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PRESS RELEASE
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Solicitor Walt Wilkins Announces “Summer of Silence” Initiative

Thirteenth Circuit Solicitor Walt Wilkins announced today that his office, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of South Carolina, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), and local law enforcement are teaming up for an initiative designed to reduce violent crime. “Summer of Silence” is a three-month initiative designed to lower violent crime in Greenville County by incarcerating, convicting, and sentencing would-be violent offenders before they commit violent acts. The program kicked off today.

Local law enforcement, the Solicitor’s Office, federal law enforcement and the U.S. Attorney’s Office will screen eligible case to determine whether the offender is likely to receive more prison time in state or federal court and act accordingly.

Federal Gun charges involve mandatory minimum prison sentences, an accelerated timeline to disposition and escalating penalties for repeat offenders. Federal law also prohibits several categories of people from possessing firearms or ammunition, including:

1. convicted felons
2. persons engaged in drug crimes
3. persons engaged in crimes that affect interstate commerce
4. persons using or addicted to controlled substances
5. persons convicted of domestic violence
6. persons subject to a restraining order
7. fugitives from justice
8. illegal aliens

The idea was conceived with hope of preventing violent crimes before they occur.

Handguns and long guns account for about 70 percent of the murders committed statewide each year. Firearms are used in about half of the armed robberies statewide and about 20 percent of all aggravated assaults, according to the State Law Enforcement Division.