

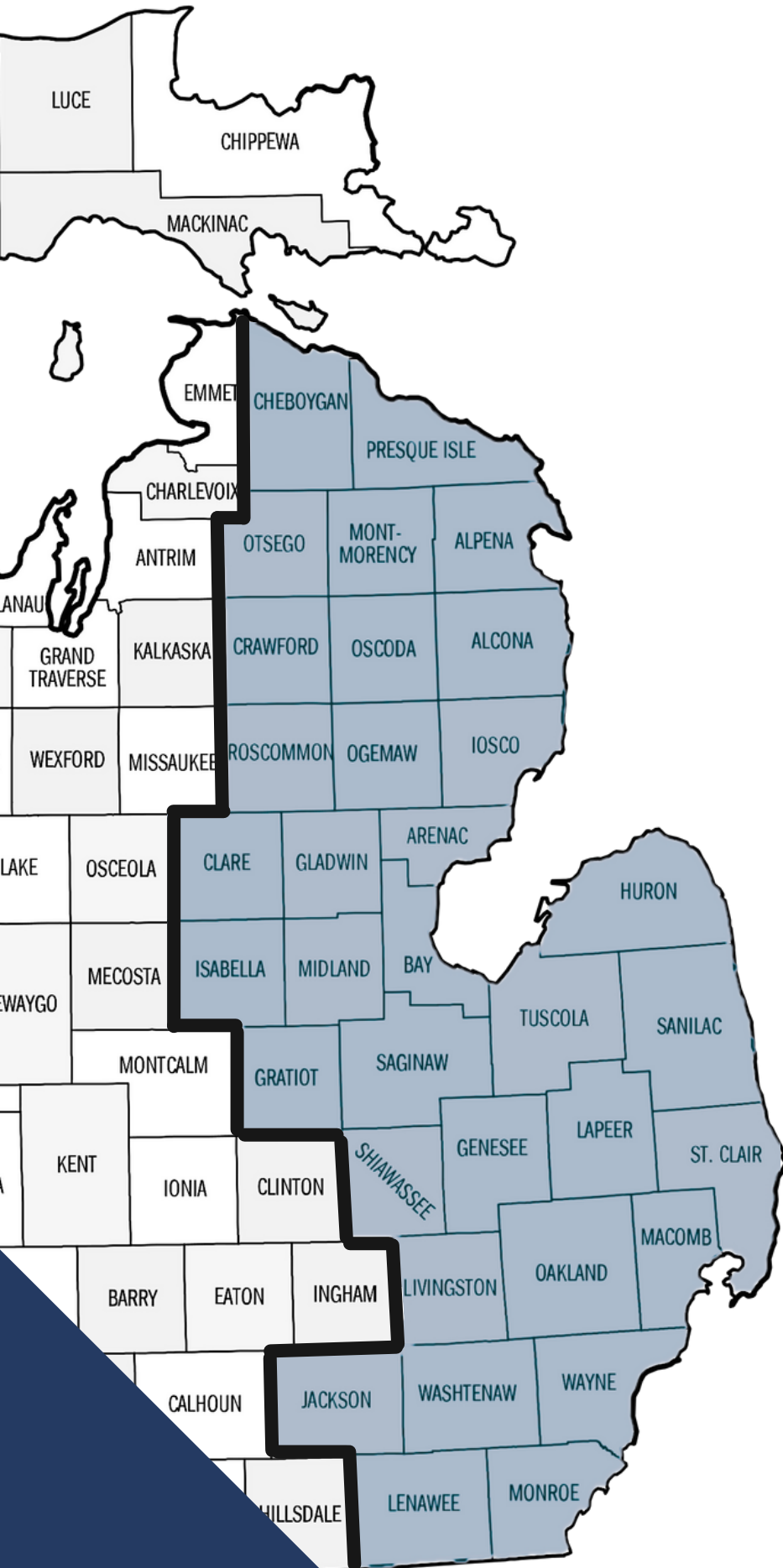
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# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN

**DAWN N. ISON**  
**UNITED STATES ATTORNEY**





## THE EASTERN DISTRICT

The Eastern District of Michigan encompasses 6.5 million people in the Eastern half of Michigan's lower peninsula. Our jurisdiction consists of 34 counties, stretching from the Ohio border north to the Mackinac Bridge, and from mid-Michigan east to Canada.

The main U.S. Attorney's Office is in Detroit, with primary branch offices in Flint and Bay City. The office employs approximately 120 Assistant United States Attorneys and 135 support staff.

The office is organized into four divisions: Criminal, Civil, Appellate, and Administrative.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



*In 2023, we focused on the power of true partnership. We collaborated with our community, government, and law enforcement stakeholders to fully engage, in significant and tangible ways, to carry out our top three priorities—rebuilding community trust, reinvigorating our protection of civil rights, and restructuring our approach to violent crime. We were encouraged by the results of some of these partnerships and engagement.*

*In addition to our partnerships, we could not have made progress on these important priorities without the dedicated attorneys and support staff who work tirelessly to further this work and our ultimate goal to improve the quality of life for all citizens in this great Eastern District of Michigan.*

### REBUILDING COMMUNITY TRUST

We know our effort to protect and serve depends in large part on our relationship with the community. The best way to serve the community is to engage with it, listen to the concerns and needs of the residents of this richly diverse community, and serve as a bridge between law enforcement and the people. We do this in several ways, but chief among them is transparency about our work and legitimacy in the manner in which we carry it out. Community outreach serves a valuable law enforcement function for the government because it helps build trust. Once we have gained the community's trust, the community is more inclined to assist us with solving crimes, utilize us as a resource for protecting civil rights, and join the effort to improve the quality of life for citizens. In addition, community engagement builds faith that justice is being administered fairly by a trusted community partner. Our office is fully engaged in doing the hard work in earning the trust of the communities that we serve throughout the Eastern District of Michigan.

### REINVIGORATING OUR PROTECTION OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Protecting Civil Rights is a top priority for our office, as shown through our long history of engaging in robust civil rights enforcement efforts. Ours remains a national model for civil rights enforcement in the United States Attorney community, but we can still do better. In that regard, we devoted additional resources to our Civil Rights practice and expanded our outreach efforts across the District.

We met with our local, federal law enforcement and community partners throughout the District to ensure that allegations of criminal civil rights violations are thoroughly and fairly investigated, acts constituting federal criminal rights violations are sufficiently remedied, and the rights of the victims are vindicated. We also committed to better educating our community as to how our office can respond to civil rights.

violations. As part of the Department of Justice's United Against Hate Initiative, our Civil Rights attorneys along with our DOJ partners from the FBI and the Community Relations Service taught more than 800 residents about how to identify, report, and prevent hate crimes and bias incidents in eight United Against Hate events across our District. We will continue to raise awareness, educate and engage with the community to eradicate hate.

## **RESTRUCTURING OUR APPROACH TO VIOLENT CRIME**

This year we formalized our violence reduction strategy, One Eastern District of Michigan or One EDM, which is the U.S. Attorney's Office's comprehensive initiative for reducing violent crime throughout the District. It is designed to identify evidence-based strategies that have proven effective in reducing violent crime and bring together a coalition of community, government, and law enforcement stakeholders to implement those strategies. One EDM is a 5-year vision for the District that aims to empower local communities to use those tools that they believe will be the most effective in their area, rather than apply the same practices to every situation or location. To that end, One EDM will establish geographic local executive teams in areas of highest violence, e.g. One Detroit, One Flint, One Saginaw, etc. Each of these executive teams will include a broad array of community stakeholders who will identify the needs, opportunities, and will implement the most appropriate evidence-based strategies for their respective communities. The strategy is backed by evidence and experience. It works. It is already having an impact in communities throughout the District. Over the course of the last year, the U.S. Attorney's Office and its local, state, and federal partners have focused enforcement on the drivers of violence throughout the Eastern District of Michigan.

In April 2023, we announced the creation of the first One EDM subgroup, One Detroit. Our office joined with a broad coalition of community partners, government, and local, state, and federal law enforcement partners to advance the comprehensive violence reduction initiative of the U.S. Attorney's Office. The core of the initiative is partnership. One Detroit is a formal alliance that brings together leaders of the community and those with subject matter expertise in the areas of enforcement, prevention, and reentry—the three pillars that serve as the foundation for the overall One EDM violence reduction strategy—to develop and execute the best strategies to reduce violent crime. Our goal with One Detroit is ambitious: we are setting our sights on cutting gun violence in half in the District's largest city. In 2023, we made notable strides in achieving that goal.

Although the One Detroit partnership was announced in April, this was not the start of our work. For the last year, we have learned about the violent crime problems in Detroit and elsewhere; we have identified individuals and groups working hard to address it; and, we have begun to implement anti-violence practices that have worked in other cities. We learned that urban violence is often perpetrated in clusters by a small number of people and groups, and we can be most effective if we focus on these violent people. We also learned that responses to violence can be overbroad and have collateral consequences for the

communities that we serve. Most importantly, we learned that violence is best addressed together, as one community, as One Detroit.

We are also focused on crime prevention in ways this community has never seen before. Last summer, we sent out over one hundred letters warning those on probation and parole about our upcoming summer enforcement in an effort to deter those individuals from illegally possessing guns. We also brought our Peacenics back to the 8th and 9th Precincts. The Peacenics featured vendors offering a variety of resources including job training, literacy programs, mental health and medical screenings, utility assistance, educational and vocational opportunities, tutorial and career development programs, expungement assistance and more. In addition to the resources, there were bounce houses, face painting, chess, and a Spades tournament. New this year was the Peacenic Thrift Clothing Boutique where residents could shop for gently used clothing for all.

We also hosted four community roundtables for more than a hundred individuals on probation and supervised release living in our hot spot areas in the 8th and 9th Precincts. The roundtables included a panel of justice-impacted individuals, One Detroit partners from the Michigan Department of Corrections and Federal Probation officials, and resource partners such as Black Family Development and Goodwill Industries. The facilitators participated in breakout sessions with the returning citizens and their family members designed to help address any barriers that might be preventing full reintegration into society for the returning citizens.

And as a result of our One Detroit enhanced summer violence reduction strategy, we saw a nearly 20% reduction in violent crime in the 8th precinct and over an 11% reduction in the 9th precinct. In addition, in 2023, the City of Detroit saw its lowest number of homicides in almost 60 years.

This combined approach—enforcement, prevention, and reentry—recognizes the need for prosecution of those who are the most violent, but also the collateral impacts that often accompany aggressive law enforcement efforts. We are committed to balancing our investigative and prosecutive efforts with outreach strategies designed to prevent violent crime from happening. For the past year, federal prosecutors have been assigned to five precincts in Detroit to work with federal and local law enforcement partners to identify violent offenders. But they are not just involved in enforcement. Our prosecutors also attend community meetings in those precincts where they communicate about our work and learn about things like blight and abandoned buildings where violence and crime often concentrate. This type of partnership has a direct impact on violence and the quality of life for Detroit's citizens, and we are looking forward to expanding this across the Eastern District of Michigan.

