

Firearms Education: ATF Should Use Performance Metrics and Information to Evaluate and Manage Outreach Campaign

GAO-26-108655

Q&A Report to Congressional Requesters

July 22, 2026

Accessible Version

Why This Matters

According to a 2024 Department of Justice (DOJ) report, one of the most common sources of illegally trafficked firearms are “straw purchases” in which someone who is prohibited from buying a firearm has someone else—a “straw buyer”—make the purchase for them. Legislation has been passed to criminalize these types of purchases. In addition, federal firearms licensees (FFLs)—which include individuals or businesses that have obtained a federal firearm license to sell, manufacture, or import firearms—play an important role in safeguarding the public by maintaining accurate records, initiating background checks, and helping to prevent straw purchasing.

DOJ’s Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) issues and renews FFL licenses, conducts on-site compliance inspections, and investigates potential noncompliance with federal laws and regulations. ATF also works with firearms industry groups, such as the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), to deliver firearms education and outreach campaigns.

We were asked to review ATF’s work with the firearms industry on education and outreach to better understand the effect of these campaigns and any areas for improvement. This report provides information about ATF’s role and federal funding provided for two such firearms education and outreach campaigns—*Don’t Lie for the Other Guy* and *Operation Secure Store*—including whether the efficacy of these campaigns has been evaluated.

Key Takeaways

- Since 2000, ATF and NSSF have managed, facilitated, and launched the *Don’t Lie for the Other Guy* campaign across various cities in the U.S. to, respectively, educate the public about the legal consequences of straw purchases and educate FFLs on how to identify and stop illegal straw purchases.
- ATF seeks to inform the public during *Don’t Lie for the Other Guy* campaigns by conducting press conferences and advertising the campaign’s message across various forms of media. NSSF also advertises the campaign and provides local FFLs with training materials on how to identify a potential straw purchaser.
- Since fiscal year 2023, ATF allocated over \$870,000 each year to support the *Don’t Lie for the Other Guy* campaign, which primarily paid for advertising and distribution of marketing materials.
- ATF collects and tracks various metrics on the *Don’t Lie for the Other Guy* campaign. However, ATF does not use those metrics to fully assess progress towards meeting the campaign’s broader program goals.

- We recommend that ATF (1) develop measurable performance goals to better monitor performance of the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign, and (2) use this information to assess progress towards achieving the campaign's broader program goals and inform programmatic decisions such as resource allocation. ATF concurred with both recommendations.
- According to ATF and NSSF officials, ATF does not manage or provide any federal funding for the *Operation Secure Store* firearms industry education and outreach campaign. These officials stated that NSSF manages and provides sole funding of this campaign, which provides FFLs with educational materials to help identify potential security risks and prevent firearms theft at FFL retail locations.

What roles do ATF and NSSF have in managing the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign?

Since 2000, ATF and NSSF have managed, facilitated, and launched the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign across various cities in the U.S. to, respectively, educate the public about the legal consequences of straw purchases and educate FFLs on how to identify and stop illegal straw purchases.¹ ATF uses crime statistics and data on gun crime, among other factors, to identify and select cities to launch a campaign.²

According to ATF and NSSF officials, ATF makes the decision on which cities ATF and NSSF will launch a *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign. In some selected cities, ATF facilitated and launched a *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign without NSSF involvement. In other select cities, both ATF and NSSF worked together to launch a campaign. In those cases, ATF and NSSF always launched separate but concurrent campaigns in the same city and during the same time frame. According to ATF officials, launching separate but concurrent campaigns helps to ensure that ATF and NSSF do not comingle funds. In addition, according to ATF officials, launching separate but concurrent campaigns allows ATF and NSSF to advertise the anti-straw purchase message to a larger geographic area of the city to help ensure full coverage.

According to ATF and NSSF officials, several factors determine whether NSSF will launch a concurrent campaign with ATF. For example, NSSF may launch a separate but concurrent campaign to help increase the visibility of the campaign if ATF selects a city where there have been many straw purchases. NSSF may also conduct a concurrent campaign if ATF has selected a city in which NSSF already plans to host a trade show where vendors display firearms, ammunition, and related accessories.

How many *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaigns did ATF launch in fiscal years 2023 through 2025?

In fiscal years 2023 through 2025, ATF launched at least 20 *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaigns across the U.S., as shown in table 1.

