

PENNSYLVANIA AUTO THEFT PREVENTION AUTHORITY

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2022

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# TO THE HONORABLE GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO AND MEMBERS OF THE PENNSYLVANIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

LETTER TO THE GOVERNOR 02.

In 2022, we saw another steep increase in vehicle crimes, including carjackings, catalytic converter thefts, and general auto theft, predominantly in Philadelphia. There was a 26 percent increase in auto theft from 2021 to 2022 across the Commonwealth, including a 42 percent increase in Philadelphia. These are statistics that are mirrored across the country.

Last year, 21,084 vehicles were stolen in Pennsylvania. After seeing decades of declining vehicle theft rates, the Commonwealth hasn't experienced that many stolen vehicles since 2008. Criminals are using the threat of violence, as well as more sophisticated technology, to steal cars. Use of social media has brought another new dimension to auto theft, with the glamorization of these crimes in viral, global social posts like the "Kia/Hyundai TikTok Challenge."

While these tactics and statistics are distressing, we are faring better than many other areas across the nation. We are one of the few states that still have an organization like the Pennsylvania Auto Theft Prevention Authority (ATPA) to combat vehicle crimes. Since the ATPA's inception in 1994, we've helped reduce vehicle theft in the Commonwealth by 61 percent.

The ATPA is a legislatively mandated, public-private entity that cannot and does not use tax dollars. Instead, the organization is funded entirely by assessments of Pennsylvania property and casualty insurers. Grants are made to law enforcement agencies based solely on manifest need. The Authority's renewal of those grants is contingent on audits and results.

We work with our grantees and partners across the state and across the globe to provide information and resources to attack vehicle crime. 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. Over the last year, we saw crime sprees begin with the theft of a vehicle, leading to the dangerous and costly ripple effect of the subsequent crimes and serious, sometimes deadly threats to drivers.

You can be certain of our continued diligence in reducing the peril to our collective safety and security that vehicle crimes pose. We will continue to serve the citizens of the Commonwealth, 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,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Ronald W. Kosh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ronald W. Kosh  
Chairperson

### 03. WHAT IS THE PENNSYLVANIA AUTO THEFT PREVENTION AUTHORITY (ATPA)?

## **THE MISSION OF THE ATPA IS TO PREVENT, DETECT, AND PROSECUTE AUTO 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 61 percent, with ATPA grantees recovering more than \$825 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 is stolen or not, vehicle-related crimes affect everyone.



1. An increasing number of cars are being **stolen by force**, threatening the lives of the drivers and anyone else nearby.
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**.
4. When vehicles are stolen, **insurance rates increase**. We all pay the price.

