

# LOCKING OUT AUTO THEFT

2012 ANNUAL REPORT

# CONTENTS

01

Letter to the Governor

02

Who is the Authority?  
Grantees

04

Grantees: Juvenile Prevention  
Training, Legislative Reform

06

Success Stories

08

Prevention and Public Education

10

Authority Impact

12

Financial Statement

13

Board and Staff

Photography by Sean Simmers

## TO THE HONORABLE GOVERNOR TOM CORBETT AND MEMBERS OF THE PENNSYLVANIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

Auto theft remains a costly crime in Pennsylvania, with 15,578 vehicles stolen last year\* – it is an evolving and complicated crime, often involving violence. The Pennsylvania Auto Theft Prevention Authority (ATPA) gives grantees the tools to stay current and bust both the major international crime ring and the smaller neighborhood menace. Thieves used to operate solo to hot-wire cars and take them on joyrides. Now, networks of criminals also orchestrate complex schemes to round up cars for sale overseas.

ATPA provides the communication network, resources, and training to combat today's auto theft. We are making a difference. The Commonwealth has once again seen a drop in auto theft. I am pleased to report:

- A 10% decrease in auto theft statewide in 2012
- A 19% decrease in auto theft in the greater Philadelphia area
- ATPA grantees and partners recovered \$29M worth of stolen parts and vehicles
- ATPA prosecutors obtained orders for perpetrators to pay \$1.2M in restitution

Restitution is important -- it's money repaid to victims, money saved by insurance companies, and therefore, savings to our citizens.

Insurers that do business in Pennsylvania fund ATPA. It is a smart investment. For every dollar collected from insurance companies since inception, the Authority has realized a return on investment of seven dollars (in vehicles and parts recovered and reduced auto thefts).

ATPA was created by the General Assembly in 1994. Since then, our work has contributed to a 68% decrease in the rate of motor vehicle theft in Pennsylvania, compared to the national decrease of 59%.\*\*

We appreciate your support. We know you and the citizens of the Commonwealth count on us to combat auto theft and its impact on the Commonwealth.

Respectfully,



Alan P. Demers  
Chairman

\*Uniform Crime Report (UCR) Definition: Motor vehicle theft is the illegal taking of a motor vehicle, or driving the vehicle without the owner's consent. Attempted motor vehicle thefts are included. Includes theft of motor-driven vehicles, such as autos, trucks, buses, motorcycles, motor scooters and snowmobiles. Data finalized for publication on 03/1/13. UCR numbers are subject to continual edit and not complete until the UCR Annual Report is complete.

\*\*Theft rates are from the FBI and available through 2011 only at time of publication.

# WHO IS THE AUTO THEFT PREVENTION AUTHORITY?

From big city to suburban neighborhoods to rural communities, we make a difference in all regions of the state. The Authority is a network of police officers, state troopers, detectives, prosecutors, and mediators working together to prevent, combat, and reduce auto theft.

The Authority uses no tax dollars. We are funded through the annual assessment of more than 370 insurance companies doing business in Pennsylvania. The Authority grants funds to eight law enforcement/investigative units statewide, including the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), which distributes grants to three regional task forces (comprised of state and local law enforcement agencies). We also fund two units dedicated to investigating and curbing juvenile auto theft.

▼ Officer Daniel Szatkowski



## WHY SUPPORT ATPA?

When cars are stolen, insurance rates go up and we all pay the price. Auto theft often goes hand-in-hand with other violent crime.

Few states devote as much attention to vehicle theft as Pennsylvania – and it shows. Since 1995, the ATPA funded law enforcement units have recovered stolen vehicles and parts worth \$486 million. In that same period, theft rates in Pennsylvania dropped by more than 68%, compared to 59% nationally.\*\*

\*\*National theft rate from the Federal Bureau of Investigation was only available through 2011 at the time this report was printed.

We have a board of directors and two full-time staff members (an executive director and grants analyst). ATPA continues to be a great steward of insurance industry assessments, using only 6.6% for administrative costs, with the bulk of funds devoted to street level enforcement, equipment upgrades, training, public awareness, and prosecution.