Table 1: U.S. Cities and Dates Where ATF and NSSF Launched a <i>Don't Lie for the Other Guy</i> Campaign in Fiscal Years 2023 – 2025					
Fiscal Year 2023		Fiscal Year 2024		Fiscal Year 2025	
1.	*St. Louis, MO (Mar.)	1.	*Atlanta, GA (Oct.)	1.	*Houston, TX (May–Sept.)
		2.	*Dallas, TX (Nov.–Jan.)	2.	Mobile, AL (June–Aug.) ^a
		3.	*Las Vegas, NV (Jan.–Apr.)	3.	*Charlotte, NC (June–Sept.)
		4.	*Jackson, MS (May–July)	4.	*Miami, FL (June–Sept.)
		5.	Dayton, OH (June–Aug.) ^a	5.	Nashville, TN (June–Sept.)
		6.	Merrillville, IN (June–Aug.)	6.	New Orleans, LA (June–Sept.)
		7.	Norfolk, VA (June–Aug.)		

8.	*Washington, DC (June–Aug.) ^b
9.	*Tucson, AZ (June–Sept.)
10.	Savannah, GA (July–Aug.)
11.	Dallas, TX (Aug.–Sept.)
12.	Las Vegas, NV (Aug.–Sept.)
13.	Phoenix, AZ (Aug.–Sept.)

Source: The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). | GAO-26-108655

Note: * Indicates cities where ATF and the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) launched separate but concurrent campaigns.

^aATF launched a virtual only (i.e., an ATF campaign that involves online ads only, with no physical marketing ads or in-person ATF personnel) campaign in this city.

^bWhen ATF launched its campaign in the Washington, D.C., metro area, it also marketed campaign ads in cities in Virginia—like Alexandria, Arlington, Ashburn, Centreville, Fairfax, and Woodbridge—which ATF considered the Washington, D.C., metro area for the purposes of the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign.

According to ATF, at the end of fiscal year 2023 and beginning of fiscal year 2024, the agency's Office of Public and Governmental Affairs—which is responsible for managing the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign, among other duties—experienced a high level of staff turnover. Additionally, according to ATF, oversight of the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign was minimal prior to new management being assigned to the office in fiscal year 2024. For these reasons, ATF officials reported that the agency was only able to launch one *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign in fiscal year 2023, which took place in St. Louis, MO. ATF officials also told us that due to budget delays, which affected planning for the fiscal year 2025 campaigns, ATF launched fewer campaigns in fiscal year 2025 than in fiscal year 2024.

While most *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaigns during this time frame involved the physical presence of ATF and NSSF personnel, in other cases ATF launched virtual campaigns. In these instances, the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign involved the use of digital ads channeled to, for example, phones and personal devices as well as other public screens and streaming audio. These campaigns did not include any physical marketing or an in-person media event. For example, the campaign held in Dayton, OH, from June through August 2024 was virtual only.

ATF most recently conducted a campaign in Memphis, TN, in May 2026. According to ATF officials responsible for managing the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign, ATF plans to launch at least five additional campaigns in fiscal year 2026.

What activities do ATF and NSSF conduct during a *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign?

ATF seeks to inform the public during *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaigns by conducting press conferences and advertising the campaign's message across various forms of media. NSSF also advertises the campaign and provides FFLs with training materials to help educate them on how to recognize a potential straw purchaser and ways to alert potential purchasers of the consequences of illegally buying a firearm for another person that is prohibited from doing so.

In some cases, ATF and NSSF conduct joint press conferences that are held at FFL retail locations in the selected city. ATF and NSSF may invite representatives of federal, state, and local law enforcement to participate in addition to local media officials. In other cases, when launching a campaign without NSSF, ATF conducts the press conference at a local field office or the associated U.S. Attorney's Office for that district. See figure 1 for a photo taken

during the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign press conference held at a FFL retail location in Miami, FL, on July 18, 2025.

Figure 1: Photo Taken During a *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* Campaign Press Conference in Miami, FL, on July 18, 2025



Source: National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF). | GAO-26-108655

Note: Included in the photo above, from left to right: Acting Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives Director, Daniel Driscoll; United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, Hayden O'Byrne (former); NSSF President and CEO, Joe Bartozzi; Special Agent in Charge of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, John Vecchio; and Assistant Sheriff of the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office, Eric Garcia.

ATF and NSSF hire marketing firms to advertise the campaign's message across various forms of media. In addition, campaign posters—in some instances, written in English and Spanish—and other materials such as flyers and billboard ads are distributed and displayed across various locations in the selected city. See figure 2 for examples of *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign marketing materials developed and distributed during a campaign.

