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

TTER TO THE 03.

I'm sure it comes as no surprise to you, 2020 was an atypical year for the Pennsylvania Auto Theft Prevention Authority (ATPA). The global coronavirus pandemic and its many ripple effects were a challenge for our grantees. Despite the challenges, they continued to make a significant impact in auto theft detection and enforcement.

Since our inception in 1994, we've helped reduce vehicle theft in the Commonwealth by 80 percent (compared to a national decrease of 53 percent\*)! Moreover, while nationwide vehicle crimes since 2015 are again rising, in Pennsylvania, theft rates continue to decline.

In 2020, ATPA grantees contributed to:

- Recoveries of \$34.2 million in vehicles and parts
- Convictions of 534 individuals of auto theft-related crimes
- Court-ordered restitution of \$3.7 million to the victims of those crimes

This success is significant to every Pennsylvanian, as vehicle crime reduction not only prevents costly increases in insurance premiums but also significantly impacts community safety. While some vehicles are stolen as a crime of opportunity, many are stolen by complex, professional theft rings whose tactics often involve violence, financial fraud, identity theft, and international trafficking. Perhaps more important, many crime sprees begin with the theft of a vehicle, leading to the dangerous and costly ripple effect of the subsequent crimes.

ATPA is a legislatively mandated, public-private entity that **cannot and does not use tax dollars**. The organization is funded entirely by assessments of Pennsylvania property & casualty insurers. Grants are made to law enforcement agencies based solely on manifest need and demonstrated results. Grant renewals are contingent on audits and results. For every dollar assessed since inception, we have realized a \$6.56 return — **all without cost to the Commonwealth.** 

You can be certain of our continued diligence in reducing the threat to our collective safety and security that vehicle crimes pose. We will continue to serve the citizens of the Commonwealth and support our grantees, educate the public, and train law enforcement to detect and solve these ever-evolving crimes. We are grateful for the opportunity, and we thank you for your support.



Respectfully,

Ronald W. Kosh Chairperson



## THE MISSION OF THE ATPA IS TO PREVENT, COMBAT AND REDUCE AUTOMOBILE THEFT.

The ATPA is a statewide network of nearly 100 highly skilled police officers, state troopers, detectives, prosecutors, paralegals, and support staff who work together to prevent, detect, and prosecute auto theft.

The General Assembly created the ATPA in 1994. Pennsylvania remains one of the only states in the country to dedicate this level of expertise and commitment to fighting vehicle theft. It's proven to be a wise investment.

Since its inception, the organization has reduced theft rates in Pennsylvania by 80 percent, with ATPA grantees recovering more than \$649 million in stolen vehicles and parts.

# WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT AUTO THEFT?

Auto theft and vehicle crimes impact your safety, the safety of your community, and your wallet. Whether your car was stolen or not, vehicle-related crimes affect everyone.



- 1 when vehicles are stolen, insurance rates increase. We all pay the price.
- 2. Stolen cars are often used to commit other violent crimes that impact your community.
- 3. If you leave your mail, bills, car registration, work files, or other sensitive information in a car, you also become vulnerable to identity theft and home burglary.

### OS. FUNDING & SKILLS

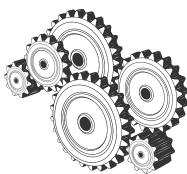
#### **FUNDING.**

We do not use tax dollars. Our funds come from an annual assessment of 341 insurance companies that insure Pennsylvania drivers. The funding provides grants to investigative and/or prosecutorial units statewide, including the Pennsylvania State Police, regional task forces, district attorneys, police departments, and public information campaigns. Our team consists of a board of directors, an executive director, and a grants analyst. An effective steward of the insurance industry assessments, our organization uses only 4.9% of its funds for administrative costs. The funds are devoted to investigation, prosecution, equipment, training, public awareness, and prevention. For every dollar assessed, we have realized a \$6.56 return on that investment in reduced theft rates and recovered vehicles and parts.

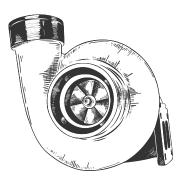
#### SPECIALIZED SKILLS.

Theft is only one aspect of vehicle crime. Pennsylvania ATPA grantees have specialized skills. They know how to detect and solve crimes that range from title washing to insurance fraud, to cargo theft, to VIN altering, to odometer fraud, to carjacking, and more. Many violent crime sprees often start with the theft of a vehicle. Only investigators and prosecutors with unique training and experience can keep this wide range of thieves and schemes at bay.





