safety and Homeland Security. “Removing weapons that could fall in the hands of children or that could be stolen and used in a crime is one more way to make our communities safer.

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“Wilmington is most appreciative of the efforts by the Governor and Secretary, supported by our own community, to take guns off the streets, said Mayor Baker. “As a whole, Wilmington is a vibrant City where the majority of citizens enjoy and appreciate everything that our City has to offer. It is important, however, to address head-on the issue of guns that are used too frequently by a small segment of the population to frustrate us as we move our City forward. It is my hope that the gun buy-back program will help not only Wilmington but each of Delaware’s counties, towns and cities to eliminate guns that could fall into the hands of criminals.”

Several community and church leaders have played a crucial role in supporting this initiative and identifying other partners to assist with this project including Wilmington Councilman Justen A. Wright, Bishop Aretha Morton, pastor of Tabernacle Full Gospel Baptist Cathedral, Rev. Dr. C.T. Curry, pastor of Ezion Fair Baptist Church and Rev. Dr. Christopher Bullock, pastor of Canaan Baptist Church.

“The Gun Buy Back is one piece to a much larger puzzle. Gun violence has plagued our families and City for far too long. This is a concerted effort with government officials, law enforcement, community leaders and you—the community—to minimize the gun violence our communities experience on a regular basis. Citizens of Wilmington, New Castle County, and surrounding areas we need you to make this a success,” said City Councilman Justen A. Wright.

The Department, in coordination with Wilmington and New Castle County community and faith-based leaders, is also promoting an anti-violence message to the communities in Wilmington and its surrounding areas. In addition to the Gun Buy Back event, Bishop Morton, Rev. Curry, Rev. Bullock, and other community leaders will hold a community event at 6:30 PM on December 16, 2011 at the Tabernacle Full Gospel Baptist Cathedral to promote the campaign against violence.

“This is the first of many steps needed to begin resolving the issue of gun violence and murders in our city. As Wilmington clergy, we see firsthand how gun deaths are devastating our families —those of the perpetrators and the victims. Fewer guns on the streets will lessen the opportunity for shooting injuries and deaths,” said Rev. Curry.

Citizens are asked to make sure the weapons are unloaded and the safety is on. Handguns should be in clear plastic bags and ammunition should be in separate clear plastic bags. Long guns should have a clear plastic bag wrapped and taped around the gun, covering the trigger guard.

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