Figure 2: Examples of *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* Campaign Marketing Materials

Note card

Front

Posters

Back

Source: Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. | GAO-26-108655

When NSSF launches separate *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaigns concurrently with ATF, the organization also buys campaign ads and displays and distributes these materials across various locations, including metro bus transit shelters, roadside billboard displays, and FFL retail locations, among other

places. See figure 3 for a *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign roadside billboard display purchased by NSSF for a campaign in Miami, FL.



Source: National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF). | GAO-26-108655

What federal funding does ATF receive for the *Don't Lie for The Other Guy* campaign, and how does it use these funds?

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act authorized \$1 million for each of fiscal years 2023 through 2027 to support ATF’s existing anti-straw purchasing efforts, such as the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign.³ Since fiscal year 2023, ATF expended over \$870,000 each year to support the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign.⁴ See table 2 for an overview of the funding amounts ATF expended on the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign for fiscal years 2023 through 2025.

Table 2: Funding Amounts Expended by ATF to Support the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* Campaign in Fiscal Years 2023–2025

Expenses	Fiscal Year			
	2023 ^a	2024	2025	Total
Marketing ^b	\$968,535	\$833,857	\$835,000	\$2,637,392
ATF Field Office Salary ^c	\$ N/A	\$14,210	\$22,197	\$36,407
ATF Headquarters Salary and Travel ^d	\$ N/A	\$25,860	\$26,920	\$52,780
Total	\$968,535	\$873,927	\$884,117	\$2,726,579

Source: Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). | GAO-26-108655

^aAll campaign events launched in fiscal year 2023 (i.e., St. Louis, MO) were funded using ATF base appropriated funds and not in response to the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA). According to ATF officials, due to a delay in fiscal year 2023 ATF appropriations, ATF did not obligate and begin liquidating funds related to the BSCA until September 2023. Specifically, although the \$968,535 shown above was obligated in fiscal year 2023, this funding was used in support of campaign events that took place in fiscal year 2024. As such, fiscal year 2024 was the first year Don't Lie for the Other Guy campaign activities were actually launched using funds authorized for ATF's anti-straw purchasing efforts mentioned in the BSCA.

^bExpenses to hire marketing firms to produce, advertise, and distribute campaign marketing materials, and to pay for costs associated with the use of digital ads and streaming audio. Note that, while ATF conducted fewer campaigns in fiscal year 2025 (6 campaigns) than in fiscal year 2024 (13 campaigns), ATF expenditures associated with the marketing contract increased from fiscal year 2024 to fiscal year 2025.

^cATF field office personnel salary costs associated with attending campaign events, according to ATF officials. Note that, according to ATF officials, ATF did not incur travel costs or related per diem expenses associated with ATF field office personnel attending campaign events. Some of these costs may be estimated.

^dAccording to ATF officials, these costs were related to personnel salary, travel costs, and related per diem expenses associated with ATF headquarters personnel attending campaign events. Salary and travel amounts for fiscal years 2024 and 2025 are based on available data and estimates. ATF did not formally track and record some expenses associated with campaign activities before fiscal year 2026, according to ATF officials.

ATF used most of the campaign funding to pay for costs associated with hiring a marketing firm to produce, advertise, and distribute campaign marketing materials, as well as costs associated with the use of digital ads and streaming audio. ATF used the remaining funds for salary and travel costs associated with ATF headquarters personnel attending the respective press conferences.

ATF officials stated that, prior to fiscal year 2023, ATF had not established specific budget codes for this initiative and did not formally track funding associated with the campaigns. These officials explained that since funding was not specifically authorized for anti-straw purchasing campaigns prior to fiscal year 2023, ATF used funds from its base budget appropriations, unrelated to the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, to pay for costs associated with the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaigns.

According to ATF and NSSF officials, NSSF uses its own funds to manage and support any *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaigns launched concurrently with ATF. These officials added that NSSF receives no financial support from ATF for these concurrent campaigns. According to NSSF officials, NSSF spends about \$500,000 each year to support these campaigns. Similar to ATF, NSSF uses most of these funds to pay campaign marketing costs, to include about \$40,000 per year for *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign kits which are distributed to NSSF members, FFLs, and the public. These kits include brochures, handouts, and other items that explain the dangers and legal consequences of straw purchasing.

What program goals has ATF established for the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign?

