

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, May 3, 2013

STOP THE VIOLENCE; BUILD OUR COMMUNITY

**ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS
ROLANDO BOBADILLA & RUFUS JOHNSON
ENCOURAGE RESIDENTS TO ATTEND A COMMUNITY SAFETY FORUM**

Meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 8th, at the Dr. William H. Horton School in Newark

(Newark, NJ) – Essex County Freeholders Rolando Bobadilla and Rufus Johnson, both of Newark, will convene a Community Safety Forum at 5:00 PM, Wednesday, May 8th, at the Dr. William H. Horton School, 291 North 7th Street in Newark, and strongly encourage members of the community to attend.

The freeholders announced that they will also be joined at the forum by Essex County Sheriff Armando Fontoura, Captain Ivonne Roman of the Newark Police Department, and Anthony Ambrose, Chief of Prosecutor's Detectives in the Essex County Prosecutor's Office, among others, who will participate in the exchange of information and ideas with residents.

Freeholder Bobadilla, who resides in the city's North Ward, said he and Freeholder Johnson were convening the community meeting, "because something *has* to be done to stop the rampant gun violence that is ravaging our neighborhoods." "Together... elected officials, law enforcement and residents... we must do *everything* we can to protect our children." Bobadilla pointed out that within the past 6 weeks alone, there have been 3 shootings in and around the vicinity of 4th Avenue and Roseville Avenue, and that *every* day more than 3,800 children from Pre-K to the 12th grade attend schools within a 5-block radius of that area.

"We are at a crossroads in this country when it comes to gun violence", said Bobadilla. "But my interest is not so much in what I *can't* control in Washington, but rather what I *can* do here at the local level, because the escalation of gun violence is about to overtake this neighborhood if we don't do something about it." He went on to say, however, that the problem cannot be solved by elected officials or law enforcement alone. "The situation requires residents to buy-in, to become stakeholders, in order for us to change the environment in which we live... for our ourselves, for our families, and especially for our children."

Freeholder Johnson applauded his colleague for planning the forum saying, "I'm no stranger to gun violence", referring to the fact that within the last year he was carjacked at gunpoint and also witnessed "two people gunned-down right in front of me." "So whenever I hear of *any* effort to do something about gun violence, I will always be one of the first to step up to help." Johnson added that something must be done to give residents a sense of safety, because as it stands now, whether in the cities or the suburban towns of Essex County, "no one feels safe", adding, "When it comes to gun violence, *none* of us are exempt." He also expressed his heightened concern that a plan be developed to deal with the fast-approaching summer, when so many more young people will have idle time on their hands, especially due to the absence of summer job opportunities.

Freeholder Bobadilla said he was hopeful of enlisting the support and participation of two core groups: young people and their parents. "I am determined to begin monthly meetings *in* the neighborhood so we can have an ongoing dialogue between the community, elected officials and law enforcement." He also indicated that an effort will be made to provide information about job training and job opportunities for the community, "since *unemployment* and *underemployment* are so often at the root of violent crime."

Anyone needing more information about the Community Safety Forum should call Freeholders Bobadilla or Johnson at their offices at the Hall of Records in Newark at 973-621-4486.

Freeholder Bobadilla, who represents Freeholder District 1 that includes Newark's North and East Wards, is currently serving his first term. Freeholder Johnson is currently serving his second term as an at-large member of the Freeholder Board; he was elected to his first term in 2008 and then re-elected in 2011.

**For Additional Information:
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