Created under ACT 171 of 1994, the Authority has supplied funding to law enforcement/investigative units since 1995. Grant funds are used for compensation, training, and equipment-related expenses for nearly 100 investigators, prosecutors, and support staff statewide.



▲ David Mussel, Sr. Deputy DA Lehigh County; Michael Cleary, Assistant DA Philadelphia; Jennifer Blackledge, Assistant DA Lancaster County; William Abraham, Assistant DA Lackawana County; George Dawson, Assistant DA Delaware County

# GRANTEES: LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERS & PROSECUTORS

The Authority provides grants for personnel costs and other expenses for investigators, prosecutors, and limited support staff. Several law enforcement agencies fund similar levels of investigative personnel to match that provided by the ATPA grant. In addition, some of the Authority’s grantees work in partnership with local police, who assign grant-paid investigators to a squad specializing in auto theft; others provide personnel on an over-time basis to expand the capacity of the grant-funded team. All of these models serve to multiply the investigative resources focused on arresting and convicting auto thieves and recovering stolen vehicles and parts. Grants are also distributed to prosecutors who work to convict auto thieves and seek restitution.

## PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE:

13 investigators from local police departments across the state; 17 state police troopers and 4 state police supervisors (grants pay overtime only); secretary

## PHILADELPHIA POLICE DEPARTMENT:

12 police officers and detectives (fully funded by grant); 12 police officers and detectives (grants pay overtime and equipment only); 6 division detectives (grants pay overtime only)

## PITTSBURGH POLICE:

3 police officers and detectives

## DISTRICT ATTORNEY OFFICES:

- ALLEGHENY COUNTY: assistant district attorney; paralegal
- DELAWARE COUNTY: assistant district attorney; detective; analyst;
- LANCASTER CITY POLICE/COUNTY: 2 investigators; assistant district attorney
- LEHIGH COUNTY: Senior deputy district attorney; secretary; 4 investigators from local police departments
- LACKAWANA COUNTY\*: assistant district attorney; 3 investigators from local police departments; administrator; secretary

\*Serves 11 counties: Lackawanna, Luzerne, Pike, Susquehanna, Bradford, Monroe, Wayne, Wyoming, Sullivan, Columbia, and Carbon.



## GRANTEES: JUVENILE PREVENTION

The Authority funds two grantees that work to curtail recidivism and reach at-risk youth before they commit vehicle theft.

### GOOD SHEPHERD MEDIATION PROGRAM

Good Shepherd delivers an Authority-funded program to first-time offenders selected by the Philadelphia District Attorney's Youth Task Force and, also continually facilitates an in-school theft prevention seminar targeting at-risk youth in Philadelphia. Good Shepherd Mediation Program shows success in slowing and eliminating juvenile auto theft. Of the 28 juvenile offenders who completed the program in 2012, only 4% were re-arrested, compared to a 26% recidivism rate of those who did not complete the program. In 2012, Good Shepherd worked with 248 middle school students to reduce the chances of vehicle theft behavior among young people in Philadelphia.

### PHILADELPHIA DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

The Philadelphia District Attorney's Office grant supports one detective, two prosecutors, and two law clerks dedicated to juvenile auto theft investigation and diversion. Juvenile offenders diverted from prosecution must complete a rehabilitation and restitution program. Those who do not fulfill the program requirements are prosecuted.



▲ Officer Joe Kent

## TRAINING

Auto theft is a complex and high-tech crime, and thieves are quick to adopt new tactics. ATPA funding enables grantees to train local patrol officers and new police officers how to spot a stolen car. The Authority helps grantees stay current through continuing education. Our annual training conference is open to all grantees and features special seminars based on current trends. This year's training focused on social media surveillance, physical surveillance, and international auto theft. The Authority also held restitution training for prosecutors. Many grantees successfully investigated and prosecuted cases that involved this year's training topics.



▲ Officer Daniel Szatkowski



▲ Harrisburg Capitol Building

## LEGISLATIVE REFORM

The Authority works to amend and support legislation that assists our grantees in the detection, investigation, and prosecution of vehicle theft. This year, ATPA lobbied for Senate Bill 86 which was signed into law as Act 203 in October. The legislation expands the current Motor Vehicle Chop Shop Act to include trailers and semi-trailers as stolen vehicles. It also allows for additional auto shop inspections and searches.

