



NEWS RELEASE

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Erie County Clerk Candidate Melissa Hartman Unveils Plan to Address Gun Violence

Joined by Legislators Johnson and Chimera, Hartman announces four proposals to promote gun safety through Pistol Permit Division

After the racist mass shooting at the Tops Friendly Market on Jefferson Avenue and with a surge in gun deaths since the beginning of the pandemic, endorsed Democrat for Erie County Clerk Melissa Hartman today unveiled a plan to enhance gun safety in our community. Hartman's plan focuses on four areas: (1) Taking unwanted guns out of circulation, (2) Preventing children from accidentally using weapons, (3) Educating gun owners about safe firearm practices, and (4) Helping gun owners at risk for suicide.

"In New York State, a pistol permit is required to purchase a handgun, and, in Erie County, the Clerk's Office is the agency responsible for completing that function. As a result, the Clerk's Office has a unique relationship with gun owners that can be leveraged to save lives," **said Endorsed Democrat for County Clerk Melissa Hartman.** "I will respect and support an individual's right to buy a gun if they are legally allowed. However, the County Clerk's Office can and should support efforts to ensure firearms are used responsibly and do not fall into the wrong hands."

If elected County Clerk, Melissa Hartman will:

1. **Institute a gun buyback program.** Residents will be able to turn in handguns to any County Clerk's Office, including Auto Bureaus, and receive \$100. Recipients can choose to keep the cash incentive or donate it to local nonprofit organizations. The goal of the gun buyback program is to take unwanted guns out of circulation through a voluntary buyback effort, preventing these weapons from falling into the hands of criminals.
2. **Free gunlocks.** Every resident issued a pistol permit will be offered a free trigger lock. A trigger lock is a lock that fits over a gun's trigger and trigger guard to prevent a gun from being fired. This device prevents children from accidentally pulling the trigger and discharging the weapon.
3. **Firearm Safety Course.** Offer a free monthly firearms safety course for any Erie County resident. In conjunction with law enforcement agencies, the County Clerk's Office will provide a free course about gun safety, gun storage, and current gun laws. This course will prepare residents for the challenges and responsibilities of gun ownership. The County Clerk's Office will contract with a trained professional to administer the class.

4. **Suicide Prevention Resources.** Provide suicide prevention information will be provided to every pistol permit applicant. The U.S. Department of Justice reports that about 60 percent of all adult firearm deaths are by suicide. The County Clerk's Office will work with the County Department of Mental Health to develop and distribute a handbook that includes suicide-prevention hotline numbers and list the telltale signs of depression, such as changes in sleep habits, sudden weight loss, and alcohol abuse.

Legislator Howard Johnson, Chair of the Public Safety Committee, said, "Gun violence is a serious issue throughout Erie County. I am pleased to see that County Clerk candidate Melissa Hartman has brought forward a sensible and actionable plan to address it. We need an 'all-of-the-above' approach to stopping these needless tragedies, and Melissa Hartman has identified ways for the County Clerk's Pistol Permit Division to play an important role. I look forward to working with her after she is elected to implement these proposals."

Legislator Lisa Chimera, Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee, said, "Although the gun debate is one of the most divisive topics in politics, Melissa Hartman has put forward a gun safety plan that nearly all Erie County residents could support. If implemented, Erie County will have fewer guns in our community, fewer guns able to be accidentally discharged, and more gun owners informed about their responsibilities and gun safety. Notably, the plan also addresses suicide, which is the majority of gun deaths. This is the type of leadership that Erie County needs in the Clerk's Office."

"Gun violence is a serious issue in our community. In just the City of Buffalo, 358 individuals were shooting victims in 2021, including fatally. With this steep rise in gun violence over the past two years, our community needs the County Clerk's Office to use its resources to address this severe crisis," **Hartman concluded.** "The Pistol Permit Division brought in \$231,870 in revenue in 2021, and the Clerk's Office generated, in total, a \$6.5 million surplus. If elected County Clerk, I will work with the Legislature and County Executive to use the revenue generated from the pistol permit fees to reduce gun violence in our community and turn the Pistol Permit Division into a gun safety resource."