



**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
GWINNETT JUDICIAL CIRCUIT**  
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**PATSY AUSTIN-GATSON**  
District Attorney

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FIRST TWENTY-EIGHT MONTHS IN SERVICE AS YOUR DISTRICT ATTORNEY

April 28, 2023

Dear Gwinnett Community:

It is my pleasure to report to you after twenty-eight months in service that we are working diligently and efficiently for you.

I am blessed to have some of the most talented assistant district attorneys, victim witness advocates, investigators, and legal assistants in the State. I have hired over 90 people across all divisions of my office, and we have a phenomenal team that I am very proud of, and they are proud to say that they are working for all in Gwinnett County.

Currently, during my tenure, we have had over 59 murder convictions (31 of those being Murder, 25 being Involuntary/Voluntary Manslaughter and 3 being Vehicular Homicide).

Since the beginning of 2023, we have had 9 murder jury trial convictions and 5 murder pleas. In other serious violent and nonviolent felonies, we have had 20 jury trial convictions, 2 bench trial convictions, and 841 pleas. These felony convictions and pleas range from acts of family violence, personal injury, property, and drug offenses. As April concludes, The District Attorney's Office continues to work efficiently to ensure we prosecute, convict, and bring justice to Gwinnettians.

In the 11 Court Divisions that we service, 3 are running double Court Rooms. Cases as old as 2014 were present since the beginning of my administration in 2021 which has presented many challenges including the ability to find both witnesses and victims. Due to the many COVID and pre-COVID backlog cases, our trial teams are working hard to manage the load and have increased the number of trial weeks. We have worked to secure a 15% pay raise for the assistant district attorneys to retain this talent for the citizens and residents of Gwinnett County which celebrates the hard work my office is doing. This adjustment may also apply to other jobs within the office in ongoing budget years.

We will remain vigilant in protecting our young people from drugs as we are aware of vaping and THC products in our schools. As I am sure you are aware, I was sued by a group regarding the drugs Delta 8 and Delta 10. The matter against me was ordered dismissed by the Supreme Court of Georgia and it is my hope that the law will be revised in order that it can be clearly interpreted and enforced.

BUT here are the sad facts. As of April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, there have been 74 cases of Fentanyl, Opioid, and Xylazine certified and uncertified deaths in Gwinnett County. I am asking our community to remain vigilant when it comes to our young people and drugs of any kind. Our kids should be learning math,

science, and history NOT vaping. This breaks my heart to report these deaths to our community and we are not even halfway through 2023.

To combat this issue, the District Attorney's Office does make it a point to be present within the community to educate and hold those accountable for proliferating this problem and endangering our students.

In addition, we were also the first office in the State of Georgia to begin charging drug dealers with murder who sell drugs laced with fentanyl unbeknownst to the buyer. We have convicted numerous dealers of murder who have done this. There is a drug problem especially within our youth in the form of vaping and illegal substances and our community is suffering. My office is committed to protecting our youth against drugs especially in our schools.

There have been several initiatives that I brought to the District Attorney's Office that never existed before. The first is the RED program. The Rehabilitation Enables Dreams program is an initiative I brought to Gwinnett that reduces the rate of recidivism for our 17-to 28-year-olds. This year long program started in January 2022 and the first cohort graduated this past December with 18 graduates. The second cohort commenced this past January with 22 students. Youth development is a key initiative of my administration, and it is working!

Another initiative is in our Juvenile Courts. We have graduated several cohorts of the RIZER program. This 6-month program provides a second chance for juveniles. After those who have entered it finish, their lives are changed for good. I can't tell you how many parents have come to me after these kids graduate to express their deep gratitude for having programs like this. We also invite high schoolers to spend time with us in our Jr. DA and Investigator Mentorship program during the summer. We have also begun working with home schoolers and introducing them to what we do. I will continue pushing programs and initiatives like these in my office to give more opportunities to educate rather than incarcerate.

During the past 28 months, we also established a cold case unit, a conviction integrity unit, an expansion of the Special Victims and Gang Task Force Unit. Along with these expansions, I added additional investigators and victim witness advocates. Many of the new investigators have come from the Gwinnett County Police Department and are true professionals. We have also made it a priority to train the community in gun safety and college sexual crime awareness.

In conclusion, in the last 28 months, I have transformed the office of District Attorney to be more responsive, efficient, and transparent. Thank you to my staff and everyone who have been involved in ensuring my office continues to serve the citizens of Gwinnett County. We will continue to work hard within our community to assure that the prosecution of crime is zealously and fairly pursued to do our part in a community that thrives!

Thank you,

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