## **SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023**

We are proud of the work that we have done in service of this District. In our case work and in our other service to the community, the lawyers and support professionals in our office, along with our partner agencies, had significant accomplishments this year. Among them:

- *In fiscal year 2023, our office collected \$68,224,759.35 in criminal and civil actions in judgments, fines, restitution, and forfeiture, more than twice our operating budget of \$ 24.9 million. These funds are being returned to victims and taxpayers.*
- *Our efforts to target the most violent offenders who are harming public safety resulted in numerous federal convictions. We obtained conviction for the leader of the Seven Mile Bloods Gang who terrorized Detroit's east side for many years. We also obtained Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations ("RICO") convictions for three senior members of the Almighty Vice Lords Nation, a criminal enterprise that operates across the country including in Detroit.*
- *We filed suit against a Dearborn Heights landlord who is alleged to have subjected actual and prospective female tenants to sexual harassment on multiple occasions since at least 2017.*
- *We charged a former Warren police officer with violating a jail prisoner's civil rights by assaulting the prisoner without justification.*
- *We remained committed to rooting out public corruption in our community as 2023 saw the Mayor of Inkster indicted by our office for bribery and guilty pleas from the Mayor of Taylor for conspiracy to receive bribes and wire fraud and the President of the Madison School Board for bribery and tax evasion.*
- *We obtained a conviction at trial against an ISIS fighter who left his home in Michigan and travelled to Yemen and Syria where he obtained ISIS training and spent more than 2 years as an ISIS soldier.*
- *The office has charged 142 defendants (52 in 2023) with participating in pandemic fraud schemes, ranging from unemployment insurance fraud conspiracies to fraud in pandemic loan programs. Of the individuals charged in such cases, the United States has thus far obtained more than 86 convictions.*
- *We indicted 8 people and charged them with federal civil rights offenses and violations of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act for using physical obstruction to intimidate and interfere with employees and patients of a reproductive health clinic,*

*because the clinic's employees were providing, and the patients were seeking, reproductive health services.*

The 220 men and women of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan are dedicated public servants, who work tirelessly every day to improve the quality of life in our community. The additional pages include some of the highlights of more of our work. We invite you to read more and share your suggestions with us at [www.justice.gov/usao/mie](http://www.justice.gov/usao/mie).

Dawn N. Ison  
*United States Attorney*  
Eastern District of Michigan



*2023 Executive Team: L-R, Executive AUSA Luttrell Levingston, Criminal Chief Daniel Hurley, First AUSA Julie Beck, U.S. Attorney Dawn N. Ison, then-Special Counsel to U.S. Attorney David Gardey, Deputy Criminal Chief Sara Woodward, Appellate Chief Andrew Goetz, and Civil Chief Kevin Erskine*



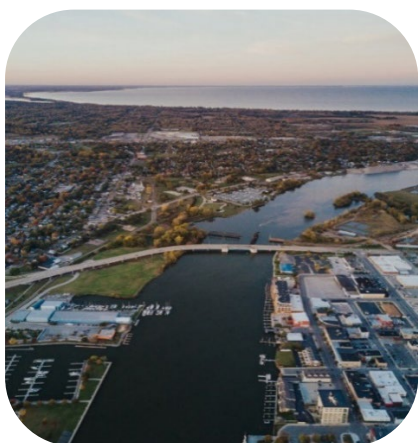
## THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN

The Eastern District of Michigan is home to a diverse population of more than six million people. Detroit is the largest city in the District with a population of 4.3 million in its metropolitan area. Other large cities include Ann Arbor, Bay City, Flint, and Saginaw.

The U.S. Attorney's Office is headquartered in Detroit, with staffed branch offices in Bay City and Flint. In 2023, the office had approximately 220 employees, including 120 attorneys. Detroit is the USAO's largest office, with 111 Assistant U.S. Attorneys and 109 support staff employees, as well as most of the office's administrative personnel. The Bay City office has four AUSAs and five support employees. The Flint branch office has six AUSAs assigned, along with five support staff.



*Downtown Detroit*



*Bay City, Michigan*

The Eastern District of Michigan abuts Canada along a 400-mile border traversing two Great Lakes. There are three international border crossings (two bridges and one tunnel), two international airports, and two international railroad tunnels. The border generates drug, human-trafficking, and immigration cases. Detroit, Flint, and Saginaw have high levels of violent crime. Several gangs operate in the major cities of the District and contribute to violent crime and drug trafficking. The office prosecutes a large number of firearms cases. Fentanyl and methamphetamine are the largest drug threats. The District is the center of the nation's automobile industry and a substantial portion of the workforce is employed by automobile manufacturers and suppliers.

Economic crime threats in the District include corporate criminal misconduct, labor racketeering and corruption, large-scale identity theft rings, and federal program fraud. The U.S. Attorney's Office also handles Indian Country cases from the Saginaw Chippewa Reservation, in Mount Pleasant, Michigan, which is about 150 miles north of Detroit.



*Flint, Michigan*



## REBUILDING COMMUNITY TRUST

To meet our goal of rebuilding community, our office engaged in outreach to communities across the District. This community engagement included communities at risk of discrimination or hate crimes, communities experiencing disproportionate rates of violence, and returning citizens. That engagement included transparency about our work and on our enforcement efforts, educational programming, prevention efforts, and listening sessions to understand the specific concerns and needs of the various diverse communities within the District.



*Attendees at United Against Hate event at Gloria Coles Flint Library.*

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH IN 2023

In April 2023, our office hosted a listening session for stakeholders from the Asian American community at the Chinese Community Center in Madison Heights. U.S. Attorney Ison, along with attorneys from both the Civil Rights Unit and the Public Corruption and Civil Rights Unit, and officials from the FBI, listened to the concerns from leaders and shared information about how to report hate crimes and bias incidents. As a result of this successful outreach event, we hosted a similar event focusing on the Indian American community in Canton.

Our outreach also included efforts to engage individuals who have been convicted of crimes and served time in prison, or who are on probation. When we assist individuals to return to productive, law-abiding lives, we help reduce crime across the District and make our neighborhoods better places to live.

U.S. Attorney Ison and other community partners organized a symposium that brought together returning citizens and support networks to share ideas and best practices for improving the success for citizens returning to the community. The symposium was part of Second Chance Month, which is a nationwide effort to raise awareness of the barriers faced by individuals with criminal records and unlock brighter futures for returning citizens.



*Executive Assistant U.S. Attorney Luttrell Livingston, Law Enforcement Coordinator Robert Poikey, Executive Legal Assistant Lauren Mercer and Outreach Specialist Mitchell Kittle at our Second Chance Symposium.*

Our Reentry Symposium, held at Wayne State University, focused on three barriers that affect returning citizens: housing, mental health, and navigating the child support system.

Detroit Pistons then-Assistant Coach Jerome Allen (pictured right) spoke about his own experience in the criminal justice system. Allen pleaded guilty in October 2018 to one felony count of money laundering and was sentenced to four years of probation. Coach Allen directly addressed the returning citizens in the audience and offered them an inspirational message that you do not have to be defined by your mistakes, and explained how taking responsibility for his own mistakes helped him find peace and take advantage of his second chance.



*Jerome Allen, U.S. Attorney Ison, and Fighting the Good Fight CEO Darryl Woods at our Reentry Symposium.*

More than 115 returning citizens attended the symposium, along with parole and probation officers, law enforcement officials, service providers, and other community leaders. Vendors from Project Clean Slate, City of Detroit Skills for Life, Blast Detroit, Recovery 4 Detroit, Goodwill Industries, Genesis House, Team Wellness, and Detroit Rescue Mission were in attendance to provide guidance, resources, and assistance to symposium participants.



The symposium addressed breaking through the obstacles to successful re-entry, such as housing barriers, employment, mental health and trauma, child support debt, and family obligations. Speakers addressed how each of these issues impact successful reintegration into society. During breakout sessions (pictured left), attendees discussed obstacles to successful re-entry.

Additional speakers included U.S. Attorney Dawn N. Ison; Shirley Stancato, Vice Chair of the Wayne State University Board of Governors; Darryl Woods, Founder and CEO of Fighting the Good Fight; and Kyle Kaminski, Offender Success Administrator for Michigan Department of Corrections.

We also continued our longstanding work with ALPACT (Advocates and Leaders for Police and Community Trust), which brings together officials from law enforcement and civil rights groups for the ALPACT chapters in Southeast Michigan, Flint, Saginaw, and Jackson to build community trust.

We continued to participate in BRIDGES (Building Respect in Diverse Groups to Enhance Sensitivity), a partnership between the U.S. Attorney's Office and Arab and Muslim communities. The BRIDGES group met quarterly throughout the District, bringing together leaders from law enforcement and community groups to discuss issues such as border crossing delays, threats on social media, hate crimes, and immigration matters. BRIDGES was formed in October 2001, following the terrorist attacks of 9/11. In December, we hosted a BRIDGES Town Hall on combatting Hate Crimes, which included remarks from Johnathan Smith, Deputy Assistant Attorney General from the Civil Rights and a United Against Hate presentation from staff from our office along with our DOJ partners from the FBI and the Community Relations Service.



*AUSAs Frances Carlson and Michael El-Zein participated in the United Against Hate Townhall hosted by BRIDGES in Dearborn, Michigan.*



*U.S. Attorney Ison at the American Human Rights Council (AHRC) Law Enforcement Event.*



Along with Mark Totten, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Michigan, U.S. Attorney Ison serves as the Co-Chair of the Michigan Alliance Against Hate Crimes (MIAAHC). Members include the Michigan Department of Civil Rights and other civil rights and law enforcement organizations.



*U.S. Attorney Ison with Judy and Dennis Shepard and Louvon Byrd Harris at the MI Response to Hate Conference.*

MIAAHC meets quarterly to address hate crimes statistics, plan initiatives to raise awareness, and promote community resilience. In September, we held our annual Michigan Response to Hate conference in East Lansing. This year's keynote session focused on the brutal murders of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming and James Byrd Jr. in Texas in 1998. Their murders sparked the eventual passage of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009. Conference attendees heard from members of the Shepard and Byrd families. U.S. Attorney Ison addressed the participants, and members of the office conducted a presentation on hate crimes.

Our District includes the Isabella Reservation in Isabella County and Saganing Reservation in Arenac County. Our office is responsible for prosecution for certain crimes on the reservation. As part of our prosecution of crimes in Indian Country, our office consults with the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe's Tribal Council. Executive AUSA Livingston and AUSA Tony Vance traveled to Mount Pleasant to meet with the Tribal Council in February. After a recommendation from the Tribal Council, we invited the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe's Tribal Preservation Officer to our office in March to give a presentation to our office about the effects of Indian Boarding Schools on the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe.



*U.S. Attorney Ison with Bryan Newland, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs, Mark Totten, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Michigan, and Clifford Johnson, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Indiana.*

U.S. Attorney Ison, Executive AUSA Livingston, AUSAs Kranz and Orr, and Victim Assistance Specialists Sherri Holloway and Erin Gauthier attended the Great Lakes Native American Conference in New Buffalo, Michigan. This annual conference is a gathering of U.S. Attorney Office staff from Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Minnesota and tribal leaders from the federally recognized tribes in those states.



*Photographs from Great Lakes Native American conference. Pictured on the right with U.S. Attorney Ison, l-r, AUSA Roy Kranz, Victim Witness Specialist Sherri Holloway, Victim Witness Specialist Erin Gauthier, and AUSA William Orr.*

Staff from our Bay City office also attended the Uniting the Three Fires Against Violence Conference on Mackinac Island, which sought to address disproportionate rates of violence impacting Native American communities.



*The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan partnered with the Urban League of Detroit and Southeast Michigan to host "United Against Hate."*

In June 2023, U.S. Attorney Ison joined a panel of city, county, state, and community partners to address and educate returning citizens in Pontiac. The panel discussion was held contemporaneous with an Expungement and Career Fair.





## NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

The United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan participated in community events during National Night Out (NNO). NNO is an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie. NNO events take place annually on the first Tuesday in August and provide a great opportunity to bring police and neighbors together under positive circumstances.



In 2023, members of the USAO took part in activities across the District. USAO representatives attended NNO events hosted by several departments, including in Bay City, Flint, and several of Detroit's precincts.







## ENGAGING WITH YOUTH

We understand that by investing in youth in our District, we are actually investing in the future of our community. For our youth to grow into successful and productive citizens, we must all come together to offer our support and mentorship. Recognizing that, in 2023, we prioritized connection with youth across the District.



