

**Statement to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
United States House of Representatives**

**Thomas R. Mahoney
Assistant State's Attorney
Cook County State's Attorney
Supervisor, Gang Crimes Prosecutions**

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Every year, thousands of guns make their way into hands of criminals through interstate firearms trafficking. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website for the National Center for Health Statistics, illegal firearms contribute to more than 12,000 gun murders in the United States each year. ATF statistics indicate that virtually all guns recovered in crimes committed nationwide were originally sold by licensed gun dealers (FFLs) within the U.S. These guns entered the illegal market through a number of methods including theft, burglary, and robbery; gun dealers participating in illegal sales, "straw purchasers" buying guns on behalf of criminals; and subsequent sales by unlicensed private sellers who are not required by federal law to conduct background checks of potential buyers. Consequently, states with weaker gun laws are disproportionately the top sources of guns recovered in crimes committed in adjacent states. Further, statistics indicate that these states have a greater proportion of guns recovered in crimes shortly after their initial purchase, a measure considered by the ATF to be a key indicator of illegal trafficking.

According to 2009 firearm trace data from the ATF, ten states accounted for nearly half of the guns that crossed state lines before being recovered in crimes. The ten states are also the source of a greater proportion of guns recovered in crimes committed less than two years after their initial purchase- a measure known as the gun's "time to crime."

According to ATF, the time to crime of less than two years is a strong indicator that the gun was illegally trafficked. In 2009, ATF successfully traced 61 percent of over 238, 000 guns recovered at crime scenes. These guns were traced back to source states.