We thank State Senator Stewart Greeleaf (R-12th District) and State Representative Kate Harper (R-61st District) for their support and leadership in helping Act 203 become law.



▲ State Senator Stewart Greeleaf



▲ State Rep. Kate Harper

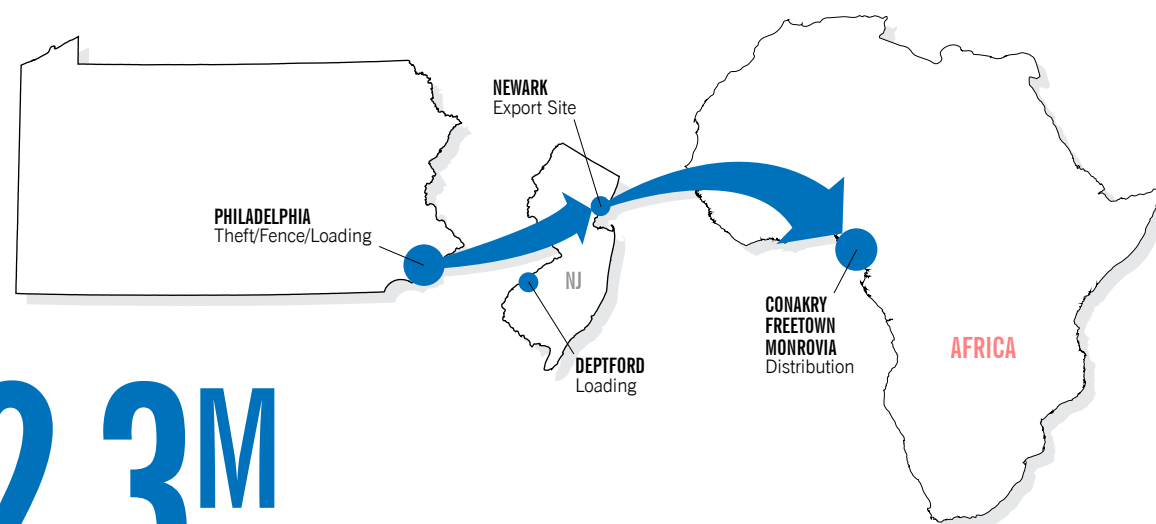


# SUCCESS STORIES

## OPERATION: WHEELS OF FORTUNE

The Pennsylvania State Police Auto Theft Unit and the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Organized Crime Section led an investigation that shut down an international luxury car theft ring with 26 suspects linked to nearly 60 stolen vehicles worth \$2.3 million. The elaborate criminal operation, dubbed "Wheels of Fortune," involved taking high-end cars and SUV's at car dealership lots and service departments in or around suburban Philadelphia and then quickly loading them in overseas shipping containers for sale in West Africa.

The thieves also allegedly car-jacked, burglarized, and held victims at gunpoint to steal vehicles that foreign brokers and buyers were seeking. Investigators intercepted and recovered 41 vehicles before and after they had been loaded on to cargo ships. Nearly all of the suspects pleaded guilty and face up to 23 months in prison.



**\$2.3M**  
VALUE OF RECOVERED VEHICLES.

*"This was a systematic and organized effort to target, steal and quickly move a massive inventory of stolen luxury cars, bound for international customers who were either unaware or did not care where the vehicles may have come from."*

Pennsylvania State Police Commissioner Frank Noonan



▲ Evidence photo



▲ Det. Stephen Kershaw, Det. Charles Yeiter

## ALAMO RENTAL CAR THEFTS

The Philadelphia Auto Squad recovered nearly 30 vehicles stolen from Alamo Car Rental. The investigation revealed it was an inside job -- the cars disappeared when employees were assigned to move them from one location to another. Auto squad detectives conducted physical surveillance to identify suspects. The suspects confessed and were convicted.