*U.S. Attorney Ison with youth members of AmeriCorps*

In December 2023, U.S. Attorney Ison met with student leaders of the Wayne County Commission Youth Council. Cass Tech, Canton, Hamtramck, and Southeastern High Schools are represented on the Council. Council members shared their vision for creating mental health opportunities in schools and ending gun violence & economic inequities.





In November 2023, U.S. Attorney Ison and General Crimes Unit Deputy Chief Hank Moon—joined by Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Special Agents Troy Williams and Jameria Caldwell—went to Henry Ford High School in Detroit's 8<sup>th</sup> Precinct and addressed incoming freshmen, delivering a message about consequences, respect, and hope.

We also actively engaged with high school, undergraduate, and law school students throughout the year. USAO staff met with and presented to youth in the District in an effort to foster their interest in the legal field.

In recognition of Law Day, AUSAs Susan Fairchild and Diane Princ spoke with local high school students about a rewarding career as an Assistant United States Attorney representing the United States.



In July 2023, U.S. Attorney Ison spoke to high school students about the inner workings of the United States Attorney's Office at the Detroit FBI's Teen Academy—a program that allows high school students an opportunity to get a comprehensive look into today's FBI.

In November 2023, U.S. Attorney Ison connected with law students at Wayne State University Law School. During the Question-and-Answer session, U.S. Attorney Ison shared insight about the work of the U.S. Attorney's Office.





U.S. Attorney Ison also joined Dean Jelani Jefferson Exum and the Black Law Student Association at University of Detroit Mercy Law School for Women's Month program.



## ENFORCEMENT

### CIVIL RIGHTS

**Disability Rights.** Our Civil Rights Unit resolved a disability discrimination case involving Flint Neurological Centre P.C. Our lawsuit alleged the medical practice violated Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by failing to provide auxiliary aids and services required to ensure effective communication with patients and their companions who are deaf or hard of hearing. Under the terms of the three-year Consent Decree, Flint Neurological Centre, P.C. will pay a total of \$150,000 in damages to ten patients and companions. It will also establish a \$40,000 victim fund for additional individuals who may have been harmed by its past practices, and it will pay a \$10,000 civil monetary penalty to the government. The Consent Decree requires Flint Neurological Centre to adopt a policy statement which notifies patients and their companions of their right to obtain sign language interpreters or other auxiliary aids and services free of charge. The medical practice is also required to train its staff on various topics, including how to provide effective communication to members of the deaf community.

We also settled a complaint regarding an allegation that a Walmart store located in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan failed to make reasonable modifications to its policies so that an individual with a mobility disorder had an equal opportunity to access the goods or services that Walmart offered for sale. The settlement agreement resolves the Office's investigation, prompted by the complaint of an individual with quadriplegia that he was not allowed to purchase alcohol at the Mt. Pleasant Walmart because his aide who was assisting him with shopping was not over 21 years old. The settlement required Walmart to pay damages to the complainant, update its corporate ADA policies, and train Walmart employees across the country on those new policies.



*AUSAs participate in DOJ's research-backed Mindful Inclusion Implicit Bias Training.*

We resolved our investigation of Bark Bark Wag, a local dog rescue organization based in Livonia, Michigan in which a complainant alleged that her adoption application was denied based on stereotypes concerning her use of a wheelchair, leaving her feeling “dehumanized.” The settlement agreement requires the dog rescue to fully comply with the non-discrimination requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). The settlement agreement requires Bark Bark Wag to adopt ADA policies to ensure that the adoption process does not improperly screen out or scrutinize individuals who have disabilities.

We reached a settlement with the State of Michigan to resolve a disability discrimination lawsuit. The lawsuit involved a disability discrimination claim made by an employee of the Michigan Department of Treasury. The employee needed to complete a medical treatment during work hours and submitted a reasonable accommodation request to use an empty office space for a short time each day. After initially allowing the employee to do so, the State of Michigan, revoked the accommodation, denying her subsequent requests and requiring the employee to travel back and forth from home during the workday to complete the procedure, until she filed a charge with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Under the terms of the settlement agreement, the State of Michigan paid \$40,000 in damages to the employee's estate, revised statewide rules and regulations for employees' reasonable accommodations, and agreed to review and revise ADA policies, practices, procedures, and documents.

The office reached a resolution with Steppingstones Counseling Center PLLC, a local therapy practice, regarding a disability discrimination complaint. The Complainant, who is deaf and whose primary language is American Sign Language (ASL), alleged the practice

initially dismissed her as a patient and later failed to provide her with equal access to its services because of her need for ASL interpretation services, in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Stepping Stones Counseling Center agreed to update its policies and training materials to ensure compliance with the ADA and to make a compensatory payment to the Complainant. In addition, the counseling center must train its staff on the ADA and develop and implement an anti-discrimination policy.



*In January 2023, the Anti-Defamation League sponsored and conducted a forum on protecting places of worship at the Hope United Methodist Church. U.S. Attorney Ison and Southfield Police Chief Elvin V. Barren participated on the panel.*

## **CRIMINAL CIVIL RIGHTS**

**Threats.** In *United States v. Pilon*, a Saginaw man was sentenced to 10 months in prison after pleading guilty to hate crimes. The defendant admitted that he willfully intimidated citizens from engaging in lawful speech and protests in support of Black Lives Matter. The man had called nine Starbucks in Michigan and told employees to relay racial threats to Starbucks employees wearing Black Lives Matter T-shirts. He also threatened to kill black people, using a racial slur to refer to his intended victims. In addition, the man admitted placing a noose inside a victim's car with a threatening note.

In *United States v. Carpenter*, a Tipton, Michigan man was indicted for threatening to kill Jewish government officials in Michigan. The indictment alleges that Jack Eugene Carpenter, III intentionally selected Jewish members of the Michigan government as the objects of his threats because of the actual and perceived religion of those individuals.

**Reproductive Rights.** In *United States v. Zastrow*, eight people were charged with federal civil rights offenses and violations of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act related to blockades of two reproductive health clinics. All eight are alleged to have violated the FACE Act by using physical obstruction to intimidate and interfere with a Sterling Heights clinic's ability to provide reproductive health services, and the patients' ability to receive such services.

## **PUBLIC CORRUPTION**

Eradicating public corruption in federal, state, and local government remains a high priority for the U.S. Attorney's Office. Corruption in government corrodes society by discouraging respect for the law, preventing the public's tax dollars from being spent on the best services at the lowest cost, harming honest businesses that play by the rules, and discouraging good

people from seeking public office. Our region thrives when we have honest government at every level.

**County Corruption.** In *United States v. Marrocco et al.*, former Macomb County Commissioner of Public Works Anthony Marrocco was sentenced to 3 months in prison and 14 months of home confinement for attempted extortion. Marrocco withheld county permits from businessmen who refused to contribute to Marrocco's campaign. Marrocco pleaded guilty to attempted extortion of a Macomb County developer and admitted that he pressured the developer to spend thousands of dollars to purchase tickets to one of Marrocco's fundraisers. The investigation of Marrocco resulted in the conviction of 9 public officials, including a Detroit Deputy Chief of Police, 8 elected officials, Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith, and the former Chief Engineer of Macomb County. In total, the investigation resulted in twenty-two criminal convictions.

In *United States v. Gibson et al.*, two former Wayne County Roads Division employees pleaded guilty to conspiring to steal over \$1.7 million in public funds. John Gibson and Kevin Gunn engaged in a scheme to use taxpayer dollars to buy generators and other power equipment from retailers in southeast Michigan which they sold for personal profit. The purchase of these items was not authorized under any vendor contract with Wayne County nor were the items ever provided to or used by Wayne County. Gunn was sentenced to 32 months in prison. Gibson is awaiting sentencing.

**City Officials.** In *United States v. Wimberly*, the former mayor of Inkster was charged with bribery. The indictment alleges that Patrick Wimberly demanded cash payments to facilitate the sale of property owned by Inkster to an outside party. According to the indictment, the outside party provided Wimberly with monthly cash bribes to secure the purchase of this property. In total, the outside party provided Wimberly with \$50,000 in cash to assure a winning bid for the property.

**Police Misconduct.** In *United States v. Kennedy et al.*, John Kennedy, a former police lieutenant in charge of the Detroit Police Department's Integrity Unit, was sentenced to 2½ years in prison for accepting bribes. Kennedy conspired with another Detroit police officer, Daniel Vickers, to accept money and other items of value in exchange for Kennedy using his influence to persuade other officers to make tow referrals to a specific towing company. Kennedy and Vickers agreed to accept bribes in the form of cars, car parts, car repairs, and new carpeting for Vickers' home. Vickers pleaded guilty to the bribery conspiracy and was sentenced to just over 2 years in prison. Vickers and Kennedy were charged as part of the U.S. Attorney's Office's investigation of corruption within the City of Detroit relating to the towing industry. Thus far, six defendants have been charged in the probe, and five of those 6 defendants have been convicted.

In *United States v. Stout*, former Hamtramck Police Department officer Michael Stout pleaded guilty to taking bribes from a towing company. While working as an officer, Stout accepted a vehicle and \$1,500 in cash from a towing company operator. In return, Stout provided information from the Michigan Law Enforcement Information Network (or



LEIN), a restricted law enforcement database, to the towing company. Stout pleaded guilty to bribery concerning programs receiving federal funds and will be sentenced later this year.

**School Officials.** In *United States v. Morrison et al*, Albert Morrison, president of the school board in Madison Heights, MI, was sentenced to nearly 4 years in prison after pleading guilty to accepting bribes from a local contractor and tax evasion. While Morrison was president of the school board, Emergency Restoration was awarded over \$3.1 million in maintenance and construction projects. One of the owners of Emergency Restoration, John David, was a long-time friend of Morrison, and paid Morrison more than \$561,000 to secure the contracts. Morrison spent the money from David on personal luxuries like vacations in Florida and a boat slip. David was sentenced to 2 years in prison.

## **VIOLENT CRIME CASES**

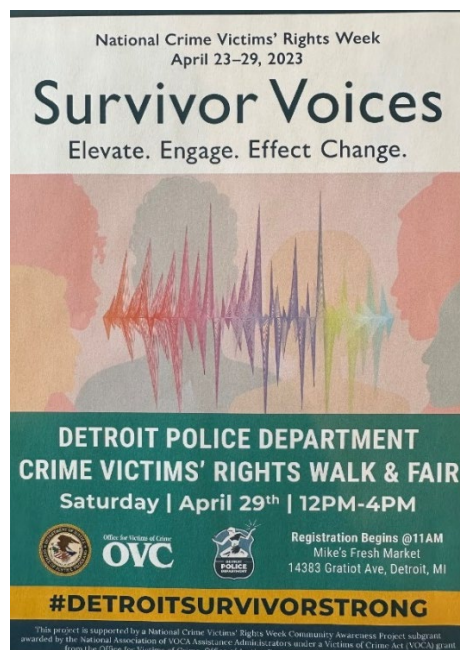
As a result of our focused approach to target the most violent offenders who are harming public safety, through our One Detroit effort and other strategies, we have achieved significant results. Improving public safety by focusing on the drivers of violence using evidence-based strategies and including prevention is a significant and critical part of our strategy. In 2023, the City of Detroit recorded its lowest number of homicides recorded in nearly 60 years.

**Murder and Racketeering.** In *United States v. Arnold*, a jury convicted Billy Arnold, the leader of the Seven Mile Bloods street gang, of 22 counts, including racketeering conspiracy, murder, attempted murder, and related firearms offenses. Seven Mile Bloods was a violent street gang that operated on the east side of Detroit in the 9<sup>th</sup> precinct. Members of Seven Mile Bloods, or “SMB,” claimed zip code 48205 as their territory and referred to it as the “Red Zone.” They also called it “4-8-2-0-die.” The investigation into SMB resulted in the seizure of more than 20 firearms, including several high-powered assault rifles. Arnold is the 20th SMB member convicted as a result of the investigation.