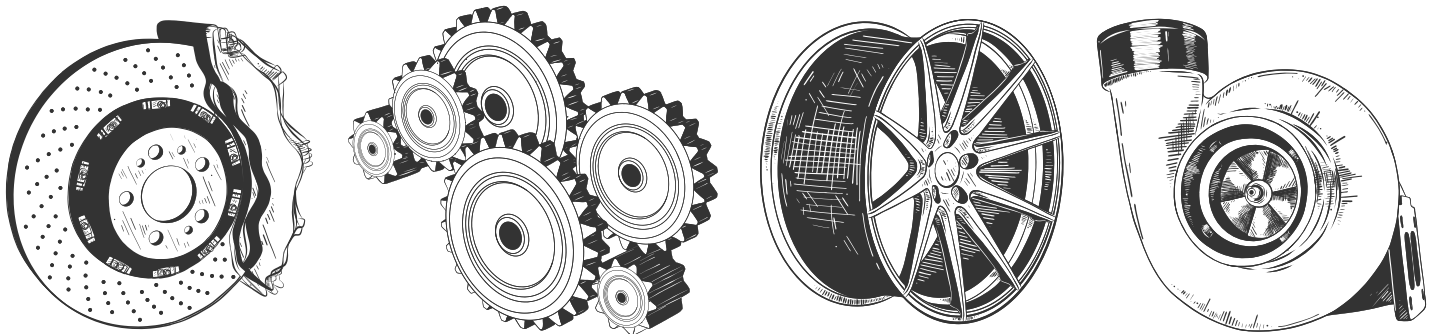
## 05. FUNDING & SKILLS

### FUNDING

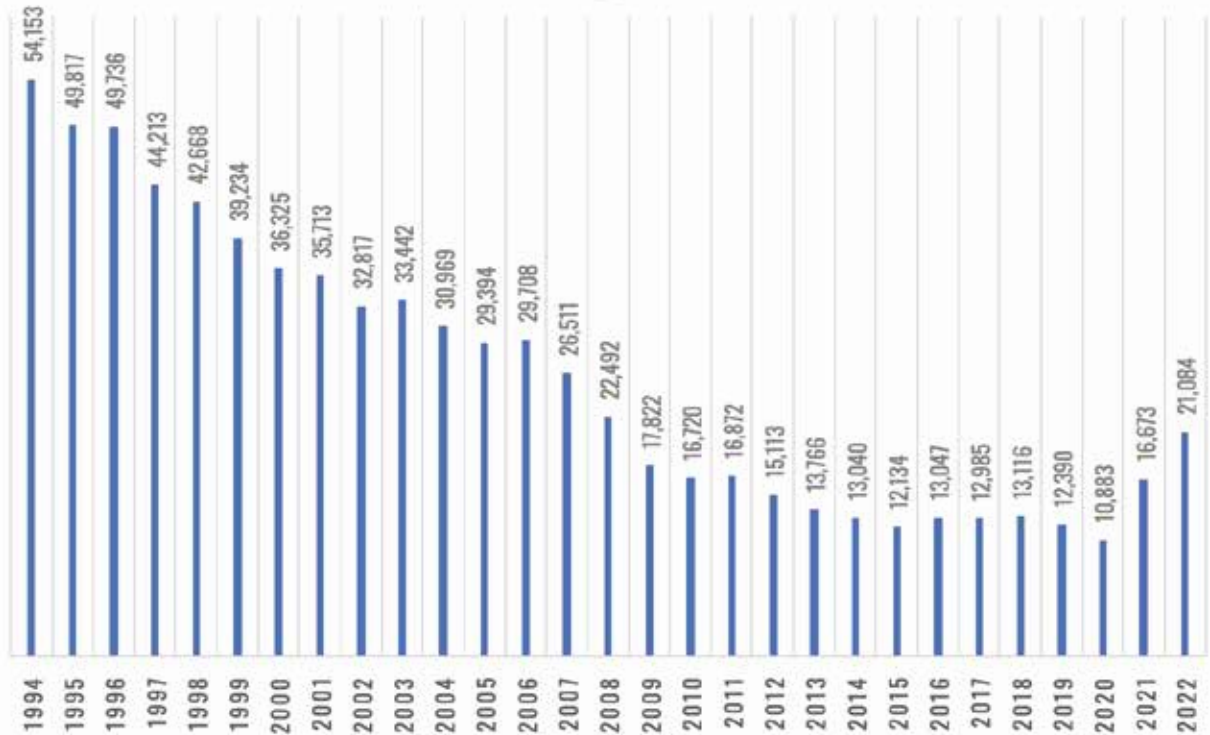
**We do not use tax dollars.** Our funds come from an annual assessment of 335 insurance companies that insure Pennsylvania drivers. The funding provides grants to investigative and/or prosecutorial units statewide, including the Pennsylvania State Police, regional task forces, district attorneys, police 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 4.8 percent of its funds for administrative costs. The funds are devoted to investigation, prosecution, equipment, training, public awareness, and prevention.

### 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 vehicle identification number (VIN) alteration 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 THEFTS\*



From 2019 to present, there are an incomplete number of agencies reporting to the National Crime Statistics Exchange.

\*Per Federal UCR through 2020; per PA UCR as of 2021. Current year is not considered final.

