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PROJECT SUREFIRE PARTNERS UNVEIL FEDERAL GUN LAW AD CAMPAIGN

CHICAGO – On placards and billboards, the grainy image of a lethal semi-automatic handgun is set against an orange background that, not coincidentally, matches the jumpsuits worn by federal prison inmates. Large block letters deliver compelling messages, some dipped in subtle sarcasm, such as: "A 9mm retails for \$450. On the street it'll cost you 5 to 10 years in federal prison." Equally riveting, a series of television spots drives home the stark isolation of federal prison and serves notice, for example, that a new federal program allows you to trade in your illegal gun for jewelry, before panning to dangling handcuffs and leg irons. The message from both mediums is clear: Buy, sell or use a gun illegally and face the possibility of federal prosecution and serving a lengthy prison sentence, without parole, in some distant state, far removed from family and friends.

"Illegal guns just got more illegal," is the slogan attached to each of the print and broadcast public service announcements that were unveiled today as part of **Project Surefire**, a statewide initiative launched last year to combat escalating firearm violence in Illinois. The media campaign was created *pro bono* by Young & Rubicam Chicago for a partnership of local and federal

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law enforcement agencies to promote **Project Surefire's** warning that breaking any firearm law is a *surefire* way to go to prison. The message is being delivered without spending public funds, thanks to support from civic groups and corporations, announced Scott R. Lassar, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois.

Television stations and cable networks in Chicago are committed to broadcasting the 15- and 30-second commercial spots beginning Oct. 9. Wildpostings of the print ads have already run in about 50 locations throughout Chicago and the ads will begin appearing soon on billboards and placards, including on Chicago Transit Authority buses and trains. Cook County Crime Stoppers Plus, Inc., has established a non-profit charitable fund for corporate donations to sustain market saturation, and the City of Chicago is committed to supporting the campaign.

Joining Mr. Lassar in unveiling the ads were the other major partners in the **Project Surefire** enforcement coalition: Kathleen Kiernan and Larry Ford, both of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; Chicago Police Supt. Terry Hillard; Cook County State's Attorney Richard A. Devine; and George McDade, chairman of Cook County Crime Stoppers Plus. They commended Young & Rubicam Chicago for the hard work and energy that the agency donated to the project. "It was a privilege to work on this project," said Howard Breen, President and CEO of Y&R Chicago.

"This is one of the most exciting and gratifying projects that I've worked on," Mr. Lassar said. "This ad campaign complements our increased gun prosecutions by getting the word out on the street that we are coming after criminals who illegally buy, sell or carry guns."

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The creative team at Y&R approached the *Project Surefire* assignment in the same manner that it would have undertaken a client's ad campaign for a commercial product. Market research yielded insight that was helpful in creating compelling messages that speak in street language and convey the foreboding sense of federal prison.

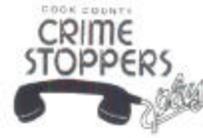
"Our team relished the fact that the advertising they created is going toward the common good," said Y&R's Mr. Breen. "These aren't the usual ads talking to moms about what to serve for dinner; these target criminals in an attempt to reduce gun violence. We found that this audience is intimidated by serving time in a federal prison, far away from their family and community."

The television spots were shot at Ely Maximum Security Prison in Ely, Nev. Backyard Productions, of Chicago and Santa Monica, Calif., which produced and directed the television spots; Lookinglass Company, of Chicago, which did the film editing; and Rhythm Café, of Chicago, which did the music and sound, all donated their time and services.

"This campaign warns criminals, including gang members and drug dealers, of the perils of violating federal firearms laws," Mr. Lassar said. "We are working with the Cook County State's Attorney and all of the other states' attorneys in our district to identify particular defendants charged with gun crimes who are most deserving of federal prosecution." Under a new system, an assistant U.S. attorney and an ATF agent meet every two weeks with an assistant Cook County state's attorney to review cases that are suitable for federal prosecution, Mr. Lassar and Mr. Devine said.

Overall, federal prosecution of firearms offenses is increasing in Chicago. In 1998, at least

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59 defendants were prosecuted for weapons violations, and the number increased to at least 129 in 1999. So far this year at least 82 defendants have been charged with various firearms offenses.

Ms. Kiernan, Deputy Assistant Director of BATF, described **Project Surefire's** four components:

- Comprehensive tracing of seized guns and bullets;
- Increased prosecution of illegal sellers and users of guns as a result of better coordination between federal and state investigators and prosecutors;
- Publicizing the prospect of federal prosecution through a public service advertising campaign; and
- Working with community-based organizations, public schools, the medical community and the clergy to reduce gun violence.

"Gun violence is a complex problem that requires a comprehensive solution," said Ms. Kiernan. "The problem should be addressed not only by reducing the supply of illegal guns, but by reducing the demand through aggressive enforcement and prevention strategies," she added. Mr. Ford, Special-Agent-in-Charge of BATF in Chicago, said "the partnerships that exist in Chicago and across the state are the core of an integrated violence reduction strategy, which seeks a long-term solution to gun violence."

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