In *United States v. Fordham*, a jury convicted three high-ranking leaders of the Almighty Vice Lords Nation (AVLN) of RICO conspiracy. Evidence offered during trial established that AVLN was a sprawling criminal enterprise that committed acts of violence and drug dealing across the country. The trial involved leaders of two branches: the Mafia Insane Vice Lords and the Insane Vice Lords. The jury convicted Martin Murff of Chicago, who had the title of “Prince” and was the highest-ranked Mafia Insane Vice Lords in the country and a member of the national leadership of the AVLN; Kevin Fordham of Detroit, another “Prince,” who was the highest-ranked Insane Vice Lord in Michigan and a member of the national leadership of the AVLN; and, Eddie Reid of Detroit, a “Chief” and the highest-ranked Mafia Insane Vice Lord in Michigan. The evidence at trial showed that these leaders worked together under the umbrella of the Almighty Vice Lord Nation and agreed that they or their enterprise members would commit acts of racketeering, including murder, narcotics trafficking, and witness intimidation. In one seizure alone, law enforcement intercepted

over 2.5 kilograms of pure fentanyl destined for Detroit. Trial is pending for 36 other defendants charged in this indictment.

In *United States v. Mills, et al.*, Carlo Wilson and Edwin Mills were each sentenced to 25 years in prison for gang-related killings of two people: an individual with whom they were feuding and an innocent 13-year-old bystander. Both Mills and Wilson pleaded guilty to RICO conspiracy and admitted to being members of the 6 Mile Chedda Grove street gang, which operated on the eastside of Detroit. 6 Mile Chedda Grove was a violent organization responsible for murders, assaults, robberies, and narcotics trafficking in the Detroit area and in other states. All eleven charged members of the gang have now been convicted and sentenced.



In *United States v. Griffin, et al.*, Mariano Garcia and Michael Griffin were sentenced to 25 and 30 years in prison for murdering two people over a drug debt. Garcia and Griffin engaged in a long-term drug trafficking conspiracy involving cocaine supplied by Garcia in Texas and distributed by Griffin and others in Birmingham, Alabama, and Detroit, Michigan. At Garcia's direction, Griffin traveled from Alabama to Detroit to collect a drug debt. Once in Michigan, Griffin tied up and shot to death the Detroit-based co-conspirator and another man. After the murders, Griffin and Garcia returned to their drug business.

In *United States v. Peterson, et al.*, the leader of It's Just Us ("IJU"), a violent street gang, was sentenced to life in prison for murder, racketeering, narcotics trafficking, and other gang-related crimes. Duane Peterson was one of 8 defendants charged in a heroin/fentanyl drug conspiracy that distributed the deadly drugs in Detroit, Jackson, Flint, Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky. At its peak, the gang boasted 40 members. IJU terrorized the Detroit community from 2014 through the beginning of 2019 by engaging in violent acts, obstruction of justice, and witness intimidation. In May 2017, IJU ambushed a 33-year-old Detroit man for allegedly disparaging an IJU associate. Peterson chased the man down and executed him, shooting him in the back of the head while he lie dying on the ground. In March 2018, Peterson and another IJU member opened fire on a carful of innocent bystanders who happened to be stopped at a red light and saw Peterson beating a woman in a liquor store parking lot.

In *United States v. King, et al.*, 6 men were indicted for RICO conspiracy related to their membership in the Purple Hearts Vets street gang. The indictment alleges that the Purple Heart Vets promoted themselves as soldiers in battle, engaging in violence on the streets of

Detroit on behalf of the gang. Operating primarily on the northwest side of Detroit, the leaders rewarded gang members who engaged in acts of violence with purple hearts. They obtained guns, coordinated attacks on their rivals, sold controlled substances, and engaged in significant unemployment insurance fraud.

In *United States v. Jordan*, Julius Jordan was sentenced to over 15 years in prison for conspiracy to commit murder-for-hire and possession of an unregistered short-barreled rifle. An individual hired Jordan and his co-defendant, Reginald L. Hunter, to travel from Alabama to Flint, Michigan, to murder someone in exchange for money. Once Jordan and Hunter arrived in Michigan, they obtained assault rifles and began looking for the individual that they were hired to kill. As Jordan and Hunter drove through a neighborhood looking for their intended victim, Michigan State Police troopers conducted a traffic stop. During the stop, troopers seized two rifles loaded with chambered rounds and high-capacity magazines. Reginald Hunter is scheduled for trial in March 2024.



*U.S. Attorney Ison with Warden Eric Rardin and staff from Milan Correctional Facility honoring Correctional Worker's Week.*

In *United States v. Castro, et al.*, Alex Castro was sentenced to over 24 years in prison for second-degree murder. In 2019, Castro, along with co-defendants Jason Kechego and Adam Taylor Wright, killed fellow Milan federal detention center inmate Christian Maire. Castro repeatedly stabbed Maire while Kechego and Wright kicked and stomped on his head. The men then threw Maire's body down a flight of stairs. Maire died from multiple stab wounds and blunt force trauma to the head. Castro's 24-year sentence is consecutive to a 42-year sentence Castro is already serving. Wright pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in 2022 and was sentenced to just over 24 years. Kechego was convicted at trial of second-degree murder and sentenced to 28 years.

**Kidnapping.** In *United States v. Maxie*, Lugene Maxie was charged with conspiracy to commit kidnapping, attempted kidnapping, and felon in possession of a firearm. The indictment alleges that Maxie and two other men approached a female victim as she was walking. The men made sexual remarks towards the victim and told her to come with them. Eventually, Maxie approached the victim and grabbed her. When the victim ran away, Maxie pulled a firearm from his waistband and fired two to three times.

**Robbery/Carjacking.** In *United States v. Sturgis*, Rayquan Sturgis was sentenced to 25 years in prison after pleading guilty to three separate carjackings. Sturgis carjacked his victims after each had tried to help him in different ways. Sturgis carjacked the first victim

when she offered him a ride after he was in a crash. Sturgis approached the second victim and asked for help jumpstarting his car. After riding with the victim for several blocks, Sturgis shot the victim multiple times. The third victim gave Sturgis a ride from Inkster to Detroit; once in Detroit, Sturgis pistol-whipped the victim, stole his sunglasses, and forced him out of the car.

In *United States v. Horsley*, Gregory Horsley pleaded guilty to three counts of attempted carjacking, carjacking and one count of using a firearm during a crime of violence. During each offense, Horsley targeted strangers who were inside their vehicles. He was sentenced to 9 years in prison.



*U.S. Attorney Ison and AUSA Barbara Lanning with Saginaw Police Chief Bob Ruth, Detroit Police Chief James White, and Jackson Public Safety Director Elmer Hitt at the 2023 Violence Reduction Summit.*

In *United States v. Jackson*, a jury convicted Mario Jackson of five counts of robbery or attempted robbery of commercial businesses, one count of robbery of a pharmacy, and five associated firearms counts. Jackson used a semi-automatic handgun with an extended magazine to rob Walgreens pharmacies in Metro Detroit. During the robberies, Jackson accessed the back of the store by crawling through the shelving in store coolers. Over the course of the robberies, Jackson stole over \$20,000 and more than 5000 prescription opioid pills. In total, Jackson held 9 Walgreens employees at gunpoint.

In *United States v. Johnson*, David Johnson was sentenced to almost 22 years for bank robbery and using a firearm during a crime of violence. Johnson and an accomplice entered a Citizens Bank with a short-barreled shotgun and announced a robbery. They stole more than \$4,000, but the money was immediately thrown from the getaway car's window after red dye packs exploded. Johnson's wife, who drove the car, told authorities the robbery was exciting and compared herself and Johnson to "Bonnie and Clyde."

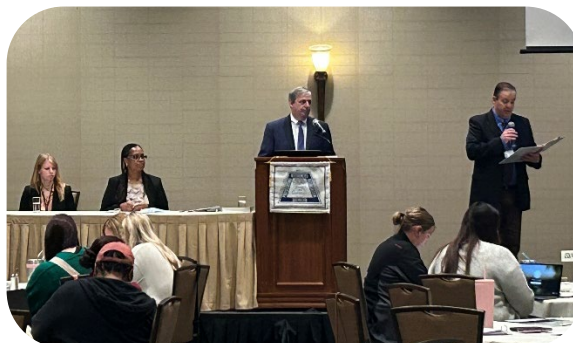
**Firearms.** We combated gun violence by prosecuting illegal use and possession of guns. Our asset forfeiture team used federal law to seize and forfeit guns and ammunition from defendants after their convictions.

In *United States v. Gates*, Immanuel Gates was sentenced to nearly 8 years for illegal possession of a machine gun and aggravated identity theft. Gates used his victims' personal identifying information to apply for unemployment benefits. Gates fraudulently obtained approximately \$413,114 of unemployment insurance. Gates used some of this money to purchase firearms; in a single day, Gates spent \$3,273 of his fraud proceeds on four guns.



Two of those firearms were subsequently used in shootings in Pontiac. Gates also transferred at least \$7,950 to a straw purchaser who purchased firearms on his behalf. The straw purchaser has also pleaded guilty. Finally, Gates purchased over thirty Glock conversion devices, commonly called “switches,” from a Russian website. A Glock conversion device converts a semi-automatic pistol into a fully automatic firearm.

In *United States v. Jackson*, Antonio Jackson was sentenced to 7 years in prison for his role in a gun trafficking ring. Jackson was the leader of a scheme in which coconspirators used stolen credit card information to buy firearms online. In total, Jackson admitted that the group illegally obtained at least 55 firearms through the scheme. Several of the firearms have been recovered by law enforcement, including some recovered from convicted felons. Four other members of the scheme also pleaded guilty and received sentences between 18 and 54 months.



*AUSA William Vaillencourt and Victim Witness Specialists Sherri Holloway and Erin Gauthier present “Victim Rights in the Federal System” during the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan’s Victim Advocate Annual Conference in Bay City, Michigan.*

In *United States v. Thomas*, Sheldon Thomas was sentenced to 2 years in prison for making a false statement on a firearm purchase record. Thomas lied on an ATF form when he falsely certified that he was the buyer of a gun when in fact he was purchasing it for Ehmani Davis, who paid for the gun. Thomas gave the gun to Davis, who then used it in the killing of a Detroit police officer Loren Courts, a five-year veteran on the force.

## **DRUG TRAFFICKING**

We focused our drug enforcement efforts on dismantling large-scale drug trafficking organizations, prosecuting individuals using guns and violence in the drug trade and tackling the fentanyl and prescription pill epidemic. We worked to identify and charge traffickers whose distribution of heroin and fentanyl resulted in overdose deaths.

In *United States v. McCoy*, 2 California residents were convicted after trial for their roles in a drug organization with international ties. The organization trafficked fentanyl and heroin across the country. Teeauna White and Robin Herndon were convicted of conspiring to launder cash for Maurice McCoy, the leader of the drug trafficking organization that had distribution hubs in multiple cities across the United States, including Novi, Michigan. In Novi, DEA agents seized more than 30 kilograms of fentanyl and over half a million dollars. At the time it was the largest fentanyl seizure in Michigan and one of the largest in the U.S. The DEA was able to crack open this conspiracy by tracking down the source of a Sony PlayStation box used to deliver heroin to a drug customer. Agents used the UPC code on the box to trace its origins to a location where the PlayStation was active. The

investigation identified couriers who crisscrossed the U.S. delivering kilograms of drugs, transporting bulk currency, or laundering money, leading to multiple arrests and additional seizures in Indianapolis, Indiana, and Baltimore, Maryland. McCoy was sentenced to 22 years after pleading guilty to drug and money laundering conspiracies. White and Herndon are awaiting sentencing.