## RT. 222 TOW TRUCK

In August, the Lancaster City Police Auto Theft unit used a decoy car to nab a tow truck operator accused of running a chop shop and stealing a dozen disabled cars and trucks from highways in Lancaster and Berks counties. The auto theft team set up surveillance using the decoy car and followed it to a garage in Reading. Investigators uncovered evidence that the stolen cars were being taken to a salvage yard in Berks County and shredded as scrap metal. Several other agencies assisted in this case, including ATPA grantees: Pennsylvania State Police Auto Theft Task Force, Berks County District Attorney's Office, and Reading City Police Auto Theft Unit.



▲ Evidence Photo

## HANDSOME BOYS

The Lehigh County Auto Theft Task Force used social media to help crack several auto theft cases this year, many involving car-jackings. Investigators also used surveillance, cellphone analysis, and information gathered from suspects and witnesses on social networking sites to bust the "Handsome Boys" part of a gang involved in a stolen car ring. Investigators first noticed an increase in the number of mid-1990's Hondas being stolen in the Lehigh Valley. Their investigation led to the arrest and conviction of two adults and 13 juveniles responsible for 16 stolen cars.

## ALLEGHENY COUNTY I-79

A tremendous cooperative effort led to a significant prosecution in Allegheny County. Investigators busted a theft/auto theft ring plaguing neighborhoods along the I-79 corridor. The Western Regional Auto Task Force, Allegheny County Assistant District Attorney, combined the cases of 65 victims -- and worked with 12 jurisdictions to investigate and prosecute the crimes. They successfully convicted all five suspects who were ordered to serve lengthy state prison sentences and pay \$44,900 in restitution.





# PREVENTION & PUBLIC EDUCATION

One simple act can reduce your likelihood of auto theft – locking your car. It’s common sense, but not common practice. Auto theft squad detectives tell us more than 50% of Pennsylvania’s stolen cars were left unlocked. In 2012, the Authority delivered creative prevention messaging through two partnerships. The goal was to maximize exposure to diverse, captive audiences during peak theft months.

## GREATER MEDIA MARKETING

In the southeast region of the state, we partnered with Greater Media Marketing for a radio campaign on WMMR in Philadelphia. The campaign ran for eight weeks during the summer.

## NATIONAL CINEMEDIA

The Authority also partnered with National Cinemedia, operator of the largest digital in-theater advertising network in North America. During the holiday season and summer months, ATPA sponsored 30-second commercials on hundreds of screens throughout the state reminding viewers to “lock the car, take the keys, hide valuables.”

ATPA movie theater spot ▼



▲ Citize's Bank Park, Philadelphia



## PHILADELPHIA *Phillies*™

ATPA partnered with the Philadelphia Phillies to remind the tens of thousands of fans in the stadium and listening on the radio – “Is your car where you left it? Lock your car to prevent theft.” This partnership offered a unique, sustained opportunity to reach a vast number of people in the southeast region of the state, which continues to have the highest concentration of auto theft statewide.



▲ Det. Stephen Kershaw, Sgt. Paul Lorenzo, Det. Charles Yeiter



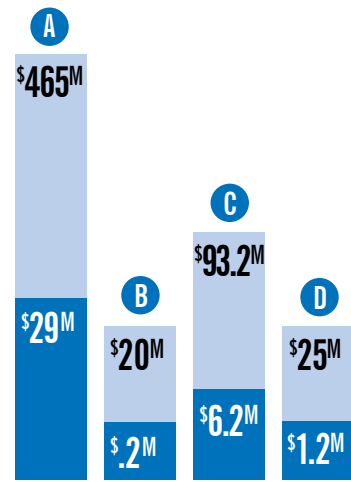
▲ VINgraving

50% OF PA'S STOLEN VEHICLES WERE LEFT UNLOCKED.

## VINGRAVING PROGRAM

ATPA grantees conducted several VINgraving events across the Commonwealth. VINgraving (or VINetching) is a proven prevention tool in which the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) is chemically etched onto all windows of a vehicle. If a thief intends to steal a vehicle to dismantle it for parts, he would then have to replace all windows. Replacing the glass can be expensive and time-consuming.

