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New State Law To Help Reduce Gun Violence Goes Into Effect Today

As 2018 begins, the criminal justice system in Illinois has a new tool to help build on the significant decline in murders and shootings achieved in Chicago in 2017. Effective today, a new state law provides guidelines for judges to sentence repeat gun offenders at the higher end of the existing sentencing range, while expanding diversion programs for first-time nonviolent offenders.

Passage of the law was a Springfield priority for Mayor Emanuel and the Police Department for years. After fighting hard to pass the new law in 2017, Mayor Emanuel and Superintendent Johnson have expressed hope that in 2018 the law will help to create a culture of accountability among gun offenders, preventing them from picking up a gun to resolve a dispute.

"This new law will help further reduce gun violence here in Chicago and improve public safety across Illinois, holding repeat gun offenders accountable for their crimes," said Mayor Emanuel. "The fact that so many individuals and organizations came together to put this new law in place is proof positive that we can all make a difference in the safety of our communities. I want to thank Senator Kwame Raoul and Leader Jim Durkin for their leadership in advancing this important legislation."

"We are happy to have a new tool in the fight to reduce gun violence," said Superintendent Johnson. "As this new law goes into effect, the Police Department is fully committed to partnering with prosecutors to make sure that repeat gun offenders are held fully accountable for the crimes they commit on our streets."

The law creates an innovative sentencing mechanism to focus on gun offenders with the greatest propensity to commit violence and harm Chicago communities – those individuals with a prior felony conviction for unlawful possession, trafficking, or use of an illegal weapon who are caught carrying a firearm again – despite their prohibited status from lawful firearm ownership. Additionally, it creates new sentencing guidelines and greater judicial discretion for nonviolent property and narcotics offenses, ensures a gun violence task force will study innovative strategies and programs to reduce violent crime and expands opportunities for alternative sentencing.

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