In *United States v. Guerrero, et al.*, Ray Guerrero, the leader of a 13-member drug trafficking organization, was sentenced to over 24 years in prison. Guerrero supplied drugs to family members, friends, and others for sale, mostly in Oakland County, from 2009 through April 2017. Guerrero used minors as well as adults to sell drugs. Guerrero proceeded to trial, but the other 12 defendants in the case pleaded guilty. The jury found Guerrero guilty of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute controlled substances and felon in possession of firearms.

In *United States v. Smith*, an armed drug trafficker selling a fentanyl analogue advertised as “heroin” was sentenced to 10 years in prison. Branden Smith was identified by federal agents as a multi-state distributor of illegal drugs, including heroin. Following several months of investigation, undercover law enforcement agents purchased what Smith had advertised as “heroin,” but was in fact carfentanil, a dangerous fentanyl analogue.

In *United States v. Hernandez-Taylor*, a long-time dark web drug supplier pleaded guilty to conspiring to distribute millions of illicit and counterfeit pills. Investigators identified a dark web marketplace that went by the name “opiateconnect” and was operated by Carolyn Hernandez-Taylor from a residence in Detroit. A subsequent search of the residence revealed a clandestine drug lab, resulting in the seizure of approximately \$1,000,000 in cryptocurrency, more than \$300,000 in U.S. currency, multiple firearms, an industrial size pill press, industrial mixer, cocaine, and counterfeit drugs. The counterfeit drugs, made to look like alprazolam, were in fact uncontrolled research chemicals not scheduled for human consumption. Hernandez-Taylor is pending sentencing.

In *United States v. Singh*, a Canadian truck driver was convicted by a jury for attempting to smuggle over 50 kilograms of cocaine across the border. Evidence presented during the trial showed that Subeg Singh tried to drive more than 50 kilograms of cocaine across the Ambassador Bridge in September 2021 in a commercial truck. Singh was stopped by Customs and Border Protection officers, who discovered the drugs in the trailer. Singh was sentenced to ten years in prison in January 2024.

In *United States v. Sams*, a Downriver-area drug dealer was sentenced to 20 years for distributing deadly narcotics. Scott Sams was identified by law enforcement as a methamphetamine distributor who often convinced his customers to “party” with him, concocting “hot shots” of methamphetamine and Alka-Seltzer tablets to purposely increase their high. Sams met one of his victims at a hotel room in Allen Park where he gave her a fatal amount of methamphetamine and fled the hotel room as she overdosed and died. Despite this victim’s death, Sams continued to distribute methamphetamine. Just weeks



later, Sams delivered a second fatal dose of methamphetamine to a male victim in Farmington Hills.

In *United States v. Frazier, et al.*, Benjamin Frazier, William Shavers, and Devin Pullins pleaded guilty for their role in a conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute 50 grams or more of methamphetamine. During the conspiracy, Frazier flew to southern California to obtain pounds of pure methamphetamine. Frazier then mailed the methamphetamine to locations in Michigan. Once the methamphetamine arrived in Michigan, Shavers distributed it to others. Once, Frazier mailed 30 pounds of methamphetamine to residences in Saginaw and Kalamazoo. All 3 defendants are awaiting sentencing.

In *United States v. Marin*, Daniel Marin was sentenced to nearly 12 years in prison for attempting to purchase 17 kilograms of cocaine from an undercover federal agent. Marin and two other men planned to obtain a large quantity of cocaine for distribution throughout the Saginaw-Bay area. As part of the plan, Marin contacted a person whom he thought was a narcotics broker in Mexico. However, the “narcotics broker” was an undercover HSI special agent. Marin subsequently negotiated the purchase of 17 kilograms of cocaine from the undercover agent for \$34,000 per kilogram. Once Marin and the two other men arrived at a hotel in Flint to purchase the cocaine, HSI agents arrested the men and seized over \$500,000 in cash.

**Prescription pills/opioids.** In *United States v. Carter*, a patient recruiter was sentenced to 7 years in prison for his role in distributing over 90,000 doses of OxyContin, Percocet, and other opioids out of a medical clinic. Levar Carter initially used family members and people he encountered at soup kitchens to obtain information that was used to fill medically unnecessary opioid prescriptions. Carter eventually worked at New Vision Rehab Center where he provided physicians with lists of patient names and identification that he knew were used to issue and fill medically unnecessary prescriptions. Carter and others exchanged the prescriptions for cash.

In *United States v. Shelton*, a physician was convicted of twenty-one counts related to the unlawful distribution of prescription drugs and causing a patient’s overdose death. Bernard Shelton prescribed over 5.5 million doses of controlled substances over a three-year period, including Schedule II controlled substances such as oxycodone and hydrocodone, usually prescribing the types and strengths of drugs most valuable on the street market. The jury found that Dr. Shelton issued twenty-one prescriptions to seven different patients outside the usual course of professional practice and for no legitimate medical purpose. Shelton received over \$1.4 million from Medicare, Medicaid, and Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan during the same time. Over the course of six years, Dr. Shelton prescribed increasingly stronger controlled substances to a patient who overdosed and died as a result. Shelton will be sentenced in February 2024.

In *United States v. Jankowski*, a Bingham Farms physician was sentenced to 20 years in prison for unlawful distribution of prescription drugs and health care fraud. His sentence also included a \$35 million forfeiture money judgment and \$5.2 million in restitution to

Medicare. Jankowski owned Summit Medical Group, a purported medical clinic located in Dearborn Heights and Southfield, Michigan. Through Summit, Jankowski supplied narcotics to drug-seeking customers, writing medically unnecessary prescriptions for drugs like oxycodone, morphine, hydrocodone, and Xanax. Jankowski issued more than 1 million opioid pills outside the course of professional medical practice and for no legitimate medical purpose.

In *United States v. Cooper*, a West Bloomfield physician pleaded guilty to illegally distributing over 7,000 oxycodone pills. Scott Henry Cooper was a primary care physician at Comprehensive Medical Associates in West Bloomfield. Cooper prescribed highly sought after and abused valuable prescription drug-controlled substances such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, methadone, alprazolam and dextroamphetamine-amphetamine to Medicaid patients. To one such patient the Cooper prescribed oxycodone and other highly abused drugs for almost three years without having patient visits or contact with the patient. The prescriptions continued even while the patient was serving nearly three years in prison. Cooper wrote monthly controlled substance prescriptions, totaling over 7,000 dosage units, that were picked up by the patient's relative. When the patient was released from prison and told Cooper he had been in prison, Cooper continued prescribing the same dangerous combination of drugs he had been prescribing while the patient was in prison. Cooper was sentenced to five years in prison in January 2024.

In *United States v. Kosho et al*, a pharmacist was sentenced to 7 years in prison after pleading guilty to conspiracy to distribute over 25,000 opioid pills and money laundering. Yousef Kosho unlawfully dispensed controlled substances by filling prescriptions for patient recruiters, including co-defendant Omar Madison. At times, Madison provided prescriptions to Kosho without ever bringing the patient to the pharmacy. At other times, Kosho sold entire pharmacy stock bottles of controlled substances to Madison and others without any medical prescriptions. Omar Madison pleaded guilty to a drug trafficking conspiracy and was sentenced to 6 years.

## **HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND CHILD EXPLOITATION**

Human trafficking and child exploitation involve the exploitation of our most vulnerable citizens. Our office remains committed to investigating and prosecuting these important cases.

In *United States v. Wroten*, a Las Vegas man was sentenced to more than 12 years in prison for trafficking two minors. Law enforcement first began investigating Jquon Wroten while attempting to locate two girls who had run away from the Lansing area in late 2020. Law enforcement recovered the minors from a motel room in Southfield and learned that Wroten had recruited the minors to work for him after meeting them in a local motel while he was in town. Wroten took proceeds from their sex trafficking for his own use.



*U.S. Attorney Ison joined Detroit Deputy Mayor Todd Bettison, Detroit Police Chief James White, and community leaders in a march during National Crime Victims' Rights Week.*

In *United States v. Girard*, a registered sex offender who sought and obtained a sexually explicit image from a minor was sentenced to 15 years in prison. Anthony Girard admitted that, while online, he requested that a 16-year-old minor create and send him an image of the minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct, and he received the picture that he requested. In that same chat, he told the 16-year-old that he “kinda” wished that she was younger.

In *United States v. Shepherd*, Bryant Joseph Shepherd was sentenced to 30 years in prison for producing child pornography after sexually assaulting at least six children in the process. For nearly nine years, Shepherd violated children by secretly recording them changing in his home. He also collected commercial child pornography. But worst of all, Shepherd made videos of himself sexually assaulting multiple children. To coerce his victims, Shepherd promised money and candy.

In *United States v. Davis*, a Detroit man was sentenced to over 15 years in prison for trafficking and having sex with children in metro-Detroit motels while on bond from North Dakota for a federal drug case. Law enforcement first began investigating Toriano Davis while searching for two missing girls. The subsequent investigation uncovered that Davis had trafficked at least two minor victims, rented motel rooms for them to engage in commercial sex, and assisted them with advertising online for commercial sex acts. Davis also took proceeds from the minors' commercial sex dates for his own use and used the money to purchase drugs and rent expensive cars. Davis engaged in sex acts with the minors and recorded his sex acts with one of the minors on his cell phone.

In *United States v. Zehnder*, a trucker was sentenced to 30 years in prison for transporting a 15-year-old minor across state lines to engage in unlawful sexual activity. Kenneth Zehnder pleaded guilty to taking the minor on an interstate trucking trip where he sexually assaulted her nearly every night. After being assaulted in the cabin of the semi-truck, the victim texted 911, and police found the truck using information she provided. Zehnder was arrested and charged with sexually assaulting the victim in Minnesota. After Zehnder's arrest, a 12-year-old girl who Zehnder took on a different out-of-state trip earlier that summer also reported to police that Zehnder sexually assaulted her on numerous occasions in different states. Both minors reported that Zehnder had assaulted them for years prior to his arrest.



In *United States v. Salyer*, a woman was sentenced to 30 years in prison for sexually exploiting an infant and another child and for distributing child pornography. Rheanna Salyer created images of herself sexually abusing an infant and then sent those images over the internet to other people with a sexual interest in children. Eventually, Salyer sent the images to an undercover officer, bragging to him about her abuse of the victim, and discussing her desire to engage in sex acts with the undercover officer and the infant together.



*USAO Branch staff Amanda Mead, Erin Gauthier, and AUSA Ann Nee participate in the Flint Resource Fair*

In *United States v. Milley*, a Canadian pastor was sentenced to 10 years in prison for using the internet to entice a 15-year-old girl to engage in illegal sexual activity. Timothy Milley communicated with the minor over the internet and exchanged text messages with her. After months of grooming, Milley traveled to the United States from Canada, and picked the minor up in front of her school in the Detroit area. He took her to a hotel and had sexual intercourse with her there, before returning her to her school and abandoning her in front of the building. Milley's crime was discovered years later when the minor victim—now an adult—looked up Milley online and found out that he had been charged and convicted in his native Canada for similar online solicitation of an undercover agent he thought was a minor.



*Survivors, victims, family of victims, and law enforcement partners came together at Detroit Police Department's Crime Victims' Rights Walk and Fair.*

In *United States v. Pejic*, a man traveled from Florida to Michigan to engage in illicit sexual conduct with a 12-year-old child. Petar Pejic took the minor to a hotel, instructed the minor how to perform oral sex, then recorded the encounter on his cell phone. Pejic also traveled to Washington and Oregon where he engaged in similar conduct with other minors. Pejic has agreed to a sentence of at least 30, but not more than 50 years in prison. Sentencing is currently scheduled for February 2024.