PENNSYLVANIA MOTOR VEHICLE  
**THEFTS**

1994

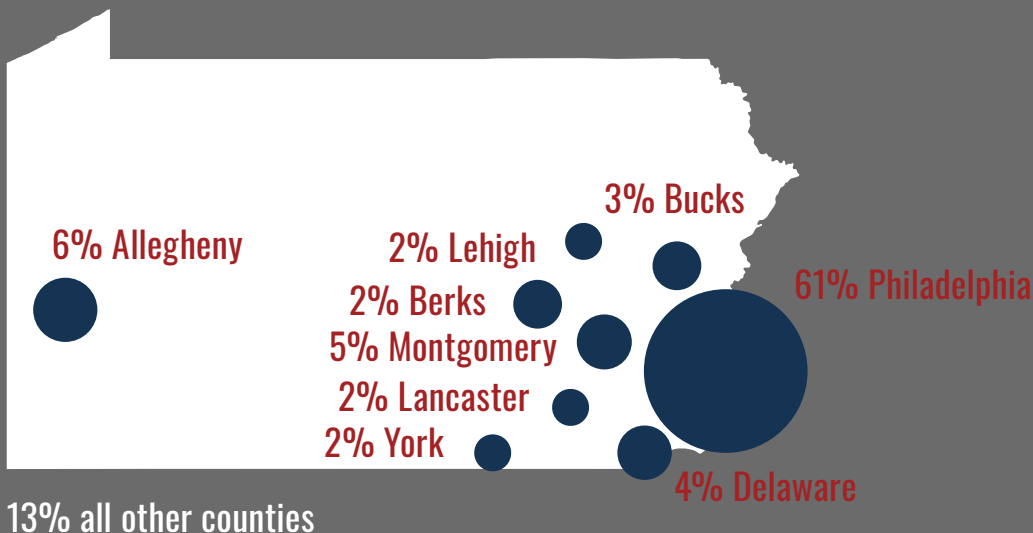
**54,153**

2022

**21,084**

AS OF 3/4/2023

**AUTO THEFTS BY COUNTY**





08. GRANTEES

# 2022 GRANTEES

**OUR GRANTEES  
SHARE AN  
IMPRESSIVE  
COMMITMENT TO**

**OUR  
MISSION**

**In 2022, ATPA grantees made 460 arrests and 847 convictions and, recovered \$66 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)

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

## POLICE DEPARTMENTS

### ERIE POLICE

- 1 detective (fully funded)
- Overtime for assisting officers

### LANCASTER CITY POLICE

- 2 detectives (fully funded)
- 1 assistant district attorney (50% funded)
- 1 sergeant (50% funded)
- Overtime for assisting officers

### PHILADELPHIA POLICE

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

### PITTSBURGH POLICE

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

# DISTRICT ATTORNEY OFFICES

## ALLEGHENY COUNTY

- 1 assistant DA (fully funded)
- 1 paralegal (fully funded)

## BUCKS COUNTY

- 1 deputy DA (fully funded)
- 2 assistant DAs (fully funded)
- Overtime for assisting officers

## DELAWARE COUNTY

- 1 deputy DA (50% funded)
- 1 detective (fully funded)
- 1 analyst (50% funded)
- Overtime for assisting officers

## LACKAWANNA COUNTY\*\*

- 1 assistant DA (50% funded)
- 1 part-time detective from the local police department
- 1 secretary (50% funded)

## LEHIGH COUNTY

- 1 chief deputy DA (50% funded)
- 1 secretary (50% funded)
- 4 detectives from local police departments (fully funded)

## PHILADELPHIA

- 1 assistant DAs (1 fully funded)
- 1 special investigative unit paralegal (fully funded)

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



PART OF OUR MISSION IS TO

# 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 estimate that more than 50 percent of the state's stolen cars were left unlocked and/or with the keys inside.

**VIOLENT CARJACKINGS ARE ON THE RISE NATIONWIDE AND CAN HAPPEN TO ANY DRIVER, ANYWHERE. HERE'S HOW TO PREVENT BEING CARJACKED.**

[LEARN MORE](#)

We continue to spread a simple, clear prevention message across the state, while also focusing on our highest crime areas. In 2022, we deployed custom digital education campaigns to reach the broadest audience, while also specifically targeting Philadelphia due to exceptionally high rates of carjacking and catalytic converter thefts.

