



# **2015 Annual Report**

**Carolyn A. Murray**  
**Acting Essex County Prosecutor**



# **Essex County Prosecutor's Office**

**Veterans Courthouse  
50 West Market Street  
Newark, NJ 07102  
[www.njecpo.org](http://www.njecpo.org)  
973.621.4700**



# Chief Executives



From Left to Right: Acting Chief of County Investigators Anthony F. Ambrose; Acting Essex County Prosecutor Carolyn A. Murray; and Acting First Assistant Prosecutor Robert D. Laurino. NOTE: As of late 2016, former Acting Chief Ambrose is now the Public Safety Director for the City of Newark, and Quovella M. Spruill is now ECPO's Acting Chief of Investigators.

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**During 2015, the total number of adult defendant cases reviewed by the Essex County Prosecutor's Office (ECPO) was 11,690. Also, 4,540 defendants were indicted or charged by accusation in 2015. A total of 51.4 percent of ECPO's total adult defendant resolutions within 2015 following an indictment or accusation involved first or second degree criminal charges. Further, in 2015, the total number of juveniles involved in delinquency case filings in Essex County was 2,447.**

(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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## Message from Acting Prosecutor Carolyn A. Murray

*Our mission in the Essex County  
Prosecutor's Office is  
to seek justice, to serve justice  
and to do justice.*

**A**s Acting Essex County Prosecutor it is a privilege to serve the people who live, work and visit Essex County. The 2015 Annual Report provides a glimpse into the tireless service provided by the men and women of the Essex County Prosecutor's Office. Like so many other government entities, the Essex County Prosecutor's Office is doing more with less but the assistant prosecutors, detectives and members of the support staff have risen to the occasion, working harder and more efficiently to investigate and prosecute crimes in the busiest prosecutor's office in the state of New Jersey.

This year's Annual Report provides a snapshot of the work that has been done. While investigating and prosecuting crimes is our primary mission, we also believe the Prosecutor's Office can play an important role in reducing crime and in community education. Consequently, each year the ECPO holds seminars and conferences aimed at offering members of the community of all ages information about how the office functions, ways they can help and details on career opportunities in law enforcement.

Maintaining public confidence is critically important to the work of all prosecutors. During 2015, the difficulty of meeting that challenge was highlighted by a string of very high profile incidents across the nation that raised questions about the conduct of sworn law enforcement officers.

Fortunately, here in Essex County we have not had the kind of incidents witnessed in other parts of the country. Nevertheless, we recognize that we have to be vigilant. Consequently, we expanded our ongoing efforts to keep the lines of communication open with all community stakeholders and are developing new measures to ensure accountability and transparency.

On Dec. 7, we hosted a program featuring the Director of the New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice Elie Honig. He led a community discussion regarding the efforts being undertaken by the Attorney General's Office to inform the public of the protocols that will be followed in all police involved shootings.

In addition, we conducted training of Essex County Internal Affairs officers in the new Attorney General Law Enforcement Directive regarding firearms discharges. Among other things, an assistant prosecutor must respond to the scene of firearms discharges when someone is shot. Finally, we began publishing public statements on our website about the results of the most critical firearms discharges. We have also been involved with the coordination of grants to municipal police agencies to train officers in the use of tasers and to assist in the purchase of body cameras.

In addition to those initiatives, ECPO continued to offer a broad array of programs to teach youngster about careers in law enforcement and to provide them with tools to help them successfully navigate their teen years.

Youth conferences were held in October, November and December. More than 500 students participated in these conferences which dealt with numerous issues, ranging from substance abuse, teen dating violence, careers in the law and making positive life choices.

In March, the ECPO sponsored a full day Male Youth Empowerment Conference for 200 high school males to address their concerns. Held at the Police Academy, it included panel discussions on ways to improve relations between law enforcement and the urban community.

Other community outreach initiatives included the annual summer internship program for high school students. This is the 14th year of this 5-week program. This year 32 high school juniors participated. They toured local and federal law enforcement agencies, participated in mock trials, learned about local and state government and attended Trooper Youth Week with the New Jersey State Police.

We also continued our Citizens and Clergy Academy. Some 70 people graduated from the program which exposes citizens and clergy to the inner workings of the Essex County Prosecutor's 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 was the subject of a popular book, a TV movie, and an episode on the TV show "Law & Order."

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](http://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, 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.

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**