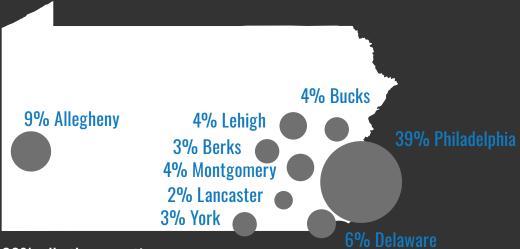




## PENNSYLVANIA MOTOR VEHICLE STATE STATE THE STATE TH

1994 54,153 2020 10,883 AS OF 2/23/2021

### **AUTO THEFTS BY COUNTY**



26% all other counties

**O@** GRANTEES

# EGRANTES

## OUR GRANTEES OUR **IMPRESSIVE**

# COMMITMENT TO MISSION

In 2020, ATPA grantees made 487 arrests, convicted 534 thieves, and recovered \$37.8 million in vehicles, parts, and restitution.

Pennsylvania ATPA grantees span the state and are awarded funds following an application and board vote. Funds are awarded based on need and on the grantee's plan for how the funds will be used. Grant renewals are contingent upon audits and results.

Many municipalities have slashed their police department and law enforcement budgets, making this support more important than ever. Grant monies may be used to cover salaries for detectives, prosecutors, and specialized support staff, as well as training and equipment.

In some cases, law enforcement agencies contribute to matching resources. In other cases, ATPA funds cover overtime costs to expand the capacity of the team. Funding models serve to multiply resources and streamline our investigative-prosecutorial approach.



#### PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE (PSP)

- 11 detectives from county and municipal police departments across the state (fully funded)
- 13 state troopers (overtime only)
- 4 state police supervisors (overtime and equipment only)
- 1 clerk (fully funded)

#### **POLICE DEPARTMENTS**

#### PHII ADFI PHIA POLICE

- 8 police officers (fully funded)
- 4 detectives (fully funded)
- 6 division detectives (overtime only)
- Major Crimes Auto Squad (overtime only)
- Tow Squad (overtime only)

#### PITTSBURGH POLICE

- 2 detectives (fully funded)
- 2 detectives (partial overtime and expenses)

#### LANCASTER CITY POLICE

- 2 detectives (fully funded)
- 1 assistant district attorney (50% funded)
- 1 sergeant (50% funded)

#### **DISTRICT ATTORNEY OFFICES**

#### **ALLEGHENY COUNTY**

- Assistant DA (fully funded)
- Paralegal (fully funded)

#### **DELAWARE COUNTY**

- Assistant DA (50% funded)
- Detective (fully funded)
- Analyst (50% funded)
- Overtime for assisting officers

#### **BUCKS COUNTY**

2 Assistant DAs (fully funded)

#### **LEHIGH COUNTY**

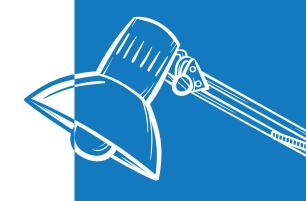
- Chief deputy DA (50% funded)
- Secretary (50% funded)
- 4 Detectives from local police departments (fully funded)

#### PHILADELPHIA

- Assistant DA Juvenile Division (15% funded)
- 2 SIU Assistant DAs (fully funded)
- SIU Paralegal (fully funded)
- SIU Investigator (fully funded)
- · Investigator (20% funded)

#### LACKAWANNA COUNTY\*

- Assistant DA (50% funded)
- 2 part-time detectives from local police departments (partially funded)
- Secretary (50% funded)





<sup>\*</sup>Serves 10 counties: Bradford, Carbon, Columbia, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Sullivan, Susquehanna, and Wyoming

## 12. PUBLIC EDUCATION

PART OF OUR MISSION

## PREVENT VEHICLE CRIME

Besides the grantees, the biggest allies in this effort are Pennsylvania drivers themselves. The simple habit of **locking the car and taking the keys with you** will significantly reduce the likelihood of having a car stolen. While this may sound like common sense, the data indicates that it's not common practice. ATPA grantees report that more than 50 percent of the state's stolen cars were left unlocked and/or with the keys inside.

We continue to spread a simple, clear prevention message across the state, while also focusing on our highest crime areas during peak theft months.