In *United States v. Pego*, Jason Morris Pego was sentenced to 30 years in prison on charges of aggravated sexual abuse. Pego engaged in sex acts with a 7-year-old child that was in his care. Pego took photographs of the victim during his sexual assaults and kept them on his cell phone. Pego also threatened the victim and the victim's sibling that he would hurt them and their family if they told anyone about the assaults. The crimes occurred on the Isabella Reservation in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

## **NATIONAL SECURITY**

Countering terrorism remained a top priority of the U.S. Department of Justice in 2023, and our National Security Unit focused on investigations relating to border security, international and domestic terrorism, terrorism financing, export violations, threats, trade secrets, and other violations that affect our national security.

**Terrorism.** In *United States v. Musaibli*, a Michigan man was convicted by a jury and sentenced to 14 years in prison on charges of providing and conspiring to provide material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), a designated foreign terrorist organization, and attending an ISIS training camp. Ibraheem Musaibli, born in Detroit, began looking into ISIS while in Michigan in 2015. He then traveled to Yemen in April 2015 and continued to research ISIS—including downloading ISIS propaganda and an ISIS book on how to get into Syria. From Yemen, he traveled to Syria in the fall of 2015 where he attended an ISIS-run religious training camp before undergoing ISIS military training where he learned to shoot, carry, and otherwise handle an AK-47 assault rifle. Upon graduation from the ISIS military training camp, Musaibli swore allegiance to ISIS and its leader. Musaibli remained with ISIS for over two and a half years. Musaibli was eventually apprehended by Syrian Democratic Forces in 2018, turned over to the FBI, and flown back to the United States to face terrorism charges.

**Espionage.** In *United States v. Chu*, an employee of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) pleaded guilty to making false statements concerning his contacts with the Taiwanese Navy and falsifying records in a federal investigation related to his application for a security clearance. The Ypsilanti man had recently applied for a three-year assignment to the United States Embassy in Singapore working for the United States Navy. In seeking a “Secret” security clearance, Yifei Chu made several false statements and sought to conceal the fact that he was a citizen of Taiwan.

**Immigration.** In 2023, we prosecuted approximately 26 individuals who were illegally in the United States, most of whom had previously been convicted of serious crimes. For

example, in *United States v. Zarate-Banos*, a citizen of Mexico who had previously been convicted of criminal sexual conduct and removed from the United States pleaded guilty to unlawfully being in the United States. Border Patrol agents from the Detroit station received information that Pedro Zarate-Banos was illegally present in the United States. Agents located Banos and conducted a vehicle stop and after a brief interview, Zarate-Banos admitted to being illegally present in the United States. Zarate-Banos was convicted in 2002 of 3rd Degree Criminal Sexual Conduct and was formally removed from the United States in 2005.

## **FRAUD**

Another enforcement priority is fraud, encompassing corporate fraud, environmental violations, health care fraud, identity theft, and other offenses. In 2023, we used civil and criminal enforcement tools to combat fraud. Like too many other parts of the country, the District has had a substantial problem with individuals seeking to enrich themselves by defrauding pandemic relief programs. Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) was the principal pandemic relief program targeted by criminal actors; loan programs designed to help small businesses get through the pandemic, such as the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program also proved vulnerable to fraud. In 2023, 52 individuals were charged in the district with Covid-19 pandemic fraud of one sort or another.

In *United States v. Shields*, a serial fraudster was sentenced to 8 years in prison for conspiring to defraud multiple government agencies out of more than \$2.2 million in Covid-19 pandemic assistance funds and to defraud the United States Postal Service (USPS) of more than \$200,000. Chaz Duane Shields was ordered to pay over \$2 million in restitution to California, Michigan, Nevada, Louisiana, the Small Business Administration, and the USPS. Shields and his co-conspirators submitted more than 240 fraudulent unemployment insurance claims to over 20 states, fraudulently obtaining more than \$2.2 million in unemployment insurance benefits. Shields also obtained a fraudulent \$20,833 Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan. Separately, Shields defrauded the U.S. Postal Service of over \$200,000 through a scheme in which he conspired to submit more than 1,000 fraudulent domestic indemnity insurance claims in the names of more than 40 separate individuals to the USPS. Shields has an extensive history of fraud and deceit, having accumulated six separate state fraud convictions – five in Michigan and one in Maryland – since 2016.

In *United States v. Reffigee*, a former employee of the Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency (MUIA) was sentenced to 18 months in prison arising from her participation in a \$313,000 pandemic-related unemployment insurance fraud scheme. As an Unemployment Insurance Examiner (UIE) with the MUIA, Semaje Reffigee had electronic access to the MUIA claims database. Reffigee used her credentials to access and approve specific UI claims submitted to the agency. Reffigee conspired with others to obtain benefits through the submission of false UI claims. In total, Reffigee approved over 35 fraudulent claims



valued at more than \$300,000. In exchange, Reffigee received kickback payments from her co-conspirators.

In *United States v. Jackson-Portwood*, 8 residents of Michigan and California were indicted for their alleged roles in a \$6 million fraud scheme targeting multiple pandemic relief programs. The 8 were charged with conspiracy to commit wire fraud and aggravated identity theft. According to the indictment, the defendants caused fraudulent unemployment insurance claims, fraudulent Paycheck Protection Program loan applications, and fraudulent Economic Injury Disaster Loan applications to be submitted for numerous individuals and business entities. Those applications are alleged to have misrepresented applicant information, including the identity of the applicant and eligibility for relief. Many of the applications were submitted in the names of identity theft victims. According to court records, the defendants received over \$6 million in fraudulently obtained funds as a result of the scheme.

In *United States v. Dunham*, 11 residents of Southeast Michigan were charged in a twenty-three-count indictment for their alleged role in a multi-million-dollar unemployment insurance fraud scheme targeting funds set aside for unemployment assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each defendant is charged with conspiracy to commit wire fraud, wire fraud, and aggravated identity theft. According to the indictment, the 11 defendants used stolen personal identifying information of other individuals to file fraudulent claims for pandemic unemployment assistance in multiple states. The indictment alleges that the defendants illegally obtained over \$4.5 million in government funds over the course of their scheme.

In *United States v. Carruthers*, a Commerce Township resident was sentenced to 2 years and 3 months in prison for defrauding the Small Business Administration and various banks out of approximately \$851,000 as part of a pandemic relief fraud scheme. Ryan Carruthers pleaded guilty to wire fraud arising out of a wide-ranging scheme to obtain loans to which he was not entitled from two pandemic relief programs overseen by the Small Business Administration (SBA). Carruthers submitted electronic applications for pandemic relief loans in the names of various business entities he purported to own and control. Carruthers's business entities, however, were shells that existed on paper only; they had no revenue, employees, or ongoing operations of any sort. Carruthers claimed in his applications that each of these entities had between three and fifteen employees. The average monthly payroll amounts included in the applications were fictitious, as were representations about how the money would be spent. According to court documents, Carruthers spent the money on personal investments and expenses, including the acquisition of personal watercraft.

**Wire Fraud.** In *United States v. Bartlett et. al.*, two former and one current owner and executive of Surveying Solutions, Inc. (SSI), a company that was awarded millions of dollars in construction and surveying contracts by the Michigan Department of Transportation, were indicted on charges of wire fraud, conspiracy to commit wire fraud,

and conspiracy to defraud the United States. The indictment arises out of false statements the defendants made to the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) in the process of applying for and receiving highway construction contracts. The alleged false statements included false claims that SSI qualified as a disadvantaged business which tricked MDOT into granting SSI contract preferences. The indictment further alleges that the defendants also reported false and fraudulent employee costs, and false and fraudulent equipment, real estate, and IT expenses which artificially inflated payments MDOT made to SSI.

In *United States v. Antonio Fluker*, Fluker pleaded guilty to wire fraud and money laundering and was sentenced to more than 11 years in federal prison. Fluker's wide-ranging fraud scheme involved PPP loan fraud, bank fraud, using loan fraud proceeds to pay for a Lamborghini, and other fraud totaling at least \$2.5 million.

In *United States v. Berro*, a jury found Suzan Berro guilty of engaging in a year-long conspiracy to submit fraudulent reimbursement claims to numerous pharmaceutical manufacturer's co-pay assistance programs to obtain more than \$65 million. These manufacturer-sponsored "coupon" programs exist to assist real patients with the often-high costs associated with name brand prescription drugs. Berro, in role of a biller, created fake prescriptions for fake patients by taking addresses from real estate lists, making up names and birth dates, selecting expensive name brand drugs, and then ultimately pairing them with real doctors' names and credentials. Witness testimony revealed that the majority of pharmacies only existed on paper and never opened to the public, nor even ordered inventory. In total, Berro and her co-conspirators submitted fraudulent claims on behalf of more than 40 pharmacies, totaling over \$65 million.

**Tax Fraud.** In *United States v. Anderson*, Sameerah Marrell was sentenced to 4 ½ years in prison for a tax fraud scheme where she sought to cheat the Internal Revenue Service and the state treasuries of six states of over \$27 million in fraudulent tax refunds. Marrell and other accomplices defrauded the Internal Revenue Service and the State Treasury Departments of Minnesota, Georgia, Maryland, Arizona, Connecticut, and Colorado, by filing 122 false and fictitious Income Tax Returns for Estates and Trusts and numerous state income tax returns, seeking over \$13,690,341 from the IRS and \$14,730,365 from the six states, by claiming bogus refunds, to which neither she nor her accomplices were entitled.

**Art Theft.** In *United States v. Beard*, a former art dealer pleaded guilty to wire fraud. The conviction arose from a multi-year scheme in which Wendy Halstead Beard received fine art photography prints on consignment, sold the artwork without the knowledge of the owners, kept the profits for her own personal gain, and continually deceived the owners about the status of their photographs.

**Ponzi Scheme.** In *United States v. Robinson*, the operator of a supposed foreign exchange trading firm was charged with running a Ponzi scheme which obtained \$100 million from investors. Darren Anthony Robinson, a U.S. citizen who operated out of the country of

Panama, was charged in a criminal complaint with committing wire fraud. Robinson is alleged to have operated a supposed trading firm known as “QYU,” which was in Panama and the Cayman Islands. QYU represented to investors that it was consistently generating stellar investment results. The complaint alleges that QYU was simply a Ponzi scheme. Investor funds were largely not used for trading activity. Instead, new investor funds were used to pay other investor distributions, cover QYU business expenses, compensate QYU employees, and fund Robinson’s lifestyle. QYU investors were provided with false account statements and fictitious trading data.

**Investment Scheme.** In *United States v. Tissue*, a former real estate investor was sentenced to 6 ½ years in prison arising from his role in perpetrating a \$3 million investment and bankruptcy fraud scheme. Sean Tissue orchestrated a substantial real estate investment fraud scheme and those working with him made numerous fraudulent representations to potential investors from Israel, India, South Africa, and other countries, trying to convince them to invest in supposed real estate in Michigan, Texas, and other locations. Many victims did invest funds with Tissue and lost those funds in the process. To further the scheme and keep investor money flowing into it, Tissue caused false documents to be provided to investors, including fake deeds, fake wiring instructions, fake bank statements, fake leases, and fake inspection reports. Tissue even provided a fake name to investors (“Sean Ryan”). Tissue converted the \$3 million in fraudulently obtained funds to his own personal use. Tissue also engaged in bankruptcy fraud by knowingly and fraudulently withholding recorded information pertaining to his assets and financial affairs from the Bankruptcy Trustee after filing for Chapter 7 bankruptcy.

**Benefits Fraud.** In *United States v. Ghotra*, a Flint convenience store operator pleaded guilty to engaging in more than \$1.1 million in fraudulent transactions involving food and nutrition benefit programs. Ranjit Ghotra engaged in a fraud scheme involving the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. Ghotra permitted beneficiaries of the SNAP and WIC programs to use their benefits to buy ineligible items, such as alcohol and tobacco, or allowed them to obtain cash instead of food products, in violation of program regulations. In each case, Ghotra charged program beneficiaries approximately double the amount in benefits as the price of the ineligible items purchased or the cash provided. Between 2017 and 2020, Ghotra carried out more than \$1.1 million in fraudulent SNAP and WIC transactions.

