



2016 Annual Report

Carolyn A. Murray
Acting Essex County Prosecutor



Essex County Prosecutor's Office

**Veterans Courthouse
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Newark, NJ 07102
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Chief Executives



From Left to Right: Acting Chief of County Detectives Quovella M. Spruill; Acting Essex County Prosecutor Carolyn A. Murray; and Acting First Assistant Prosecutor Robert D. Laurino.

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During 2016, the total number of adult defendant cases reviewed by the Essex County Prosecutor's Office (ECPO) was 13,180, versus 11,690 in 2015. Also, 4,829 defendants were indicted or charged by accusation in 2016. A total of 53.2 percent of ECPO's total adult defendant resolutions within 2016 following an indictment or accusation involved first or second degree criminal charges. Further, in 2016, the total number of juveniles involved in delinquency case filings in Essex County was 2,141.

(Statistics from N.J. Division of Criminal Justice, Analysis of Prosecutors' Data, and from the Promis Gavel Database of the Administrative Office of the Courts, N.J. Superior Court).

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2016 Annual Report of the Essex County Prosecutors Office Overview

Our mission in the Essex County Prosecutor's Office is to "seek justice, to service justice and to do justice." In 2016, under Acting Essex County Prosecutor Carolyn A. Murray, the commitment to that goal remained unqualified. The primary function of the office is to investigate and prosecute crimes in Essex County to ensure that it is a safe place to live, work and visit. Accomplishing that goal requires the cooperation and support of the people of the Essex County community. To maintain that support, the men and women of the Essex County Prosecutor's Office promise to perform in a manner that fosters trust, confidence and transparency.

We are also committed to finding the best and the brightest to serve the people of Essex County. On Jan. 20, 2016, that pledge was advanced when Deputy Chief Quovella Spruill was promoted to Chief of Detectives of the Essex County Prosecutor's Office. Chief Spruill became the first African American woman to serve as Chief of Detectives in Essex County and the first in the State of New Jersey. Her appointment also gave Essex County the distinction of being the only county in the state with both a woman Prosecutor and a woman Chief of Detectives.

In 2016, under their leadership, the investigative units of the office, which include Homicide, Narcotics, Special Victim Units, Cyber Crimes, Arson, Domestic Violence, Financial Crimes and Professional Standards continued their hard work, handling upwards of 25 percent of the indictable offenses in the state of New Jersey.

The Office also maintained its community outreach initiatives. The Community Justice Unit, which serves as a liaison between law enforcement and residents, promoted awareness about the role and functions of the Essex County Prosecutor's Office.

The Community Justice Unit sponsored youth symposiums addressing critical issues aimed at reducing delinquency and giving youth skills necessary to successfully navigate through their teen years and beyond. Among other things, those symposiums addressed bullying, gang awareness, internet safety, human trafficking and careers in law enforcement.

The Victim Witness Unit also continued to support crime victims and witnesses. Among other activities, for another year the Unit offered its annual domestic violence training program called "Sanctuary." The program is a 100-hour training

program designed to equip community residents to provide crisis intervention and outreach services to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, stalking and surviving family members of domestic violence homicides.

This 2016 Annual Report, published in conjunction with the statistical summary that is required by the Attorney General, provides an overview of the outstanding work done by this Office.

A Brief History of the Essex County Prosecutor's Office

In 1776, the State of New Jersey ratified its first Constitution (superseded by later Constitutions in 1844 and 1947). Under this Constitution, the elected Governor appointed an Attorney General to enforce the laws of the State. The Attorney General in turn appointed deputies for the various counties, including Essex, to enforce the criminal laws on behalf of the local populace. In 1822, the New Jersey General Assembly passed an act authorizing a more independent Prosecutor of Pleas for each county, to be appointed by the Court of Quarter Session once every five years. A few years later, the Governor was given the authority to appoint each county's Prosecutor of Pleas.

On Feb. 20, 1829, Amzi Dodd became the first governor-appointed Prosecutor of Pleas for Essex County. The earliest record of a prosecution by Prosecutor Dodd involves "a nuisance in suffering the water to stagnate and become offensive in the old burying ground" in Newark. The first Prosecutor of Pleas worked alone, but by 1877 the Prosecutor required the help of a First Assistant.

As Essex County grew and matters became more complex, the Office grew in size. By 1922, Prosecutor John O. Bigelow employed 28 men, including three Assistant Prosecutors, two Detective Captains, two Lieutenants, and various Detectives and clerks.

In the 1920s and 30's, cases involving gambling, organized crime and official corruption were growing in number. In October of 1935, the nationally-known organized crime figure Dutch Schultz was shot at the Palace Chop House in Newark. Although the prime suspect was found hanged soon after the incident, the Office continued its investigation and identified Schultz's real shooter who pled guilty to the murder in 1940.