#### "NO PUFFERS" - PREVENTION AT THE PUMP

A "puffer" is a car left running, unlocked, and unattended. It's the easiest and most opportunistic way to steal a car. While puffer thefts are clearly preventable, they remain a persistent problem. Drivers often leave their cars alone to warm up or cool down. They may feel safe leaving them running and unattended "for just a minute," but they are putting their vehicles and their community in jeopardy.



## A PUFFER IS A CAR LEFT RUNNING, UNLOCKED, AND UNATTENDED.

PUFFERS ARE QUICKLY AND EASILY STOLEN.
#NoPuffers | nopuffers.com



LOCK YOUR CAR. TAKE YOUR KEYS. EVERY TIME.



#### **GAS STATION PREVENTION MESSAGE**

Our 2020 anti-puffer campaign placed our prevention messages where drivers routinely saw them — at gas stations. Our pilot program included about 50 gas stations in Philadelphia, using the ad space on gas nozzle "billboards," signage on top of gas pumps, and beverage cooler signage inside the gas station mini-marts. The program ran from January through July.

#### **GONE IN A PUFF.**

liquor store, at work, or in your driveway, protect your ride.

We complemented this effort by launching 18 message-wrapped vehicles throughout Philadelphia to remind drivers not to leave their vehicles puffing. As part of this media deployment, we also received more than 130,000 digital retargeting ads, adding a third layer of messaging to increase the frequency and reach of our prevention campaign.





The coronavirus pandemic and slowdown in travel and retail activity spurred us to pivot the tactics used in our annual "Great Gasoline Giveaway" campaign. We quickly developed new creative that resonated with people's lack of summer travel and appealed to their optimism with the campaign tagline, "New Memories Await."



## EDUCATING OUR COMMUNITIES

We used social media and email marketing to relay theft prevention tips and motivation to adopt good prevention habits during the summer months. The campaign reached more than 2.5 million Facebook users and 2.6 million Twitter users. Weekly and monthly "Great Gasoline Giveaway" winners received gas gift cards, and the grand prize winner won a year's supply of free gas.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA ADS**







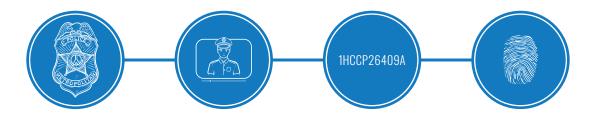
10,883 vehicles were stolen in Pennsylvania in 2020. Even without experiencing theft firsthand, insurance rates and violence associated with vehicle crimes affect all of us.

#### **TRAINING**

Auto theft is complex and ever-evolving. It requires unique training and skills to stay current on theft trends and technology. Therefore, patrol officers and prosecutors must be trained on the most current information regarding stolen vehicles, identity theft rings, and prosecution for auto theft cases. ATPA grantees both receive and provide specialized training throughout the year.

#### COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Chemically etching the vehicle identification number (VIN) onto all vehicle windows deters auto theft, as perpetrators would need to replace all of a vehicle's glass before trying to sell it. Grantees hold several VINetchings throughout the year, however most events were canceled this year due to the pandemic.



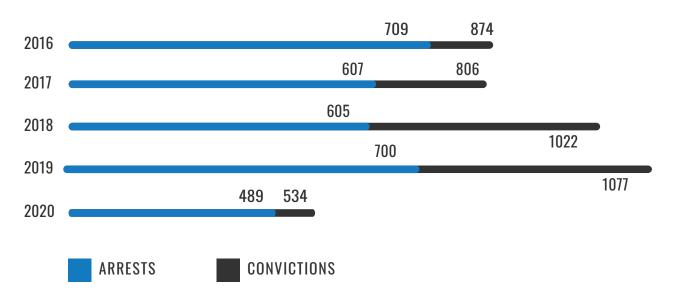
#### FOR GRANTEES

This year, we partnered with the Northeast Regional Chapter of the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators to present monthly intelligence briefings and seminars on theft detection, vehicle finance fraud, and other topics. Due to the pandemic, the sessions were offered via videoconference. Attendees learned different ways to determine whether a crime has been committed, by what means, and what resources are available for the investigation of these schemes.