**Health Care Fraud.** In *United States v. Yasin*, a Dearborn Heights doctor pleaded guilty to defrauding Medicare of more than \$925,000 in health care payments. Fares Yasin operated Michigan Home Visiting Physicians, in Dearborn, Michigan. Yasin was suspended from submitting claims to Medicare for any services that he rendered. However, during his suspension, Yasin continued to treat Medicare beneficiaries, and then he fraudulently submitted claims to Medicare utilizing the names and identification numbers of other doctors, including co-defendant Nura Yasin, in order to receive reimbursement for the services he rendered. Yasin will be sentenced in January 2024 and agreed to forfeit



approximately \$367,000 in cash seized by federal agents during the course of the investigation.

In *United States v. Kazkaz, et al.*, a Farmington Hills clinic owner was sentenced to 7½ years months in prison after having pleaded guilty to health care fraud and money laundering charges. Mohamed Kazkaz was also ordered to forfeit approximately \$5.3 million as the gross proceeds of his unlawful conduct. Kazkaz admitted he owned and controlled Centre HRW, a purported psychotherapy agency in Farmington Hills, Michigan for the purpose of submitting false and fraudulent claims to Medicare, seeking reimbursement for psychotherapy services that were not provided or were otherwise not eligible for reimbursement and whose Medicare identification numbers were procured through kickbacks and bribes. Kazkaz transferred the proceeds of the health care fraud scheme to various entities in an effort to conceal the proceeds. Specifically, Kazkaz transferred approximately \$1,445,000 in a cashier's check issued by a financial institution located in the Eastern District of Michigan to a National Restaurant Chain, knowing the source of these funds was criminal proceeds from the health care fraud scheme. The 4 co-defendants in this case are at various stages in the prosecution.

In *United States v. Youssef*, a pharmacist, a doctor, and a pharmacy technician were indicted for their alleged roles in a more than \$7 million health care fraud scheme involving the diversion of expensive specialty prescription drugs that treat fewer common conditions. According to the indictment, Samer Youssef worked with physicians in Southeast Michigan, including Dr. Daoud Faraj, to write medically unnecessary prescriptions for the specialty drugs Youssef wanted. Dr. Faraj wrote the medically unnecessary prescriptions in the names of "patients" who were individuals Youssef, Houda Bazzi, or Dr. Faraj knew, including Medicare beneficiaries, and in the names of Youssef and Bazzi themselves. Youssef, Dr. Faraj, and Bazzi caused Medicare and Blue Care Network to be billed for the medically unnecessary specialty medications. Medicare and Blue Care Network then paid for the specialty medications, which Youssef, Bazzi, and others sold and shipped to domestic and foreign businesses at 100% profit.

## **CIVIL ENFORCEMENT CASES**

Our office is responsible for pursuing civil actions against individuals and public and private entities that engage in fraud, violate federal laws, divert controlled substances, or damage federal lands or resources. Cases may be pursued under the False Claims Act, Stark Act, Anti-Kickback Statute or Controlled Substances Act, among other statutes. Under the False Claims Act, the United States may recover treble damages and additional penalties from those who use false claims or statements to obtain money from the federal government.

In *United States v. Covenant Healthcare System et al.*, - Covenant Healthcare System and two physicians paid over \$69 million in three related civil settlements to resolve possible False Claims Act violations. Covenant Healthcare System, a regional hospital system based in the Saginaw, Michigan area, paid \$69 million to resolve allegations under the False

Claims Act of improper financial relationships with eight referring physicians and a physician-owned investment group, resulting in the submission of false claims to the Medicare, Medicaid, TRICARE, and FECA programs. Neurosurgeon Dr. Mark Adams and electrophysiologist Dr. Asim Yunus will pay the United States \$406,551.15 and \$345,987.54, respectively, to resolve allegations related to their relationships with Covenant. The civil settlements resolve the claims brought by Stacy Goldsholl, M.D., under the qui tam or whistleblower provisions of the False Claims Act. The whistleblower received a combined \$12,384,927.36 from the three settlements.

In *United States v. Foresee Results, Inc.* - Foresee Results, Inc. and Verint Americas, Inc. (collectively, Foresee) agreed to pay \$7,000,000 to resolve allegations that they violated the False Claims Act by falsely representing to the United States that they used the methodology of the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) to measure customer satisfaction. The Federal Consulting Group (FCG), which is part of the United States Department of the Interior, awarded Foresee a five-year contract for website assessment and improvement services, through which Foresee agreed to measure the public's satisfaction with certain government websites and make recommendations regarding how to improve satisfaction. In awarding the contract to Foresee, the FCG understood that Foresee would be applying the trusted methodology of the ACSI to provide federal agencies with an ACSI measurement. The settlement resolved the government's allegations that Foresee did not use the ACSI methodology, but instead used a different methodology to measure the public's satisfaction with certain government websites.

In *United States v. VHS of Michigan, Inc.* - VHS of Michigan Inc., doing business as, The Detroit Medical Center Inc. (DMC), Vanguard Health Systems Inc. (Vanguard), and Tenet Healthcare Corporation (Tenet), agreed to pay \$29,744,065 to the government to resolve allegations that they violated the False Claims Act by providing kickbacks to certain referring physicians. The settlement resolves the government's allegations that DMC, Vanguard, and Tenet caused the submission of false or fraudulent claims to Medicare. Specifically, the government alleged that from Jan. 1, 2014, through Dec. 31, 2017, Sinai Grace Hospital and Harper University Hospital provided the services of DMC-employed mid-level practitioners to 13 physicians at no cost or below fair market value in violation of the Anti-Kickback Statute (AKS). The government further alleged that the physicians were selected because of their large number of patient referrals to Sinai Grace Hospital and Harper University Hospital and that the purpose of these arrangements was to induce the physicians to refer additional Medicare patients to DMC facilities.

In *United States v. IPC Hospitalists of Michigan, Inc.* - IPC Hospitalists of Michigan, Inc., Inpatient Consultants of Michigan, P.C., IPC Healthcare f/k/a IPC The Hospitalist Company, and Team Health Holdings, Inc. (defendants) agreed to pay a total of \$4,384,618 to the United States and the State of Michigan to resolve allegations that they violated the False Claims Act by upcoding inpatient hospital services, allowing their doctors to bill for more services than they could possibly provide in one day, and billing for services not rendered. The State of Michigan will receive \$606,483 of the settlement amount based on

its share of alleged damages to the Medicaid program. The defendants are related companies that employ and provide hospitalists to Michigan hospitals. Hospitalists are doctors whose focus is the general medical care of hospitalized patients.

In *United States v. Detroit Land Bank Authority*- The Detroit Land Bank Authority (“DLBA”), a public organization working on behalf of the City of Detroit and the Detroit Building Authority in the City’s redevelopment and demolition management efforts, agreed to pay the United States \$1,503,000 to resolve allegations relating to unsubstantiated backfill dirt costs invoiced by demolition contractors and paid by the DLBA in connection with the DLBA’s blight elimination program. The City of Detroit received approximately \$258 million from the Hardest Hit Fund to help demolish blighted properties within the City of Detroit and assist neighborhoods with high vacancy rates and blighted residential properties. The DLBA allocated a portion of its HHF award for neighborhood improvement projects, which included acquiring properties, demolishing blighted properties, and providing ongoing property maintenance for neighborhood improvement projects.

## ONE EDM

In April 2023, the U. S. Attorney’s Office announced its Eastern District of Michigan Violent Crime Reduction initiative, One Eastern District of Michigan, ONE EDM. One EDM is the USAO’s comprehensive holistic framework for reducing violent crime in the District. It is a 5-year plan that covers the entire District, establishes executive teams and subgroups, for example, One Detroit, One Flint, One Pontiac and One Saginaw that make District-wide decisions based on the needs and opportunities in the areas within the District with the highest violence.

The aim of the initiative is a comprehensive violence reduction strategy that links evidenced-based strategies with a coalition of stakeholders in the community, government, and law enforcement. Its core is partnership, and the principles of the partnership fall into three pillars: enforcement, prevention and intervention, and reentry. The partners commit to reducing violence while fostering legitimacy through engagement, coordination, and action. The ultimate goal is to balance law enforcement with prevention and outreach, and for the entire violence reduction process be guided by the principles of focus, balance, and fairness. The enforcement strategy, in particular, is focused on the drivers of violence, that small number of individuals, groups, and clusters of places that the evidence shows contributes to the vast majority of violent crime.

### ONE DETROIT

We launched our first partnership in Detroit, our largest city in the District. Through this partnership, we have brought together leaders of the community and those with subject matter expertise in the areas of enforcement, prevention, and reentry—the three pillars that serve as the foundation for One Detroit—to develop and execute the best strategies to reduce violent crime. And although collaboration between local, state, and federal law enforcement working together and sharing information already existed in Detroit, our goal



is not to reinvent the wheel, but rather to identify what works and build a framework to formalize our participation.

The One Detroit executive team is comprised of a broad array of community stakeholders, local, state, and federal law enforcement officials, prosecutors, and our research partner from Michigan State University. More specifically, the other One Detroit Executive Team members include, Mayor Mike Duggan, Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy, Detroit Police Chief James White, Detroit Police Department Citywide Community Relations Council President Alvin Stokes, Black Family Development CEO Kenyatta Stephens, Bishop Edgar Vann, Second Ebenezer Church, Michigan Department of Corrections Assistant Deputy Director Beverly Smith, Special Agent in Charge James M. Deir (ATF), Special Agent in Charge Cheyvoryea (FBI), Special Agent in Charge Orville O. Greene (DEA) and Research Analyst Christopher Melde (MSU).

The One Detroit partnership's enforcement efforts involve close coordination between federal and local law enforcement to identify emerging violent offenders or trends within particular neighborhoods. We draw on the expertise of local officers who have deep experience in the communities they serve. And we pair that personalized knowledge with technology like the National Integrated Ballistics Identification Network (NIBIN), ShotSpotter, and evidence-based tools that help us focus on the small number of people perpetrating violence. Federal prosecutors, along with representatives from ATF and FBI, attend weekly violent crime meetings in five Detroit Police precincts—2, 4, 8, 9, and 11—where they triage cases for potential federal prosecution.

Since 2022, the USAO's violence reduction strategy has included enhanced enforcement during the summer months when violent crime spikes throughout the country. We focus on two Detroit neighborhoods with the highest incidence of violent crime – Detroit's 8th and 9th Precincts. The initiative, which was incorporated as part of the formal One Detroit Partnership, begins on Memorial Day and ends on Labor Day and is designed to prosecute the most violent individuals and crimes in federal court when possible.



*One Detroit Partnership Announces a Unified Summer Enforcement, Prevention, and Reentry Strategy Focusing on Designated High Crime Areas in Detroit.*

In 2023, the effort resulted in 22 defendants being charged with federal firearms offenses including being a felon in possession of a firearm, illegal possession of a machine gun, possession of a stolen firearm and possession of a firearm with an obliterated serial number. Of those charged, 13 defendants have been detained pending trial, 3 defendants have pleaded guilty to charges, and 18 defendants are pending trial.



# ONE DETROIT

VIOLENCE REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP

## FEDERAL PROSECUTION

Felons arrested for illegally possessing firearms, and those arrested with fully automatic weapons in select areas of Detroit's 8th and 9th precincts will be prosecuted in **federal** court. The United States Attorney's Office and Wayne County Prosecutor's Office will collaborate to prosecute the most dangerous offenders.