ATF has established three broad program goals for the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign:

- Increase public awareness of the new straw purchase law in the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act.⁵
- Increase public awareness of the penalties for straw purchases.
- Provide an avenue for the public to engage with ATF and NSSF to provide tips and key information on suspicious or criminal activities.

According to ATF officials, the overall objective of the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign is to stop straw purchases. However, ATF officials acknowledge that it is difficult to isolate and attribute the reduction of straw purchases to an education and outreach campaign. For example, these officials stated that there are many factors that could affect their ability to reduce the number of straw purchases, such as the unemployment rate or population growth rate of a city, that are not reflective of the overall success of the campaigns.

How does ATF monitor and assess progress towards meeting the program goals of the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign?

ATF collects and tracks various metrics for the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign but, as of June 2026, has not used those metrics to fully assess progress towards meeting the campaign's broader program goals, or to better inform programmatic decisions such as resource allocation.⁶

Since at least fiscal year 2024, ATF has documented and reported various campaign metrics, such as the number of tips it received from the public related

to a possible straw purchase violation. ATF also tracks the following *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign metrics:

- **Impressions:** every time a viewer sees an online advertisement or a physical advertisement displayed on a building.
- **Cost Per Mille:** cost to the advertiser per one thousand impressions.
- **Click:** every time a user clicks on an online ad.
- **Click Through Rate:** the number of clicks that an ad receives, divided by the number of times the ad is shown.
- **Cost Per Click:** the cost for each click that an ad receives.
- **Campaign Spend:** dollars spent to deliver campaign advertisements.
- **Website Activity**
 - **Page Views and Visits:** count of how many times a page has been viewed within a given time period.
 - **Page Rank:** rank order of popularity on ATF.gov by number of page views.
- **Toll-Free Number Activity 1-888-ATF-TIPS:** number of calls per fiscal year.
- **Earned Media Coverage:** number of articles (print/digital), and news packages/stories (radio/tv).
- **Social Media Engagements:** number of channels, likes, reposts, comments, shares, and views on Facebook, Instagram, and X.

However, ATF does not use its current metrics to fully assess the extent to which the agency is meeting the broader program goals of the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign or to better inform programmatic decisions such as resource allocation. For example, although ATF tracks the numbers of online advertisement views (i.e., “impressions”) associated with a campaign, it has not determined the number of impressions it hopes to achieve to meet the broader program goals of increasing public awareness of the law and penalties for straw purchases. Similarly, while ATF tracks amounts spent on campaign advertisements, it has not used this information to assess the extent to which the campaign is using the various forms of media in a cost-effective way in its efforts to increase public awareness of straw purchases.

Our prior work on evaluating the effectiveness of media campaigns highlights the importance of determining what metrics and campaign goals agencies should collect and use to assess the effectiveness of a campaign.⁷ Furthermore, we have previously identified key practices that help agencies assess the effectiveness of federal programs.⁸ Specifically, these key practices state that agencies should develop performance goals that are target levels of performance to be accomplished within a time frame and are expressed as tangible, quantifiable, and measurable objectives. For example, ATF could identify a performance goal that sets a target—such as a specific percentage increase in the number of user clicks on its online ads—to enable the agency to better monitor and assess the progress made towards meeting the campaign’s three broader program goals.

According to ATF officials, ATF has not yet developed specific performance goals related to the campaign metrics listed above. These officials stated that formally tracking campaign expenditures and other campaign data points is a relatively new effort and developing and using quantifiable performance goals had not been a priority prior to the enactment of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. ATF officials stated that, since ATF has collected performance data covering at least 2 years of *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaigns, the agency could now use these metrics to evaluate the campaign by developing performance goals.

Developing measurable performance goals associated with its campaign metrics will help ATF better monitor the performance of the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign. Subsequently, by using this performance information to assess progress towards achieving the campaign's broader program goals, ATF will be in a better position to evaluate the campaign to help managers make important management and resource allocation decisions. For example, taking these steps could inform decisions such as which campaign marketing efforts are more cost-effective at increasing public awareness, whether additional funding for this initiative may be warranted, or if ATF should continue the campaign in the future.

What roles do ATF and NSSF have in managing the *Operation Secure Store* campaign?

