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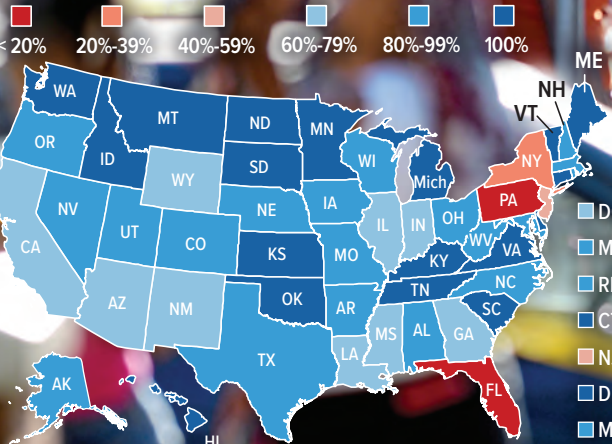
POST-GAZETTE SPECIAL REPORT

## ‘AN EMBARRASSMENT’

### PA. TRAILS THE COUNTRY ON REPORTING CRIME TO FBI

In 18 states, every law enforcement agency has successfully transitioned to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). Pennsylvania, on the other hand, had just 11% of agencies make the switch as of last year.

#### Percent transitioned to NIBRS



Research: Michael Korsh/Post-Gazette; Graphic illustration: James Hilston and Ed Yozwick/Post-Gazette

### Despite promises to improve crime reporting, Pittsburgh still fails to turn over its numbers

By Michael Korsh and Laura Esposito  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

**O**n a Tuesday evening in February last year, police found 15-year-old Tre’Sean Jackson with a gunshot wound in his chest in Pittsburgh’s Allentown neighborhood. He was rushed to a hospital but died later that night.

The same week, Rasul Abdullah Aquil Jr., 23, was shot in a vehicle on the North Side and

#### INSIDE

Map details how many Pa. law enforcement agencies have adopted the national crime reporting system. **Page A-5**

died, and 47-year-old Girard Porter, of McKeesport, was shot to death in Northview Heights.

The fatal attacks were the seventh, eighth and ninth of 2023, and by year’s end, there were 49.

Police should have reported

all three crimes to an FBI database called the National Incident-Based Reporting System, or NIBRS, a program that includes thousands of participating law enforcement agencies and allows the federal agency to monitor and target spikes in violence.

But for the third consecutive year, Pittsburgh did not turn over its annual numbers to the system, including homicides and assaults, making it nearly

SEE **FBI**, PAGE A-5



**It’s an embarrassment. The people, our communities, if they want to know an accurate picture [of crime in Pennsylvania], they aren’t going to get it — it’s not there.”**

**Beth Pittinger**  
director of Pittsburgh’s Citizen Police Review Board

## ‘HE’S A CLASSIC OVERACHIEVER’

Strong family life, patience, perseverance allow Duquesne’s coach to finally earn his shot

By Jason Mackey  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

On the third floor of Duquesne’s sparkling new UPMC Cooper Fieldhouse, the office of men’s basketball coach Dru Joyce III remains a space in transition.

A few books and basketballs occupy the shelves adjacent to his desk. There’s a signed piece of the floor from Mr. Joyce’s high school, St. Vincent-St. Mary, plus two championship rings sitting next to an Akron Hall of Fame plaque. To the left of Duquesne-themed Christmas lights encased in glass

#### COMMENTARY

is an empty picture frame hanging by the door.

Mr. Joyce apologizes for the spartan appearance, saying he needs to prioritize decorating, but no explanation was necessary. Hired in late March to succeed his mentor, Keith Dambrot, Mr. Joyce has been busy with recruiting and laying the groundwork for how he wants the program to look.

It’s also not smart to doubt him

SEE **MACKEY**, PAGE A-8



Sebastian Foltz/Post-Gazette

Duquesne basketball coach Dru Joyce III at UPMC Cooper Fieldhouse. Mr. Joyce succeeds Keith Dambrot, who led the Dukes to an NCAA tournament berth this year.