## FOCUSED SUMMER ENFORCEMENT

Federal agents from ATF and FBI, alongside Detroit Police, will focus enforcement efforts in Detroit's most violent areas. Detroit's 8th and 9th precincts lead the city in homicides and several other areas of violent crime in 2023.

Eighth Precinct

Ninth Precinct

According to Detroit Police Department statistics, from June 1 to August 31, during our summer enforcement, there was nearly a 20% reduction in target violent offenses in the 8th Precinct, an 11% reduction in the 9th Precinct, and a nearly 6% reduction citywide compared to the same time last year.

The One Detroit partnership also engaged in preventing crime in the targeted areas through Peacenic, a collective gathering of the community and law enforcement where we shared in food, fellowship and fun in the name of peace.



The Peacenics featured vendors offering a variety of resources, including job training, literacy programs, mental health and medical screenings, utility assistance, educational and vocational opportunities, tutorial, career development, expungement assistance, and more.

The Peacenics provided Detroit residents the opportunity to have fun, meaningfully engage with law enforcement, and obtain resources to improve the quality of their lives. Approximately 4800 Detroit residents attended the two Peacenics held on July 8 in O'Hair Park and July 15 in Heilmann Recreational Center.



*The rain didn't stop residents of the east side of Detroit from coming out and enjoying fun and food at the One Detroit Peacenic at Heilmann Recreational Center.*



In addition to the resources, there were bounce houses, face painting, and football drills from the Detroit Lions. There were also chess games, and a Spades tournament. New this year was a Thrift Clothing Boutique where residents shopped for gently used clothing.





At the conclusion of the One Detroit Summer Enforcement Strategy, United States Attorney Dawn N. Ison and One Detroit partners, local community organizations, and state and federal law enforcement gathered to share the results from the summer with community members in the 8th and 9th precincts.

One Detroit hosted a Community Huddle and Peace March in the 9th Precinct in September as well as one in the 8th Precinct in October. After the reporting out of the results, the One Detroit Partners and faith-based leaders joined community members to walk through these neighborhoods in the name of peace.





In the fall, One Detroit hosted four community roundtables for more than a hundred individuals on probation and supervised release living in the 8th and 9th Precincts.





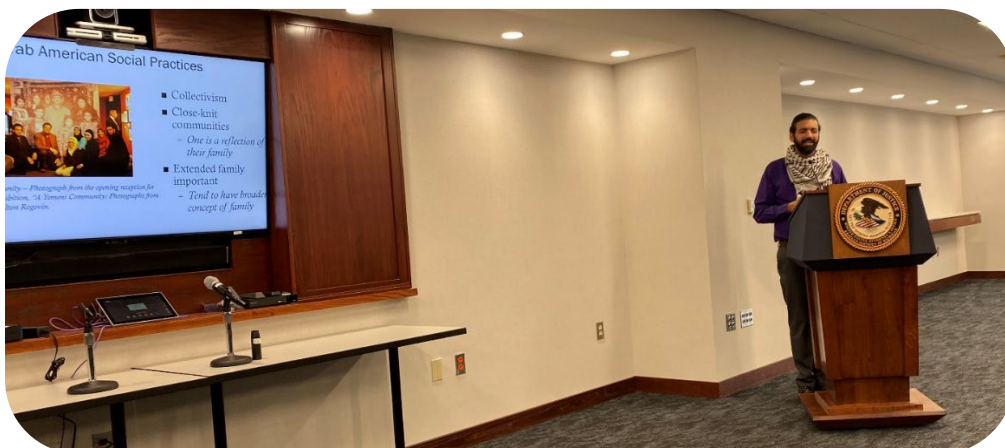
The roundtables included a panel of justice-impacted individuals, parole agents from Michigan Department of Corrections, probation agents from the U.S. District Court, and caseworkers and therapists from Black Family Development and Goodwill Industries, who participated in breakout sessions with the returning citizens and their family members designed to help address any barriers that might be preventing full reintegration into society for the returning citizens.

## 2023 OFFICE HIGHLIGHTS

### SPECIAL EMPHASIS PROGRAM

In 2023, we welcomed a number of guests to the Eastern District of Michigan's USAO as part of our Special Emphasis Programs. These programs—which help to develop a diverse and talented workforce—provide awareness, sensitivity and understanding of the special issues affecting employment of diverse groups.

In recognition of Arab American History Month, Dave Serio, Curator of Education at the Arab American National Museum educated USAO staff about Arab history, immigration, understanding culture, makeup of the Arab World, and the countries connected to that term. The presentation also delved into the diversity within the Arab community, layers of identity and Arab Americans making an impact in today's world.

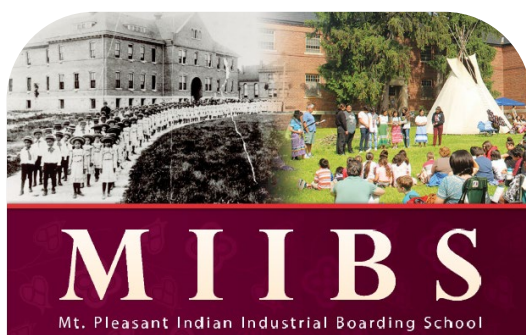


Tania Morris Diaz, Supervising Attorney at the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center, joined us as part of Hispanic Heritage month. Ms. Diaz spoke with USAO staff about the impact of being justice-involved as an immigrant, whether as a victim or a perpetrator.

In October, Representatives from Leader Dogs for the Blind educated USAO staff on the importance of service animals individuals with blindness and low vision. The speakers shared some common courtesies for interacting with someone who is blind or visually impaired and provided insight into some of the daily challenges members of the community often face.







**Tuesday, March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023**

**Presentation Location:** MTTC / Webex

**Time:** 2 p.m. - 3 p.m.

• Facilitator: Marcella Hadden  
Tribal Historical Preservation Officer  
Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan



**Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan**  
"Working Together for Our Future"

7500 Seating Eagle Blvd.  
Mount Pleasant, MI 48858  
989-775-4300  
www.sagchip.org

We also welcomed the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer and a Tribal Council member from the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan, who presented on the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School, the history of boarding schools generally, and how that history still affects Tribal Members.



*L-R: Law Enforcement Coordinator Robert Poikey, U.S. Attorney Ison, Saginaw Chippewa Chaplain Alice Jo Ricketts, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Marcella Hadden, Executive AUSA Luttrell Levingston, Outreach Specialist Mitchell Kittle, and First Assistant United States Attorney Julie Beck.*



## NEW TO THE USAO

In 2023, we officially welcomed our newest team members to the United States Attorney's Office in both our Detroit and Bay City Offices.



*The Detroit office welcomed new Assistant United States Attorneys Sunita Doddamani, Nedra Campbell, Priya Khangura, Louis Meizlish and Craig Welkener, pictured left with United States Attorney Ison.*

*Bay City welcomed new Assistant United States Attorneys William Orr and Katharine Hemann, pictured right with United States Attorney Ison.*



*Detroit also welcomed Assistant U.S. Attorneys Darrin Crawford, Greg Dickinson, Nhan Ho, Patrick Martin, U.S. Attorney Ison, Assistant U.S. Attorneys Zackary Zurek, Nicholas McIntrye, Jessica Nathan, Jason Norwood, and Jasmine Moore in the Million Dollar Courtroom.*

## **ATTORNEY GENERAL MERRICK GARLAND IN DETROIT**

We were honored in April with a visit by Attorney General Merrick Garland. He was briefed on our work as part of the One Detroit Violence Reduction Partnership. After the briefing, Attorney General Garland met with federal law enforcement officials in Detroit and spoke about the importance of tackling the problem of fentanyl in both the U.S. and Mexico. Attorney General Garland also met with local law enforcement and commended the strong working relationship between local, state, and federal law enforcement. His visit to Detroit concluded with an address to the staff of the U.S. Attorney's office.



*United States Attorney General Merrick Garland with the staff of the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan.*

## **AWARDS**

In 2023, we celebrated the amazing accomplishments of our staff as well as the outstanding law enforcement agents and officers in the District.

Each year we highlight a select number of staff with special awards. We congratulate this year's winners of U.S. Attorney's Awards, the Michele Tomsho Award, the Donna Fobbs Award & the Gershel/Wicks Award. We salute you.

### **United States Attorney Awards**



Assistant United States Attorneys Andrea Hutting and Adriana Dydell were awarded the U.S. Attorney's Award for superior performance by a criminal prosecution team. Pictured left is U.S. Attorney Ison with AUSAs Andrea Hutting and Adriana Dydell.



### Michele Tomsho Award

AUSA Jackie Hotz was awarded the Michele Tomsho Award for her integrity, professionalism and dedication to the office and community, all of which defined Michele Tomsho's character and personality. Pictured right are U.S. Attorney Ison and Assistant U.S. Attorney Jackie Hotz (retired).



### Donna Fobbs Award



Paralegal Monica Green was awarded the Donna Fobbs Memorial Award for her professionalism, steadiness, reliability, positive attitude, strong commitment to USAO, and a high degree of competence in carrying out assignments. Pictured left are U.S. Attorney Ison and Paralegal Monica Green.

### Gershel/Wicks Award

Each year, we honor two former Division Chiefs – Alan Gershel (Criminal) and Mike Wicks (Civil) and present the Gershel-Wicks Teamwork Award to a group of employees to recognize outstanding teamwork. This year we honor the *United States v. Godiali* prosecution team.



*L-R: AUSA John Postulka, Legal Assistant Aida Garmo, U.S. Attorney Ison, AUSA Jacki Hotz (retired), Paralegal Specialist Karen Merritt, Auditors Scott O'Connell, AUSAs John Neal, and Phillip Ross. Not pictured: Supervisory Legal Assistant Kristi Bashaw, AUSAs Caroline Burgunder, Craig Wininger, Regina McCullough, Investigator Jon Sonbay, and Auditor Pattie O'Neill (retired).*

Godiali was a vascular surgeon from Bay City, who was prosecuted by our office for defrauding Medicare, Medicaid, and Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan. Together the prosecution team represented the combined expertise of our office's Health Care Fraud, White Collar Crime, Money Laundering and Asset Recovery and Affirmative Civil Enforcement Units, including support staff, that effectively deployed criminal and civil tools to hold Godiali accountable for his egregious fraud. Godiali was sentenced to nearly 7 years in prison and was ordered to pay \$19.5 million in restitution to the victims, and he agreed to pay another \$43,419,000 million to resolve related civil allegations that his fraudulent billings to health care programs violated the False Claims Act (FCA).

### U.S. Attorney Agency Awards

We proudly recognized our partnerships with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies and thanked them for their hard work and dedication to supporting our mission of upholding the rule of law and keeping our country safe.



*Hundreds of law enforcement officers from 29 federal, state, and local agencies answered the call to assist in the investigation of four-year-old Wynter Cole Smith's abduction and murder over the 4th of July holiday. We honored those agencies for their tremendous efforts in finding Wynter.*

At the event, United States Attorney Dawn Ison recognized Deputy Mayor Todd Bettison and Detroit Police Chief James White for their contributions to the One Detroit Partnership and the Peacemics.







U.S. Attorney Dawn Ison also recognized several Homeland Security Investigations special agents for their continued collaboration with our office in support of two years of Peacenics.

Agents from the FBI and HHS-OIG were recognized for the successful prosecution of a doctor who unlawfully distributed prescriptions drugs. The lead agent on the case, Larissa Kramer, was awarded posthumously. The award was accepted by her parents Mary Ann and Bob Mroz.



U.S. Attorney Dawn Ison recognized Department of Labor-OIG Special Agent Miguel Colon for outstanding white-collar work done in support of a violent crime case. SA Colon was supported by Department of Labor-OIG Special Agent in Charge Irene Lindow and Assistant U.S. Attorney Trevor Broad.