According to ATF and NSSF officials, ATF does not manage or provide any federal funding for the *Operation Secure Store* firearms industry education and outreach campaign.⁹ These officials stated that NSSF manages and provides sole funding of *Operation Secure Store*, which provides FFLs with educational materials to help identify potential security risks and ways to deter and prevent thefts of firearms stored at FFL retail locations. For example, NSSF provides an *Operation Secure Store* security and risk self-assessment questionnaire to FFLs to help identify possible security vulnerabilities, such as areas around the store that are vulnerable to vandalism or forced entry. According to NSSF, *Operation Secure Store* helps FFLs gain an awareness of potential threats, an understanding of security basics, and access to the techniques and solutions to protect their businesses. NSSF officials told us that, by leveraging these resources, the campaign is intended to enhance public safety by reducing the effect of the criminal misuse of firearms on communities.

During our review, ATF proactively updated the agency's public facing website to correct information that inaccurately described the role of ATF in NSSF's *Operation Secure Store* campaign. Specifically, when we began our review in August 2025, we observed that ATF's public-facing website described *Operation Secure Store* as a "joint partnership" between ATF and NSSF. However, after confirming with ATF that the agency does not manage or provide funding in support of *Operation Secure Store*, officials acknowledged that the information on the ATF website was inaccurate and agreed to make updates to correct it. In February 2026, ATF reported, and we confirmed, that the inaccurate information was removed from the agency's website.

Conclusions

ATF works to reduce violent crime, including helping reduce the number of firearms obtained through straw purchases. ATF uses the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign to educate the public about the legal consequences of straw purchases. Since fiscal year 2023, ATF has launched at least 20 *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaigns in cities across the U.S. and expended approximately \$3 million dollars to manage and facilitate these campaigns. However, ATF has not developed measurable performance goals that will help the agency monitor and assess the progress made towards achieving the broader program goals of this firearms education and outreach campaign. Developing performance goals will help ATF better monitor the performance of the campaign. Using this information to assess progress towards meeting the broader goals of the campaign could further help ATF make informed programmatic decisions, such as which campaign marketing efforts are more cost-effective or if ATF should continue the campaign in the future.

Recommendations for Executive Action

GAO is making two recommendations:

The Director of ATF should develop measurable performance goals to better monitor performance of the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign.

(Recommendation 1)

The Director of ATF should use the performance information obtained to assess progress towards achieving the campaign's broader program goals and inform programmatic decisions such as resource allocation. **(Recommendation 2)**

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to ATF for review and comment. ATF stated in an email that the agency concurred with both recommendations. ATF also provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate. We also sent NSSF sections of our report relevant to its role in the two campaigns. NSSF provided us with technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate.

How GAO Did This Study

Our work focused on two firearms industry education and outreach campaigns—*Don't Lie for the Other Guy* and *Operation Secure Store*—aimed at educating the public of the potential risks of selling firearms and methods to reduce incidents of straw purchases and stolen firearms. For the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign, we focused our review on campaign activities initiated from fiscal years 2023 through 2025. Prior to 2023, ATF did not collect funding or performance data for this campaign. For the *Operation Secure Store* campaign, we focused our review on describing campaign activities conducted in fiscal year 2025 since *Operation Secure Store* is not an ATF managed campaign and does not receive any federal funding.

To determine what role ATF has in managing the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* and *Operation Secure Store* campaigns, and how federal funds are used to support these campaigns, we reviewed statutory and regulatory authorities related to ATF roles and responsibilities. We also reviewed a recent ATF report that examined ATF efforts to prosecute gun trafficking crimes and decrease straw purchases.¹⁰ In addition, we reviewed applicable ATF program documentation related to these campaigns. We collected campaign marketing materials so we could illustrate how ATF educates the public about straw purchases.

In addition, we interviewed ATF, local law enforcement officials, firearms industry representatives, and a federal firearms licensed dealer involved in a recent education and outreach campaign. Since ATF tracks the list of campaign participants, ATF headquarters officials provided us with the list of officials who participated in a recent campaign conducted in 2025 and, using this list, we contacted and interviewed available officials. We used the information collected during our meetings to corroborate information we collected from ATF on how ATF manages and coordinates with stakeholders to facilitate these campaigns.

We also reviewed available ATF campaign documentation—such as the campaign's performance work statement, which provides guidance on how and why ATF initiated the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign. We interviewed ATF headquarters officials to understand how ATF works with NSSF, FFLs, and state and local law enforcement officials to manage the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign. We reviewed campaign funding data to determine the level of funding ATF received and expended on the campaign from fiscal year 2023 through fiscal year 2025. We also used this information to describe how ATF used these funds to support the campaign.