#### **BYGRANTEES**

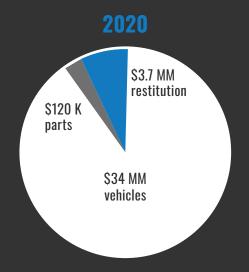
The Lehigh County Auto Theft Task Force routinely engages in training and outreach. This year, the Task Force instructed cadets at the Allentown Citizens Police Academy about the divisions within the criminal justice system and auto theft prevention. The Task Force led several presentations geared toward school students. One of the unit's attorneys also participated in a mock court exercise with PSP troopers to assist their training in cross examinations during trials.

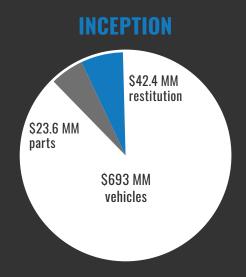
ATPA IMPACT INDIVIDUALS ARRESTED AND CONVICTED



## **VALUE OF RECOVERIES**

\$6.56 RETURN ON INVESTMENT SINCE INCEPTION





TOTAL VALUE OF RECOVERED VEHICLES AND PARTS SINCE INCEPTION IN 1994

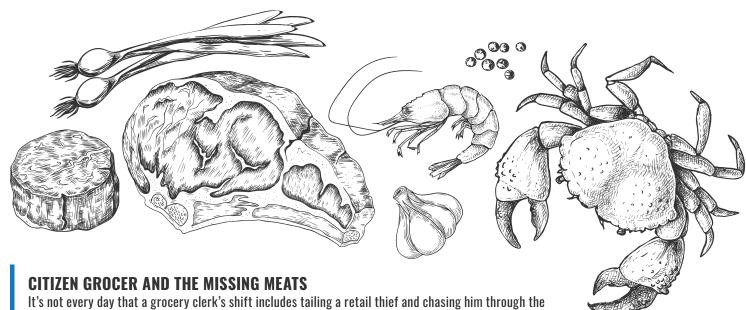
\$716.6<sup>§</sup>

#### **BUCKS COUNTY**

#### I FORGOT MY ID, SO I'M GOING TO STEAL YOUR CAR

A car owner in Falls Township, Bucks County, lent her vehicle to a family friend who needed to drive to Florida. While in the Sunshine State, the friend agreed to drive an acquaintance back to Pennsylvania. Upon their arrival in the Philadelphia area, the acquaintance announced that she was unable to fly home to Florida as she did not have any identification with her. In order to help her get home, the friend and the car owner booked a rental car for her. Instead, the acquaintance decided to steal the owner's vehicle. It could have been seen as a misunderstanding, except that the acquaintance sent text messages confirming that she did, indeed, steal the vehicle.

The car was recovered 12 hours later in New Jersey. The acquaintance was sentenced to 18 months of probation in Florida for a felony larceny and was also arrested on a grand larceny warrant out of Florida at the time, leading the Falls Township police to believe that she was a repeat offender. In Pennsylvania, the case was tried by ATPA-funded prosecutors from the Bucks County District Attorney's Office. She was sentenced to 4–23 months in Bucks County Jail, with credit for time served in lieu of posting bail from December 2019 to her plea date of May 2020. She was also ordered to pay restitution for stealing \$800 out of the car owner's purse, which was in the car when the acquaintance drove off.



It's not every day that a grocery clerk's shift includes tailing a retail thief and chasing him through the parking lot. Amidst the adrenaline rush, the clerk was able to capture the license plate number of the thief's 2019 Kia Rio — a car that was stolen from a Philadelphia rental agency. When Warrington police officers spotted the speeding Rio and pulled the driver over, they found more than \$450 of premier meats and seafood, such as steak tenderloin, shrimp, and crab meat. ATPA-funded prosecutors from the Bucks County District Attorney's Office prosecuted the case. The defendant was indicted for the theft and was also taken into custody for several probation and parole violations for other retail theft felonies. He had seven prior retail theft convictions and, at the time of the offense, was driving with a suspended license.



#### **DIGGING A DEEP HOLE FOR HIMSELF**

One backhoe seems like a lot to steal, but three? Three feels like a very coordinated scheme, but that's not the case here. The perpetrator was not attempting to build a fleet or sell the equipment. Instead, he stole the first backhoe in order to do work for extra cash to feed his drug habit. The second backhoe became necessary to rescue the first backhoe after it rolled over into the creek. On the way back from the not-so-stealthy operation, the second backhoe was involved in a car accident. The alleged thief left his name and contact information with the other driver. Desperate for money, he stole a third and final backhoe to finish the original job. The PSP Western Auto Theft Task Force consisting of officers from the City of Pittsburgh Police Department, Allegheny County detectives, and troopers from the PSP, arrested the defendant, who ultimately pleaded guilty to three felonies. He received seven years of probation for each backhoe theft to run concurrently, and he was ordered to pay restitution of \$30,000 and undergo drug and alcohol evaluation, including any necessary treatment.

