



**Anna Sanders**  
anna.sanders@huffingtonpost.com

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# Gun Violence: Queens Leaders Call For Increased Patrols To Curb Surging Problem

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Anna Sanders

Amid a surge in shootings and murder this year, Queens leaders Friday called for more cops to bring peace to the borough's troubled Southeast.

"Right now the police department is down by about 7,000 police officers," state Assemblywoman Barbara Clark (D) said at a press conference Friday. "The precincts we have are understaffed and we need more police presence in our communities."

Queens District Attorney Richard Brown endorsed the call for more police to patrol Southeast Queens -- an area where shootings have increased 22 percent in the last year, three times the rise seen by the city as a whole. Murders have also risen here, increasing 28 percent even as they fell almost 18 percent citywide.

Last week, a [police officer was shot](#) twice in the leg during a pursuit in Southeast Queens. Three men were killed by an AK-47 in Springfield Gardens a month earlier when someone fired more than 60 rounds in their Jeep. According to Clark and other officials, increasing police presence in these areas could decrease the number of guns on the street and the inevitable shootings that follow. An additional precinct in the area could help too, Clark said.

"The 105th precinct is huge," she said. That precinct stretches roughly nine miles from the Glen Oaks section of Queens in the North to the edge of JFK airport. If there's an emergency at the Five Towns shopping center in the South, Clark said, police have to travel from the precinct in Queens Village -- almost a 20 minute car ride.

"The distance by itself is too much," she said.

Local officials also endorsed an expanded [gun buy back program](#), where police will buy guns from residents with no questions asked. Officials will also increase their campaign to encourage community members to come forward when they witness crimes or see people with guns.

"Without a witness you don't have a case. You have to have somebody to testify," Rep. Gregory Meeks (D-N.Y.) said. "The police can do all the work they want, but if you don't have someone that's going to step up, then you don't have a case."

Facilitating trust in police officers is important for decreased gun violence as well, Meeks said.

But officials acknowledge this can be difficult with the [stop-and-frisk policy](#) as it is now.

"We want to make sure that it's done in a way that is appropriate for the community," Meeks said.