## BIDEN FACES INCREASING PRESSURE ON ENERGY POLICY

Critics say his decision to pause LNG exports threatens Pa. jobs

By Benjamin Kail  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden faces mounting pressure over energy policy in Pennsylvania, a critical battleground where he’s aiming to again secure support from both environmentalists and union workers who helped send him to the White House in 2020.

While his administration’s temporary pause on new approvals of liquefied natural gas exports pleased many progressives and environmental groups, Mr. Biden is facing criticism from public officials of both parties in the state, even those who support the president’s push toward renewable energy.

Seen as a political ploy by Republicans and many industry analysts, the temporary pause to study the price and climate impacts of the glut of LNG exports has made Pennsylvania — second only to Texas in natural gas production in recent years — Ground Zero in an ongoing fight over the future of America’s energy transition.

Gov. Josh Shapiro’s remarks to CBS’ “Face

SEE **BIDEN**, PAGE A-6

## Pa. law requires vets to pick: Gun or marijuana use

Veterans’ right to arms collides with access to medical pot

By Laura Esposito and Hanna Webster  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

James Irely had to choose between chronic pain or losing his constitutional rights.

While serving in the Army as an indirect fire infantryman, the 46-year-old Bloomsburg, Columbia County, resident suffered a host of injuries including broken bones, torn ligaments and damage to his neck while on deployment in Kosovo.

Mr. Irely was honorably discharged after nine years in the Army, leaving the service with numerous honors and awards — and pain so severe that he was deemed 100% disabled by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. Irely knew the risks of serving his country. But after he sought treatment for his pain and doctors referred him to Pennsylvania’s Medical Marijuana Program, something happened he didn’t expect. He could obtain

SEE **PTSD**, PAGE A-7

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# PITTSBURGH FAILS TO TURN OVER CRIME NUMBERS

FBI, FROM A-1

impossible for police experts and the public to get an accurate a true picture of crime in the nation from the FBI.

The Pittsburgh Bureau of Police is among hundreds of agencies across Pennsylvania that have been missing from the federal program, giving the state the rare distinction of having the lowest rate for participation in the country, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette has found.

“It’s an embarrassment,” said Beth Pittinger, director of Pittsburgh’s Citizen Police Review Board. “The people, our communities, if they want to know an accurate picture [of crime in Pennsylvania], they aren’t going to get it — it’s not there.”

A data analysis by the Post-Gazette shows that just 11% of the state’s law enforcement agencies sent their data to the new system last year, leaving Philadelphia police as the only large municipal agency to share those figures with the FBI.

The lack of participation in the state — one of the nation’s most populous — not only creates gaps in detecting national trends but also raises concerns about police transparency, an issue that continues to drive debates across the country.

Like the vast majority of agencies in the state, Pittsburgh used to take part in what’s known as the Uniform Crime Reporting system — a program created in the 1920s that gives the country a glimpse of crime nationwide. Pittsburgh routinely reported its fatal shootings, larcenies, robberies and other offenses to that system.

When the FBI launched the new system in 2021, federal dollars were offered to pay for the move, but it took the city nearly three years to incorporate the software late last year — and even then, the results won’t be part of national crime statistics until next year.

So far, 18 states are fully onboard — with every law enforcement agency in those states moving to the new system — while neighboring states like Ohio and West Virginia have had more than 90% of their departments in the program.

Another 21 states have more than three-quarters of their police agencies fully engaged.

In an email to the Post-Gazette, the FBI said that some of the reasons for the delays are funding, personnel and the need for technology upgrades, and that the federal agency will continue to work with local and state agencies until they can make the transition to NIBRS.

Experts say the value of what the new system brings to the nation’s crime map is unmistakable: demographic details about victims as well as chronicling 52 different types of offenses, ranging from hate crimes and do-

mestic violence, to white-collar and juvenile offenses.