## SOCIAL MEDIA ADS

**TAKES ONLY SECONDS TO STEAL.  
LEARN ABOUT CATALYTIC  
CONVERTER THEFT.**

**LOCK YOUR CAR,  
TAKE YOUR KEYS,  
EVERY TIME.**

**theAUTHORITY**  
Pennsylvania Auto Theft Prevention Authority

**PHILLY CARJACKINGS  
INCREASED 85%+  
IN ONE YEAR.**

**LEARN MORE.**

**LOCK YOUR CAR,  
TAKE YOUR KEYS,  
EVERY TIME.**

**theAUTHORITY**  
Pennsylvania Auto Theft Prevention Authority

CARJACKINGS  
ARE ON THE  
**RISE**



**TIP:**  
PARK IN A  
WELL-LIT AREA  
WHERE OTHERS CAN  
SEE YOU AND  
YOUR VEHICLE

TO LEARN MORE AND VIEW OTHER TIPS  
VISIT **WATCHYOURCAR.ORG**



**TIP:**  
PARK IN  
VIEW OF A  
SURVEILLANCE  
CAMERA WHEN  
POSSIBLE

TO LEARN MORE AND VIEW OTHER TIPS  
VISIT **WATCHYOURCAR.ORG**



## SHORT VIDEOS



Pennsylvania Auto Theft  
Prevention Authority

Sponsored · 1/18



Carjackings can happen to any driver, anywhere. Even in the middle of a crowded parking lot. These tips can help prevent a carjacking.



watchyourcar.org

Carjacking Prevention

Learn more



Like



Comment



Share

We produced social media posts and 20 short video vignettes of 10 individual safety tips about avoiding carjacking and catalytic converter theft. We placed the videos on new website landing pages and as ad content on YouTube, social media, and through retargeting to drive awareness and click-through traffic to [watchyourcar.org](http://watchyourcar.org) for more information. The campaign generated more than 5 million impressions across Pennsylvania.





## **AUTO THEFT AFFECTS EVERYONE**

21,084 vehicles were stolen in Pennsylvania in 2022. Even without experiencing theft firsthand, insurance rates and violence associated with vehicle crimes affect all of us.

### **TRAINING & COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

Auto theft is complex and ever-evolving. Unique training and skills are required 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.



## FOR GRANTEES

This year, we held our biannual Auto Theft Prevention Authority Grantee Training Conference in Harrisburg, including three days of workshops, seminars, and information-sharing between grantees across the Commonwealth. Conference speakers from across the country addressed topics including auto finance fraud, theft trends, investigatory techniques, and statewide and national resources available to investigators.

In 2022, we also partnered with the Upper Allen Township, Peters Township, and Erie Police Departments to offer free heavy equipment identification and theft training across the Commonwealth. Attendees learned how to locate and recover identifying characteristics on heavy equipment. The program included classroom instruction, as well as a site visit to a heavy equipment dealer for hands-on learning. The instructors were experienced investigators from the PSP Western Auto Theft Task Force.

