



## NEW JERSEY SENATE

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### Turner Announces Expansion of Program to Counter Drug Trafficking

Senator Shirley Turner (D – Mercer) has received a letter from the Executive Office of the President's Office of National Drug Control Policy in Washington, D.C. indicating that the New York/New Jersey High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (NY/NJ HIDTA) has been expanded to include Mercer and Middlesex Counties. Senator Turner had previously written to the Office of National Drug Control Policy to request that Mercer and Middlesex be added to the program. Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Passaic, and Union Counties were already included in the NY/NJ HIDTA making them eligible for enhanced and coordinated drug trafficking control efforts. "I am very pleased that Mercer County will now be included and will receive the additional assistance so sorely needed in the fight against illegal drug trafficking, crimes and violence," Senator Turner said.

Senator Turner noted that the need for expansion is evident in the number of crimes being reported for these regions, especially in Trenton where gang members, including the Sex, Money Murder Bloods and Gangster Killer Bloods, have been largely connected to the wave of violent crimes that have occurred.

“Our Capital City has the highest crime index and the highest incidence of violent crime of any major city in the State not previously included in an HIDTA region,” said Senator Turner. Trenton has already had 12 homicides this year, and Senator Turner noted that area street gangs are the greatest threat for transporting and distributing illegal drugs and committing violent crimes. “HIDTA will provide local law enforcement with access to information and intelligence driven enforcement, training, and prevention to better enable them to combat the crimes and violence that has been rampant in the area,” said Senator Turner.

The Office of National Drug Control Policy Reauthorization Act of 2006 allows the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy to designate those areas across the country that qualify as HIDTAs. This designation will help Mercer and Middlesex Counties develop and consolidate drug control efforts already underway.

Senator Turner noted that I-95, which serves Mercer County as a connection to New York and Philadelphia, could act as a major drug trafficking corridor. She also raised concerns that in recent illegal drug investigations, the narcotics were traced to sources outside of the state.

“New Jersey has numerous highways that are used to transport illicit goods to the central area of the state,” said Senator Turner. “Mercer County and its residents would greatly benefit from the increased cooperation, coordination, and communication among federal, state, and local authorities. There is no doubt that this will improve the health, safety, and quality of life of the residents in our state.”

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