The unveiling of the program comes in the wake of one of the most violent periods in U.S. history — including a 42% rise in homicides in Pittsburgh during the pandemic — when data became increasingly important in tracking crime and mobilizing resources to the areas that were most impacted, experts say.

“Truly, if you don’t know what the data shows, you can’t have an honest conversation about how to increase public safety in the country as a whole,” said Ames Grawert, senior counsel at the Brennan Center for Justice, a nonprofit law and public policy institute at the New York University School of Law.

Last month, Gov. Josh Shapiro announced \$10 million in tax dollars to support system upgrades, with Pennsylvania planning to offer 50 grants with budgets up to \$200,000 each.

At the time, Lt. Gov. Austin Davis said in a statement that gaps in the data have hindered officials’ ability to roll out new initiatives to combat street crime, such as funding for a statewide office of gun violence prevention and firearm injury prevention.

“Those strategies all rely on data — but unfortunately, we don’t have access to real-time analysis of data for many communities, because a low percentage of our law enforcement agencies have adopted [the program],” said Mr. Davis, who heads the state’s Commission on Crime and Delinquency.

One of the reasons the FBI felt a need to overhaul the system was because it only accounted for a limited number of major crimes and less serious offenses, such as vandalism and disorderly conduct.

When the FBI announced the transition in 2015, it gave police agencies across the country six years to install the system — even providing millions to help fund the improvements.

Caitlin Coffin, who handles crime data for the Westtown-East Goshen Regional Police Department in West Chester, Pa., said it received more than \$800,000 last year from the state, allowing the department to upgrade to the new system in August.

The department used some of the money to hire NIBRS specialists for the next two years to help with the transition and to pay for the technology upgrade.

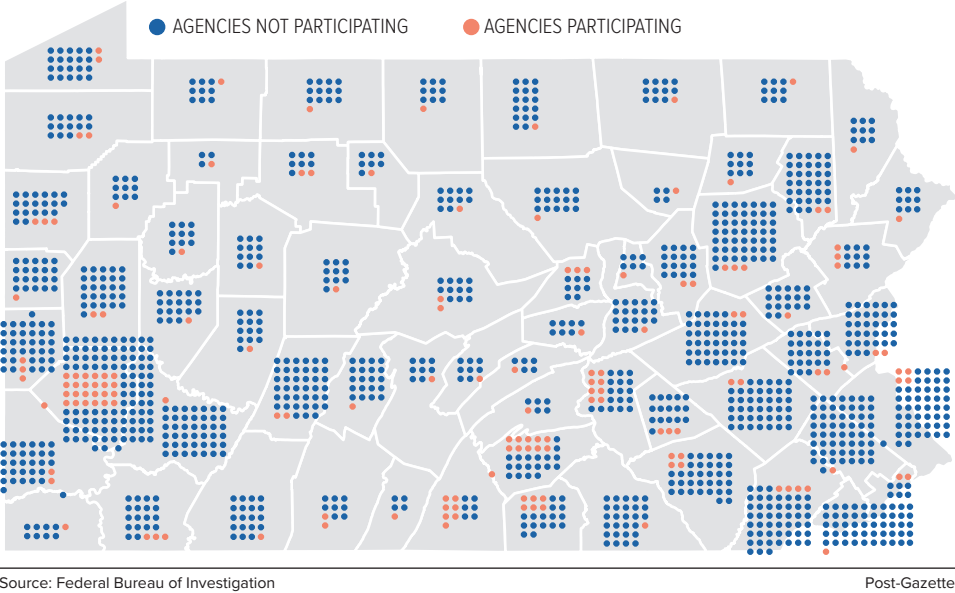
“It was a change, but a good change,” Ms. Coffin said. “NIBRS seems much more accurate with the data being submitted.”