## BY GRANTEES

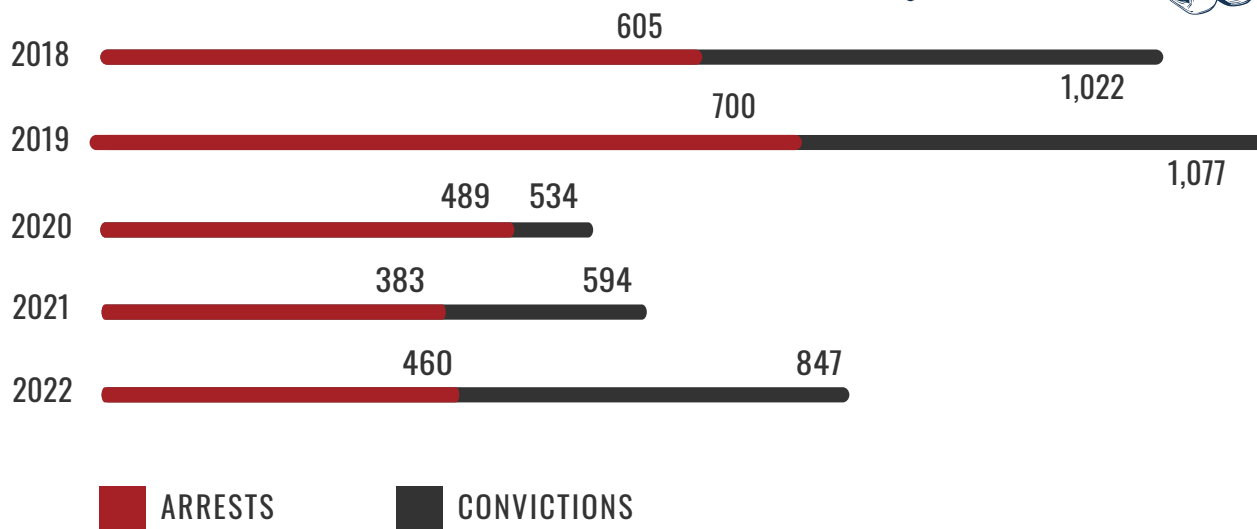
Chemically etching the VIN onto all vehicle windows deters auto theft, as perpetrators would need to replace all of a vehicle's glass before trying to sell it. The Lehigh County Auto Theft Task Force and the Bucks County District Attorney's office each held VIN etchings this year.

The Bucks County District Attorney's office also convened a specialized, information-sharing task force consisting of approximately 25 police departments throughout Bucks and Montgomery counties to focus efforts on catalytic converter thefts.

The Lackawanna County District Attorney's office conducted a half-day auto-theft education class for new Scranton police officers, including detection, methods of entry, VIN history, and more.



## INDIVIDUALS **ARRESTED** AND CONVICTED

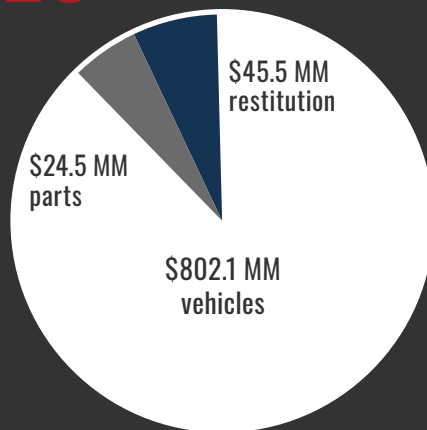


# VALUE OF **RECOVERIES**

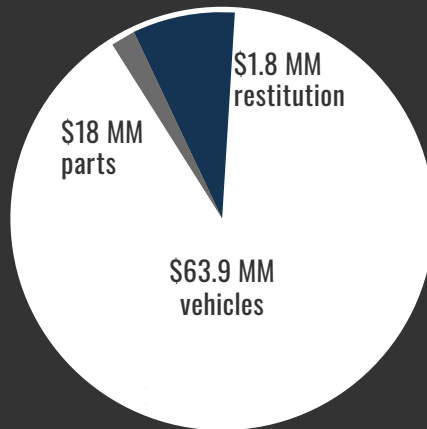
**\$825**  
**MILLION**

TOTAL VALUE OF RECOVERED VEHICLES  
AND PARTS SINCE INCEPTION IN 1994

INCEPTION



2022



## 19. CASE HIGHLIGHTS

### PHILADELPHIA SPIKES

There were 1,311 carjackings in Philadelphia, a 57 percent increase compared to 2021:

- 879 of them occurred when the victim was parked.
- In 868 of those cases, a handgun was shown by the suspect.
- 141 occurred during food deliveries.
- In 22 incidents, the suspect(s) fired the handgun in the process of taking the vehicle.

