

# Lt. Governor Brown, Attorney General Gansler Announce New Domestic Violence Laws

**ROCKVILLE, Md. (September 29, 2009)** – At a press conference earlier today, Lt. Governor Anthony G. Brown announced domestic violence new laws that will take effect on Thursday. Brown was joined at the Montgomery County Family Justice Center by Attorney General Doug Gansler, Montgomery County State’s Attorney John McCarthy, Montgomery County Councilmember Duchy Trachtenberg, Chief Deputy Sheriff Darren Popkin, and Mary Crawford, who testified on behalf of the O’Malley-Brown Administration’s domestic violence bills.

“Governor O’Malley and I are committed to reducing violent crimes committed against women and children, and we will not stop fighting against domestic violence. This new legislation is a big step forward for Maryland that will protect families, prevent murders and save lives,” Lt. Governor Brown said. “Too many Maryland families know the tragedy of domestic violence and far too many lives have been lost. We know these new laws will save lives, but we also know that they are not a silver bullet. We must continue to work with local leaders, nonprofit groups and other partners to educate more Marylanders about how they can help end domestic violence.”



“Crimes of domestic violence are among the most defining public safety issues of our times. Whenever any of our neighbors fall victim to such a crime, it not only touches all our hearts, but it impacts all our lives in the broadest sense of community,” said Governor Martin O’Malley. “This new law provides our judges the tools necessary to take guns out of the hands of abusers, and will help reduce the risk of deaths caused by firearms, protecting Maryland’s women and children, and improving public safety in our State.”

Brown led the O’Malley-Brown efforts to pass two bills during the 2009 legislative session that increase protection for Maryland’s victims of domestic violence and remove guns from the hands of abusers. The new legislation will go into effect October 1:

- Law requires a judge to order the respondent in a final protective order to surrender any firearms (handguns and long guns) in respondent’s possession and refrain from possessing any firearm for the duration of the protective order.
- Law authorizes (but does not require) a judge to order the respondent in a temporary protective order to surrender any firearms in the respondent’s possession and refrain from possessing any firearm for the duration of the temporary protective order.

In 2008, 75 individuals died in Maryland as a result of domestic violence, up from 52 individuals in 2007. Of those 75 individuals who lost their lives last year, 42 were killed by a firearm. In Montgomery County alone, seven children and three women were murdered in 2007 as a result of domestic violence. In the continuing effort to put an end to these tragedies, the Maryland General Assembly, legislative leaders, domestic violence advocates and victims joined together to support the fight against domestic violence with a pair of new laws that become effective in two days.

“These new laws provide judges with the necessary tools to take the guns out of the hands of abusers, reducing the risk of death or injury to their victims and to law enforcement,” said Attorney General Douglas F. Gansler. “I applaud the O’Malley-Brown Administration in their effort to give victims of domestic violence some level of comfort and to help protect them from additional violence at the hands of their abuser. By providing our judges with the tools necessary to take guns out of the hands of abusers, we’re working to reduce the risk of deaths caused by firearms, and improving public safety in our State.”

In 2007, Montgomery County police documented more than 2,000 incidents of domestic violence and 170 families sought shelter from domestic violence. The Montgomery County Family Justice Center, which opened in May 2009, is a collaboration of public and private agencies that aims to help these families in a safe and friendly environment. The center is a one-stop-shop approach to responding to victims of domestic violence and providing them with a broad array of critical services.

“As a public health professional, I am guided by best practices that have been proven by research, results and experience,” said Montgomery County Councilmember Trachtenberg, who is a member of the Montgomery County Council’s Health and Human Services Committee. “The Family Justice Center model places necessary services for victims of domestic violence in one location and reduces the number of places a victim has to go to receive services. The Montgomery County Family Justice Center is truly a collaborative community response and we know this best practice prevents family violence and saves lives.”

“I am here today to tell everyone my story. My ex-husband got the gun from a pawn shop before the protective order. He told me it was for hunting purposes. That was the weapon that almost cost me my life. I believe that if this law had been in effect, he would not have had any firearm to use against me at that time. He also had a shotgun, a black powder gun, and two 22s, all unregulated firearms. If they would have taken these weapons when I got the initial protective order, he would not have had a gun to try and kill me. I often ask God, why me? Even though I do live in fear constantly, now I am beginning to see that it could be to help someone else to have strength to no longer be a victim but a survivor of domestic violence,” said Mary Crawford.



During the press conference, Brown also announced that the Governor’s Office of Crime Control and Prevention (GOCCP) has made American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds available for criminal public throughout the state. The grants, which must be applied for through GOCCP, are available through the Byrne Justice Recovery Act Grant Program and can be used to a variety

of initiatives, including prevention and education programs. Brown expressed his hope that grants will be awarded for innovative initiatives to prevent domestic violence.

This month marks the 15th anniversary of the Federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), drafted in 1994 by then-U.S. Senator Joseph Biden. Lt. Governor Brown will celebrate Domestic Violence Awareness Month throughout October, during which he will participate in numerous events across the State in an effort to promote public awareness of domestic violence and enhance efforts to prevent abuse.

“I have absolutely no tolerance for domestic violence. That’s why I strongly support legislation and grant programs that help protect women and their families from continued violence and abuse,” said Senator Barbara Mikulski, an original champion of VAWA, and Chairwoman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee that funds this program through the Department of Justice. “I applaud Governor O’Malley and Lt. Governor Brown for their fight to stop domestic violence in Maryland, and was proud to support Montgomery County in its efforts to secure federal funding for the Family Justice Center. I will continue to do my part in Congress, fighting to put funds in the federal checkbook to combat domestic violence in Maryland and help the victims of these terrible crimes rebuild their lives.”

Lt. Governor Brown testified before the Maryland House of Delegates and the Maryland Senate during the 2009 legislative session on behalf of the O’Malley-Brown Administration’s domestic violence bills. Last summer, Brown’s cousin Cathy was shot and killed in Montgomery Village by her estranged boyfriend.

[View more photos from this event.](#)