#### **PSP WESTERN AUTO THEFT TASK FORCE**

#### ROOM FOR RENT GONE WRONG

An elderly man in Allegheny County rented out a spare room in his home to a couple before suffering a serious fall. His injuries required a lengthy hospitalization and rehabilitation process. During that time, the two renters made themselves very comfortable and took advantage of the gentleman's credit cards, checking account, and vehicle, accumulating a large amount of debt. The couple was evicted and took the vehicle with them. Law enforcement investigators from the PSP Western Auto Theft Task Force were able to put a hold on the checking account, cancel the credit cards, and recover the stolen vehicle. The couple ultimately pleaded guilty and were each required to pay \$5,154 in restitution. The gentleman passed away before the case came to trial.

#### **PHILADELPHIA**

#### LAMBORGHINI USED AS BAIT

Mercedes. Lamborghini. Rolls-Royce. These luxury vehicles were targets of a heist in Philadelphia. Think this sounds more like the plot of a summer blockbuster than a real-life scenario? Think again. Members of the PSP Eastern Auto Theft Task Force received a tip about a criminal group using fraudulent driver's licenses, fake insurance details, and stolen credit cards to rent luxury vehicles. Once inside, the thieves would remove the tracking devices and steal the vehicles. Thwarting another round of high-end thefts, PSP troopers and members of the Philadelphia Major Crimes Auto Squad arranged for a Rolls-Royce and a Lamborghini to be delivered to a five-star hotel as bait. The two suspects signed rental agreements with fictitious driver's licenses, and the troopers took them into custody, preventing the theft of more than \$1 million in luxury vehicles.



#### **PSP EASTERN AUTO THEFT TASK FORCE**

#### TEENAGE COUPLE PLOTS FRAUD AND THEFT

An attempted carjacking and a recovered cell phone at the scene led a team of local officers from the Scranton Police Department and Taylor Police Department, as well as members of the PSP Eastern Auto Theft Task Force, down a path to uncover more than just one crime. The recovered cell phone was linked to a 16-year-old driver and his car. PSP troopers located the vehicle outside of a residence in Taylor Borough. Upon speaking with the homeowner, they learned that the car belonged to her teenage daughter's boyfriend. The boyfriend was taken into custody based on an existing juvenile probation warrant. The homeowner allowed officers to search her home to find \$15,000, a money counting machine, drug paraphernalia, blank physician prescription pads, fraudulent checks, equipment to wash checks, unemployment documents from the California Unemployment Department (where recent COVID stimulus checks were distributed), a paintball gun, and numerous other credit, debit, and ID cards.

Both teenagers were interviewed separately in the presence of their mothers. The young woman admitted to being involved in a fraudulent unemployment scheme with her boyfriend, and he admitted to the recent carjackings. After securing a warrant to search the vehicle, troopers found a stolen and loaded 9mm pistol, additional fraudulent credit and debit cards, and a large box of 9mm ammunition. The investigation also uncovered that a vehicle matching the description of the 16-year-old's car had been traveling through Taylor Borough and shooting residents with a paintball gun — including a 3-year-old child, who was shot in the face. The juvenile was committed to a juvenile detention center as officers prepared to file multiple charges against him.





The defendant was ultimately charged as an adult. His mother posted bail of \$100,000. At an in-person preliminary hearing, he was charged with three separate carjackings. Victims from Reading and Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, as well as Kirkwood, New York, traveled to the court proceeding and testified. The defendant's mother also spoke to her son's ongoing criminal behavior and expressed concern that he was a flight risk. She requested that the bail be revoked — a request accepted by the judge. The lone sheriff in the courtroom then attempted to take the defendant into custody, at which point he became verbally and physically combative with the sheriff and began to make his way in the direction of the judge. A PSP trooper of the Eastern Auto Theft Task Force, who was present to testify, quickly helped put the defendant in handcuffs. Due to his actions in the courtroom, the defendant was subsequently charged with aggravated assault on a police officer, resisting arrest, escape, and harassment.