In 2021, more than two-thirds of departments nationally made the switch to NIBRS, but only 2% of agencies in Pennsylvania had done so.

The lack of data over the

## Pa. law enforcement slow to adopt national crime reporting system

Pennsylvania was one of the lowest states in terms of agency participation in the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), with only 158 agencies of 1,469 (10.8%) submitting data as of Dec. 31, 2023. Here’s a county-by-county breakdown:



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation

Post-Gazette

past few years has left the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics and the FBI scrambling to get the clearest picture of the direction of crime.

To do so, the FBI took the rare step of combining data from agencies under the old reporting system with crime figures from the new reporting.

“It’s a stopgap,” said Mr. Grawert of the Brennan Center. “It’s not going to get them all the way forever. But they intended for it to be just good enough until we have more complete agency adoption.”

In the first two years after

the system’s rollout, Pittsburgh police continued to submit its crime data in the Uniform Crime Report.

That meant high-profile events like the standoff in Garfield between police and a 63-year-old gunman who fired repeated shots at officers last year before he was killed would not be included in the new system.

“The city of Pittsburgh has always been late in reporting its crime numbers, even with the [old] UCR system,” Ms. Pittinger said. “You could go in and look for something that happened eight months ago and it

won’t be there.”

Even when Pittsburgh police moved to the new system in November, it wasn’t an easy transition.

Just a month earlier, the city police department launched its own public dashboard so residents could see local crime data and to provide “as close to a real-time data feed as possible,” according to a police statement.

The portal showed information about major crimes broken down by police zone, neighborhood, type of crime and date.

Police Chief Larry Sci-

rotto touted the dashboard during its rollout, saying it would help inform residents about safety in their neighborhoods and the city overall.

“I am committed to driving accountability through transparency, and the Police Data Portal is another building block toward that goal,” Mr. Sciroto said at the time.

But the platform was short-lived: When the bureau began to transition to NIBRS, all the data in the public portal was lost — with no ability to find crime even from a week earlier.

Ms. Cruz did not provide estimates of when — or if — Pittsburgh’s full crime data will become publicly available.

Terry Fromson of the Women’s Law Project, a nonprofit in Pennsylvania, said the public is entitled to know about key trends in crime, as it allows for both the public and police to assess the performance of law enforcement.

“Crime data is sort of letting people know what’s in their neighborhoods so they understand their safety,” said Ms. Fromson. “[The] researchers out there — I don’t know how they’re handling the data when they have so many gaps, and even the FBI says we don’t have enough.”

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## Ga. congressman praises heckling of war protesters

By Emily Wagster Pettus  
Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. — Israel-Hamas war demonstrations at the University of Mississippi turned ugly last week when one counter-protester appeared to make monkey noises and gestures at a Black student in a raucous gathering that was endorsed by a far-right congressman from Georgia.

“Ole Miss taking care of business,” Republican U.S. Rep. Mike Collins wrote Friday on the social platform X with a link to the video showing the racist jeers.

The Associated Press left voicemail messages for Mr. Collins on Friday at his offices in Georgia and Washington and sent an email to his spokesperson, asking for an explanation of what Mr. Collins meant. There was no immediate response.

The taunting brought sharp criticism on and off campus.

“Students were calling for an end to genocide. They

were met with racism,” James M. Thomas, a sociology professor at the University of Mississippi, wrote Friday on X.

The Rev. Cornell William Brooks, a former president and CEO of the NAACP and professor at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, wrote on X that a white man mocking a Black woman as a monkey ‘isn’t about ‘Stand With Israel’ or ‘Free Palestine.’ This is protest as performative racism.”

Mr. Collins was first elected to Congress in 2022 and made several social media posts criticizing campus protests.

Nobody was arrested during the demonstration Thursday at the University of Mississippi, where hecklers vastly outnumbered war protesters.

According to a count by AP, more than 2,400 arrests have occurred on 46 U.S. university or college campuses since April 17 during demonstrations against the war.

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