## AUTHORITY IMPACT



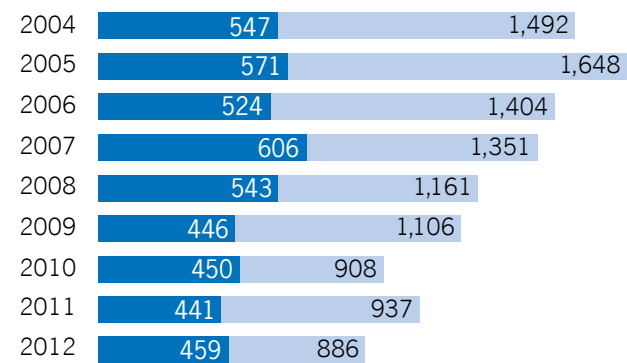
### IMPACT OF GRANTEES' COMBINED EFFORTS

■ FY 2011-2012 ■ INCEPTION

- A) Value of Recovered Vehicles
- B) Value of Recovered Parts
- C) Grants Paid
- D) Restitution

**\$486M**

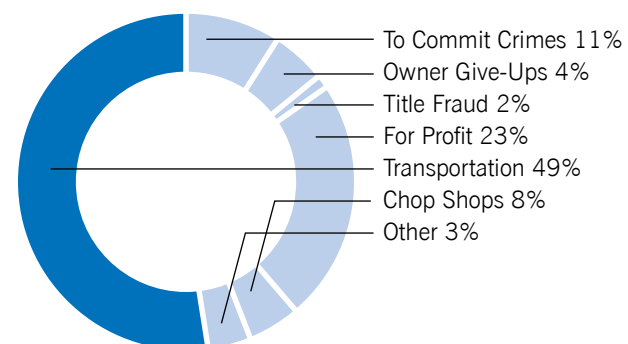
Total value of recovered vehicles and parts since inception in 1994



