

THE FIREARM INDUSTRY TRADE ASSOCIATION

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YES – PROSECUTING & ARRESTING CRIMINALS WOULD HAVE IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON D.C.'S CRIME

By Matt Manda

The Nation's Capital is standing out on its own for a horrific trend over the past year and the early weeks of 2024 show no signs of positive change. The city's 700,000 residents meanwhile are being held hostage by so-called leaders who refuse to do the very basics to keep people safe from violent criminals.

The most glaring and infuriating example of the dereliction of duty of those seemingly in charge came from Washington, D.C., Attorney General Brian Schwab.

What's worse is that against the backdrop of rampant violent crime, a police force that is hamstrung and short-staffed and a leading prosecutor who buries his head in the sand to ignore what's happening, the city still imposes some of the strictest gun control laws in the country on law-abiding residents who just want basic safety.

Begging for Action

Murders in Washington, D.C., reached **record highs** not seen in two decades in 2023 as 274 innocent lives were taken by criminals. That tragic mark was 36 percent higher than the previous year and the city has only surpassed 200 homicides a total of three times in the past 20 years. Across the country, major cities saw surges in crime and violence over the past two to three years and some early data shows those numbers might be coming back down. But not in D.C.

"We're having homicides in places we've never had homicides before," Metro Police Department Homicide Inspector Kevin Kentish recently **told** media. The majority of homicide victims in Washington, D.C., in 2023 were lost to criminal misuse of firearms.

The current crime situation led to a community discussion where **angry residents** gave community officials an earful about the rise of violent crime in the city, specifically among juveniles. The panel, titled "Understanding Juvenile Carjacking: A Panel Discussion," was moderated by D.C. Councilmember Charles Allen. It's worth remembering that D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, instead of getting tougher on criminals, announced she was **handing out GPS tracking tags** to district residents so they can find their vehicles if they are the victims of a carjacking, like **U.S. Congressman Henry Cuellar** (D-Texas) was recently.

At the community panel, AG Schwab threw gasoline on a fire when he tried to assuage the concerns of attendees.

"We as a city and a community need to be much more focused on prevention...if we want to be safer in the long run," AG Schwab said in a **now-viral clip**. "We cannot prosecute and arrest our way out of it."

District resident Jacob Walker was beside himself and rightfully so. Walker's son Alberto Vazquez, a father of two young children, was murdered by a criminal with a record.

"It's going to take a lot of time for us to get our family back together and we'll never have that chance to see him or be with him again," Walker said, fighting back tears. "He did everything I taught him to do. And it still cost him his life."

The murderer had also shot D.C. Housing official Mike Gill, who also died from his wounds, a few hours earlier.

Empty Response

Following the outcry of his comments, AG Schwalb tried to backtrack. His spokesperson released a statement saying, "The Office of the Attorney General is laser focused on using the law to make D.C. safer. This includes prosecuting juveniles and holding them accountable when they commit crimes... Prosecution, however, by definition, takes place after a crime has occurred."

Former D.C. Neighborhood Commissioner Denise Rucker Krepp joined Fox & Friends and decried what has happened to the city and the attorney general's irresponsible remarks.

"That's correct—I live in the District of Crime. I live in a city where there over 7,000 car thefts last year, 274 homicides, 959 carjackings and I now have a DC attorney general who says he cannot prosecute and arrest your way out of the crime problem. Which begs the question: What are you doing today?" Rucker Krepp said. "We have a wonderful police department... but we have prosecutors who are not prosecuting and we have judges who are looking at criminals, who are committing violent offenses and are saying, 'Now, now – you're not making smart decisions.'"

Arrest and Prosecute

In order to arrest criminals on the street you need police officers and Washington, D.C., is already on the short end of the stick there, thanks to the defund the police efforts of city council members like Allen. He's one of the chief architects behind a \$15 million cut to the D.C. police force that went into effect in 2020. That cut was among the reasons the D.C. Police Union said they are short 500 officers as of mid-January this year.

If there was an adequate police force to go after criminals, U.S. Attorney for the District of Washington, D.C., Matthew Graves has a good idea that arresting those individuals, and prosecuting them appropriately, would have an immediate impact on lowering violent crime and preventing future violence.

Graves told District residents in August of 2023 about the violence in D.C., and that they know "what we need to do in response to this crisis – and that's to go after the individuals that we know to be driving violence."

He discussed a crime report and that his office is focused on "targeting a relatively small group of people driving most of D.C.'s gun violence; including as few as 500 identifiable people, many of them involved in neighborhood crews or cliques, who are responsible for 70% of the city's shootings."

A full police force arresting known individuals and keeping them behind bars would certainly reduce the tragic violent crime still impacting D.C. neighborhoods.

Taking Initiative

As a direct result of the ongoing threats of violence faced by District residents, many have turned to the Second Amendment. Washington, D.C.'s, ABC 7 News highlighted the trend, particularly among Black women, in a local news report and spoke to mothers Kennette Brown and Nicole Washington about why they chose to buy a firearm.

"A lot of times men look at women and they think we are defenseless. They target us, first because they think we don't carry. We can defend ourselves as women, we are not as weak as you think we are," Brown said. Washington added, "With all the things going on in the world, you just want to be able to protect yourself."

With a police force still severely understaffed and a local prosecutor refusing to hold criminals that are arrested accountable and behind bars, D.C. residents will continue to feel unsafe. Despite the extra roadblocks they face, they'll increasingly rely on themselves for safety and security by lawfully purchasing a firearm.