Philadelphia experienced a 60 percent increase in catalytic converter thefts, with 5,694 thefts in 2022. The catalytic converters from Mitsubishi Outlanders were stolen the most frequently, followed by those of Honda CRVs and VW Jettas.

### NEW TRENDS

ATPA grantees report new vehicle theft trends in 2022 that are on the rise:

**Kia & Hyundai thefts** — A challenge issued on social media led to a sharp spike in Kia and Hyundai thefts. Later in the year, it was discovered that the increase in thefts was also due to certain Kia and Hyundai models not being equipped with engine immobilizers, making them especially vulnerable to theft.

**Tablet thefts** — Certain vehicles are being stolen without a key. The suspects are programming a key and driving away with high-end, expensive sports cars.

## FRAUD ARRESTS IN TITLE WASHING RING

On October 5, 2022, Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro announced criminal charges against 19 suspects and 13 businesses for title washing. The businesses included towing companies, several used-car dealers, and an authorized tag and title agency. The Attorney General alleges that the individuals worked together to purchase totaled vehicles, falsify inspection information, and submit fraudulent title applications to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). This fraud was designed to bypass rigid requirements for reconstructed titles in states such as New Jersey and Massachusetts or to make stolen vehicles look legitimate for resale or export.

“These defendants used their positions and knowledge of PennDOT requirements to defraud state and federal authorities, hide stolen vehicles, and put unsuspecting drivers at risk,” said Attorney General Shapiro. “Vehicles that have been totaled must not only be repaired, but also undergo an enhanced safety inspection to make sure they are safe. These defendants instead allowed hundreds of heavily damaged vehicles onto roadways in Pennsylvania and around the country without even looking at them.”



The defendants were charged with corrupt organizations; forgery; washing vehicle titles; deceptive business practices; tampering with public records; false application for certificate of title; altered, forged, or counterfeit documents; insurance fraud; and commercial bribery, among other charges. Charges against the businesses include washing vehicle titles; deceptive business practices; tampering with public records; altered, forged, or counterfeit documents; and false application for certificate of title.

ATPA grantees across the Commonwealth contributed to the investigation, including the Pennsylvania State Police, Lackawanna District Attorney's office, and others. This case is being prosecuted by Chief Deputy Attorney General Robert LaBar, a member of the ATPA Board of Directors.



## **VIOLENT CRIME**

On August 29, Pittsburgh police officers responded to a report of a carjacking. The victims said they had just finished working at a local pizza shop when three men in their 20s approached them — they were dressed in all black and wearing grey masks. One of them was reportedly holding a rifle that resembled an AK-47, while the other two men were holding smaller pistols. The man with the rifle hit one of the victims in the head and told him to lie on the ground. The suspects then emptied the victims' pockets and stole a Kia Sorento SUV. More than a month later, a tip to 911 led investigators to the location of the stolen SUV in an abandoned garage. Investigators also found an AK-47 with a loaded 30-round magazine, along with spent cartridges.

Pittsburgh police officers reported a sharp increase in carjackings over the summer, with most of the crimes involving juveniles. Victims reported assault and sexual assault occurring along with the carjackings. Investigators think the rise in juvenile crime might be related to the lack of a juvenile detention facility in the vicinity — the county closed the only center in 2021, and juvenile suspects are often released to their parents pending court action. Investigators believe that many of these juveniles continue to steal cars once released by the court.

## **CARJACKINGS & CONVENIENCE**

On June 23, 2020, Middletown Township police in Bucks County responded to a carjacking at Wawa. The victim reported that the defendant pushed her out of the way while she was pumping gas and drove away in her car. While fleeing, the defendant struck another car and fled. On August 21, 2020, police responded to that same Wawa for a report of a stolen vehicle. The victim reported that his car was stolen when he went inside the establishment. Approximately one hour after the theft of the second vehicle, Trenton police responded to a vehicle crash of the stolen car. The defendant was identified as the suspect in both car thefts and was charged with robbery and two counts of theft of an automobile.