To determine the extent ATF monitors and assesses progress towards achieving the goals of the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign, we reviewed ATF

guidance documents and campaign performance reports. We reviewed these documents to determine if ATF identified broad program goals, quantifiable performance goals, and associated metrics for the campaign. We then interviewed ATF officials responsible for managing the campaign to determine how ATF monitors and assesses progress towards achieving the campaign's broad program goals. We compared ATF's actions to monitor and assess the campaign against key practices for evaluating the effectiveness of media campaigns and selected key practices for evidence-based policymaking, which outline key attributes for assessing the effectiveness of federal programs.¹¹ The selected key practices are (1) defining goals; (2) identifying strategies and resources; and (3) identifying and prioritizing evidence needs.

We conducted this performance audit from July 2025 to July 2026 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

List of Requesters

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate

The Honorable Cory Booker
United States Senate

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Endnotes

¹In some cases, ATF used a new campaign slogan to rebrand its anti-straw purchasing campaign, and called the campaign *A Favor Can Be a Felony* instead of *Don't Lie for the Other Guy*.

²In addition to crime statistics, ATF uses gun trace data and prosecution charges to select cities to launch *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaigns. Tracing is a systematic process of tracking the movement of a firearm from its manufacture or from its introduction into U.S. commerce by the importer through the distribution chain (wholesalers and retailers), to identify the first unlicensed retail purchaser. That information can help to link a suspect to a firearm in a criminal investigation

and identify potential traffickers. Firearms tracing can detect in-state, interstate and international patterns in the sources and types of crime guns. Firearms tracing begins when a law enforcement agency discovers a firearm at a crime scene and seeks to learn the origin or background of that firearm to develop investigative leads.

³Pub. L. No. 117-159, § 12004, 136 Stat. 1313, 1326-32 (2022).

⁴According to ATF officials, the Department of Justice's fiscal year 2023 appropriation was the first year ATF received funding to support its anti-straw purchasing efforts tied to the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA). ATF did not receive its full year fiscal year 2023 appropriation, which included funding tied to the BSCA, until February 2023. In February 2023, after ATF received its initial funding associated with the BSCA, it began to negotiate and award a contract for the *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign marketing contract. That contract was awarded in September 2023 (i.e., the last month of fiscal year 2023). Since ATF did not award the marketing contract and begin liquidating fiscal year 2023 funds in response to the BSCA until September 2023, actual campaign events funded in response to the BSCA did not take place until October 2023 (i.e., the beginning of fiscal year 2024). ATF used its base budget funds to pay for fiscal year 2023 *Don't Lie for the Other Guy* campaign events held in cities throughout the U.S., listed in table 1 above. The Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, Pub. L. No. 117-328, 136 Stat. 4459, states that the agreement expects ATF to comply with directives agreed to within the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, including dedicating funds for the Anti-Straw Purchasing Campaign.

⁵Pub. L. No. 117-159, § 12004, 136 Stat. 1313, 1326-32 (codified, in part, at 18 U.S.C. § 932).

⁶Federal agencies use different terms to describe how they measure agency performance. Depending on the agency, and the circumstances, an agency may use the term "performance metric" or "performance measure" to describe the unit of measurement for assessing and quantifying agency performance. In this case, ATF uses the term "metric".

⁷GAO, *Office of National Drug Control Policy: Experts' Views on Developing and Evaluating Media Campaigns Intended to Prevent Drug Misuse*, [GAO-25-107845](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 30, 2025).

⁸GAO, *Evidence-Based Policymaking: Practices to Help Manage and Assess the Results of Federal Efforts*, [GAO-23-105460](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 12, 2023).

⁹Using the *Operation Secure Store* campaign, NSSF provides FFLs with suggestions and solutions on how to deter and prevent firearms thefts from FFL retail locations. Currently, there are no federal laws or regulations that requires FFLs to implement firearms security storage measures, such as installing locks on firearms stored inside a FFL retail location, or a requirement for FFLs to install security locks on firearms storage containers inside a FFL retail location. ATF officials we spoke with stated that, while ATF does not manage or provide funding for the *Operation Secure Store* campaign, ATF has a vested interest in the success of the program, and any similar program, as it helps safeguard inventory from theft, reduces the risk of stolen firearms being used in violent criminal activity, and ultimately supports public safety.

¹⁰U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, *National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA): Firearms in Commerce, Volume Three*, (April 4, 2024).

¹¹[GAO-25-107845](#) and [GAO-23-105460](#).