He was sent to the Lackawanna County Prison.



#### **LEHIGH COUNTY**

#### AN ALIAS, A MISSING CAR, AND A BAD FRIEND

In January, a victim reported his vehicle stolen to the South Whitehall Township Police Department. The unsuspecting auto theft victim let his friend, Anthony, borrow his car. Unfortunately, Anthony did not bring the car back the next day as promised. Despite multiple attempts to contact him, the victim never heard from his friend again — but he did receive multiple E-ZPass bills and parking tickets from the state of New York. The vehicle was ultimately found in New York, thanks to an investigation by the Bethlehem Police Department. The driver admitted to borrowing the car and never returning it and also admitted to using an alias, 'Anthony,' with his very trusting friend. The case was prosecuted by the Lehigh Valley Auto Theft Task Force.



#### TOASTY BUT STOLEN

The victim made the all-too-common mistake of leaving her car puffing (warming up while unlocked, unattended, and with the keys inside) for a few minutes before she left for the day. Unfortunately, the thief didn't miss a beat, and when the woman came back out of her home, the alleged thief was long gone with the victim's car, purse, driver's license, and green card. The theft was reported to the Allentown Police Department that day. A few days later, while driving through Allentown, the victim and her husband spotted the stolen vehicle and followed it. The chase ended in a car crash and the driver of the stolen car fleeing on foot. The thief was later found and arrested. He was identified as a repeat offender after his fingerprints were discovered on a Toyota Camry that was used in a robbery. The officers investigating the crime identified a pattern of the alleged thief's targets: In each case, the victim had left the car puffing. The case was prosecuted by the Lehigh Valley Auto Theft Task Force.

#### A PLAN INTERRUPTED

This group of four had a plan. They knew exactly where to find a warehouse stocked with dirt bikes, and they were confident that the market demand for the bikes would make the stunt worth the time and risk. They began the night by stealing two U-Haul box trucks. The two trucks pulled up next to the loading bays at the warehouse — perfectly placed so that the team could move the three large boxes (with two dirt bikes each) directly into the trucks. The bikes were in the expected place. Everything was going as planned; they only had to sell them, which should be the easy part.

The next morning, the missing bikes were reported to the Upper Macungie Police Department, as were the trucks to the Allentown Police Department. Warehouse security camera footage reviewed by the Department showed the thieves heading directly to the boxes as if they already knew exactly where they were going to be. Upon interviewing the warehouse staff, police identified an ex-employee as a possible suspect, noting that he had seemed obsessed with the bikes.

A few days later, an Allentown Police Department officer on routine patrol noticed a dirt bike being unloaded from a pickup truck. The owner of the pickup truck reported that he was selling the bike. Upon checking the vehicle identification number, the officer confirmed that the bike had been stolen from the warehouse, and the man confessed. He was detained on the scene. Officers also found a handgun and Yamaha operation manuals in his vehicle. He cooperated fully and gave officers the names of his co-conspirators. All were arrested on multiple felony accounts. The case was prosecuted by the Lehigh Valley Auto Theft Task Force.



#### **FINANCIAL**

#### Fiscal year 2019 - 2020

Assessments Interest earned Miscellaneous Due from Treasury Realized gain on disposal Total revenue Balance carried over from prior year Total funds available:	8,362 0 0 0 7,606,816 6,313,424
Program expenses Grants paid	(6,696,015)
Grant reviews	(71,247)
Public awareness	
Training Total	
101.01	(7,131,212)
Operating expenses	
Personnel expenses:	
Operating expenses:	
Total	(368,/95)
Net effect of balance sheet changes:	(2,852,968)
Year-end balance:	9,253,201
(to be applied to future grants and operational expenditures)	

ATPA operated at 4.9% of the total assessments collected.



Ronald W. Kosh Chairperson



Celeste C. Dodson Secretary

Claims Manager — SIU, State Farm Insurance



Scott P. Sherry Treasurer Associate Vice President Personal Lines Claims - Field, Nationwide



Chief Deputy Attorney General, Office of Attorney General



Frank J. Noonan

Retired Pennsylvania State Police Commissioner



Frank E. Pawlowski

Retired Pennsylvania State Police Commissioner



**Jeff VanSteenbergen** 

Pennsylvania Material Damage Manager, AAA



Robert G. LaBar

Senior Deputy Attorney General, Insurance Fraud Section, Office of Attorney General