On March 2, 2022, the defendant pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 10 to 23 months at a county correctional facility, followed by three years of consecutive probation. The defendant was also ordered to pay \$1,040.00 in restitution to the victim of the first stolen car and \$500 in restitution to the second victim.



## CRIME BEGETS CRIME

Stolen vehicles are often used to commit other crimes. The Delaware County District Attorney's Office and Pennsylvania State Police Eastern Auto Theft Task Force assisted partners from the Office of the Attorney General – Bureau of Narcotics, Homeland Security Investigations, and the Drug Enforcement Administration in arresting three suspects for their alleged involvement in auto theft, drug trafficking, title washing, and more. They were arrested after the recovery of two Jeep Grand Cherokee SRT Trackhawk vehicles. The SUVs were stolen in Illinois and transported to Delaware County to be “revinned” and titled with counterfeit documentation. A task force officer helped identify the suspects' roles within a large-scale drug trafficking organization operating in the greater Philadelphia area.

As a result of the investigation, law enforcement partners seized large quantities of dangerous, illicit drugs with a street value of approximately \$1 million, as well as 29 firearms, three stolen motor vehicles, and \$179,000 in illegal proceeds from the organization.





## **PUFFERS & HANDLE FLIPPERS**

One of the persistent problems in auto theft in Pennsylvania and across the nation is vehicles left puffing or with the keys inside. For instance, Lehigh County District Attorney investigators report that, in December 2021, two vehicles were reported stolen to the Bethlehem Police Department, and one vehicle was reported stolen to the Allentown Police Department. The first victim reported that her 2016 Lexus IS 350 was stolen from the driveway of her residence. She said the key to the stolen vehicle was left inside another unlocked vehicle parked in the driveway.

A second victim reported her 2022 Kia Sportage stolen from her residence. She said that vehicle was left unlocked, with the key inside. It was later recovered at Triangle Park in Bethlehem, unlocked, with the key under the driver's seat. A third victim reported his Honda Pilot stolen from his residence. This victim stated that he had left the vehicle unlocked, with the keys in the ignition, while he entered his residence. That SUV was later recovered in Bethlehem.

The Lexus IS 350 was recovered by Bethlehem Police Department, where three juveniles were seen running from the area. One juvenile was taken into custody and told police that he and another juvenile were flipping door handles to see which ones were unlocked. Two juveniles admitted to being involved in the theft of the stolen vehicles. None of the victims gave anyone permission to operate their vehicles. The key fob belonging to the Honda Pilot was recovered inside of the Lexus.

In February of 2022, the juveniles were charged with theft of unlawful taking, receiving stolen property, unauthorized use of automobiles and other vehicles, and other charges.



# FINANCIAL

## Fiscal year 2021 - 2022

Assessments	8,000,000
Interest earned	3,493
Total revenue	8,003,493
Balance carried over from prior year	8,605,759
Total funds available	<b>16,609,252</b>

### Program expenses

Grants paid	(6,989,492)
Grant reviews	(70,070)
Public awareness	(211,649)
Training	(4,550)
Total	<b>(7,283,961)</b>

### Operating expenses

Personnel expenses	(255,587)
Operating expenses	(126,569)
Total	<b>(382,156)</b>

Net effect of balance sheet changes	(1,414,171)
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Year-end balance: (to be applied to future grants and operational expenditures)	<b>7,414,964</b>
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The ATPA operated at 4.8 percent of the total assessments collected.



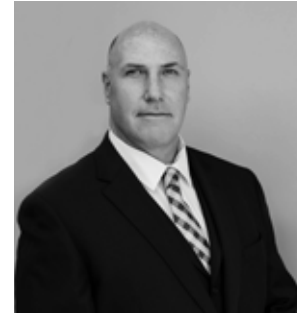
**Ronald W. Kosh**  
Chairperson



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



**Scott P. Sherry**  
Treasurer  
Associate Vice President  
Personal Lines Claims — Auto,  
Nationwide



**Robert G. LaBar**  
Senior Deputy Attorney General,  
Insurance Fraud Section,  
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