By 1945, the Office still had only three Assistant Prosecutors, despite a growing number of murder and gambling cases. In 1951, Prosecutor Edward Gaulkin gained attention by successfully prosecuting four men charged with conspiracy, extortion and bribery in the Newark milk scandal case.

In 1959, Governor Robert Meyner nominated Brendan T. Byrne of West Orange as the 25th Prosecutor of Essex County. Prosecutor (and later Governor) Byrne served the Office until 1967. By 1962, there were 16 Assistant Prosecutors, most of whom were part-time employees. Shortly thereafter, the first female Assistant Prosecutor, June Strelecki, was appointed. Also during Byrne's tenure, the "Charlie Squad" was

formed, a name coined after members of the public were urged to report illegal gambling by calling a dedicated phone number and asking for “Charlie.”

In 1967, the City of Newark experienced a week-long civil disturbance, which heralded long-term social and economic change in Essex County. These transformations challenged future Prosecutors to respond to changing patterns and volumes of crime with increased professionalism and dedication.

By 1973, the legal staff numbered 63 lawyers, all full-time. County Investigators replaced the former Detectives, and were increasingly selected from the ranks of experienced local police officers. Under Prosecutor George Schneider (Prosecutor from 1981 to 1986), the number of Assistant Prosecutors exceeded 100. Increasing resources were dedicated to special squads. The Homicide Squad was expanded and a Narcotics Section, which at first was a joint task force with the Sheriff’s Office, was created. Eventually specialized units were established in Child Abuse, Sex Assault, Arson, Domestic Violence, Megan’s Law and Gangs.

In 1986, Governor Thomas Kean appointed the first African-American Prosecutor in Essex County (and only the second in the State), Herbert H. Tate, Jr. Computerization of the Office was begun and continued in stages throughout the terms of Prosecutor Tate and his successor, Prosecutor Clifford J. Minor.

Also during their terms, a sexual assault case was brought against a group of high school athletes from Glen Ridge, who in 1993 was convicted of victimizing a 17-year-old mentally handicapped woman. This case, which was handled by Robert D. Laurino, who would later be named Acting Essex County Prosecutor in 2010, was the subject of a popular book, a TV movie, and an episode on the TV show “Law & Order.” Most importantly, the case brought national attention to the issues related to the prosecution of defendants who abuse the developmentally disabled.

In 1998, the first female Prosecutor, Patricia Hurt, was appointed by Governor Christie Whitman. Prosecutor Hurt was followed by Acting Prosecutor Donald Campolo and Acting Prosecutor Paula T. Dow. In the opening years of the 21st Century, the Office responded aggressively to increased auto theft and expanded youth gang activity. By 2003, it completed a second generation of computerization complete with e-mail and Internet access and increased its outreach to the public through its web site (www.njecpo.org), its Victim-Witness Advocacy Office, and its Community Justice Program.

In 2005, Governor Richard Codey swore Acting Prosecutor Dow to the Office of Essex County Prosecutor. During Prosecutor Dow’s years of leadership, the Essex

County Prosecutor's Office instituted vertical prosecution, increased its resources and outreach to victims and witnesses, opened a state-of-the-art crime scene facility, and participated in a wide variety of cross-agency / cross-jurisdiction collaborations including a state-federal anti-gang and narcotics task force, gun buy-back programs, and a successful fugitive safe surrender program held in Newark in November, 2009. Prosecutor Dow also emphasized technology development, with the Office updating its computer server infrastructure in 2009 and planning for the implementation of an office-wide, fully integrated electronic case and record management system.

In January, 2010, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie appointed Prosecutor Dow as Acting Attorney General of the State of New Jersey. In her place, Chief Assistant Prosecutor Robert D. Laurino, then a 29-year ECPO veteran, who gained public recognition in the trial and conviction of the high school athletes in Glen Ridge, was appointed Acting Essex County Prosecutor.

In February 2011, Gov. Christie appointed Carolyn A. Murray as Acting Essex County Prosecutor. As Acting Prosecutor she has made victims' rights a high priority. In addition, the Mental Health Unit was created during her tenure, providing new options to prosecutors and defense attorneys when dealing with offenders who have a history of mental illness. During Acting Prosecutor Murray's term, the Office prepared for the challenge of implementing the legislative bail reform mandate which went into effect on January 1, 2017. In preparation, Murray oversaw the implementation of an integrated, office-wide case database system for case management and investigation management.

The lawyers, detectives and support staff who report to her will continue the work of Amzi Dodd into the 21st Century, and are honored to be part of the Office of the Essex County Prosecutor.

With thanks to Francis D. Falivena, Jr., Assistant Prosecutor, Retired, an ECPO history