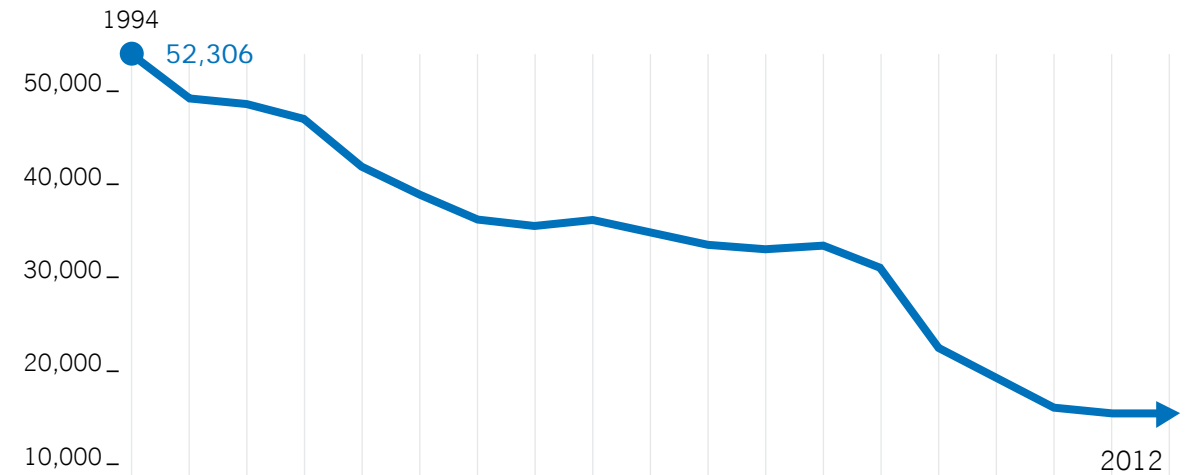
### INDIVIDUALS ARRESTED AND CONVICTED

By funded positions only

■ CONVICTIONS ■ ARRESTS

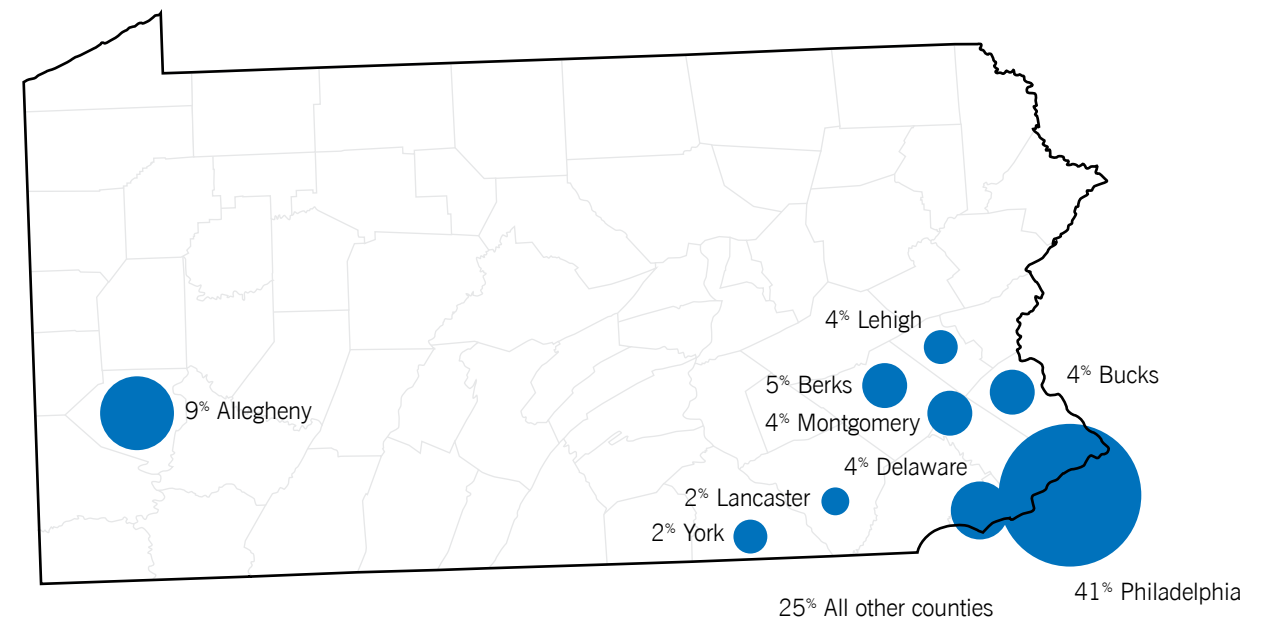


### TYPES OF ARRESTS



### INDIVIDUALS ARRESTED & CONVICTED\*

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### AUTO THEFTS BY COUNTY

Source: 2012 NCIC Data

# FISCAL YEAR 2011/2012

Assesments.....	\$6,463,092.00
Interest Earned.....	2,891.00
Miscellaneous.....	18,337.00
Total Revenue.....	6,484,320.00
Balance carried over from previous year.....	1,502,139.00
<b>Total Funds Available.....</b>	<b>\$7,986,459.00</b>

Program Expenses:

Grants Paid.....	(\$5,845,948.00)
Grant Reviews.....	(56,927.00)
Public Awareness.....	(505,060.00)
Training.....	(15,269.00)
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>(\$6,423,204.00)</b>

Operating Expenses:

Personal Expenses.....	(\$232,044.00)
Operating Expenses.....	(163,656.00)
Capital Asset Expenses.....	(28,972.00)
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>(\$425,572.00)</b>

**Net Effect of Balance Sheet Changes ..... \$202,014.00**

**Year-End Balance ..... \$1,339,697.00**  
(to be applied to future grant and operational expenditures)

**The ATPA operated at 6.6% (\$425,572.00) of the total assessments collected.**

## BOARD MEMBERS



Alan P. Demers  
*Chairman*  
Vice President,  
Nationwide Insurance



Ronald W. Kosh  
*Treasurer*  
Vice President, Public  
& Government Affairs,  
AAA Mid-Atlantic



Celeste C. Dodson  
*Secretary*  
Claims Manager,  
State Farm Insurance



Iva Dougherty  
Chief Deputy Attorney  
General, Office of the  
Attorney General



Frank Noonan  
Commissioner,  
Pennsylvania State  
Police



Frank E. Pawlowski  
Retired Colonel,  
Pennsylvania State  
Police



Charles H. Ramsey  
Commissioner,  
Philadelphia Police  
Department

## STAFF




Cynthia T. Tolsma  
*Executive Director*



Patti Lane-Lesniak  
*Grants Analyst*





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[www.watchyourcar.org](http://www.watchyourcar.org)