

March 22, 2022

ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL MEETS WITH LAWMAKERS, LAW ENFORCEMENT AND RETAILERS TO DISCUSS ORGANIZED RETAIL CRIME

Raoul's Organized Retail Crime Task Force Works with Federal, State And Local Law Enforcement to Investigate Organized Retail Crimes Statewide

Collinsville — Attorney General Kwame Raoul convened a meeting with representatives of Metro East law enforcement agencies, the retail industry and lawmakers to discuss collaborations to strengthen investigations and prosecutions of individuals and enterprises involved in organized retail crime.

Attorney General Raoul visited Collinsville, Illinois, where the Attorney General's office partnered with Rep. Jay Hoffman to host a discussion between the Attorney General's chief of investigations and prosecutors from the office; lawmakers; Madison County State's Attorney Tom Haine; St. Clair County State's Attorney James Gomric; representatives of the retail industry; and representatives of the Madison County Sheriff's Office, the St. Clair County Sheriff's Department, the Collinsville Police Department, the Swansea Police Department, the Caseyville Police Department, the Southern Illinois University – Edwardsville Police Department, the Pontoon Beach Police Department, the Edwardsville Police Department, the O'Fallon Police Department, and the Wood River Police Department. The meeting is part of his Organized Retail Crime Task Force's work to enhance cooperation among retailers, online marketplaces, law enforcement agencies and state's attorneys.

"The effects of organized retail crime are not limited to any one region of our state, particularly when the sales of stolen merchandise often fund additional criminal activity – such as the drug trade and human trafficking," Raoul said. "I would like to thank Rep. Jay Hoffman for helping us convene this discussion with their colleagues in the General Assembly, law enforcement and retail. Organized retail crime is a complex issue that will require a multifaceted solution, such as providing law enforcement with tools that will improve investigations and increase successful prosecutions."

The Attorney General's Organized Retail Crime Task Force is comprised of career investigators and prosecutors from the Attorney General's Criminal Enforcement Division working in concert with the U.S. Secret Service, the Department of Homeland Security, the Illinois State Police, the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police, the Illinois Association of State's Attorneys, and local law enforcement agencies throughout Illinois. The purpose of the Collinsville meeting was to identify opportunities for the Attorney General's office and the task force to partner with Metro East law enforcement agencies in order to address organized retail crime in the region. In addition, prosecutors from the Attorney General's office provided updates related to the task force's ongoing work to identify and dismantle criminal enterprises behind organized retail crime. The meeting was not open to the public.

Organized retail crime and retail fraud can be mistaken for isolated incidents committed by low-level offenders; however, organized crime rings are often behind these incidents. Crime rings connected to the drug trade, human trafficking and other forms of crime target big box stores, pharmacies, hardware stores, auto dealerships and other retailers to carry out sophisticated theft operations and operate across county and state borders. Rings coordinate the theft of large amounts of merchandise – using boosters and mules including people who are homeless, indigent or addicted to drugs – that are resold below market value using online marketplaces. The danger of organized crime goes beyond lost revenue. In discussions with the Attorney General's office, retailers have raised concerns related to the safety of employees who confront

thieves or customers who are bystanders to these crimes. Consumer safety is also at risk when expired merchandise, such as baby formula or medicine, is resold online.

The Attorney General's Organized Retail Crime Task Force is the first statewide, public-private collaboration of its kind in Illinois and is designed to foster cooperation among retailers, online marketplaces, law enforcement agencies and state's attorneys dedicated to targeting organized retail crime enterprises. The task force allows Raoul's office to utilize data and tips provided by retailers and partner across jurisdictions with law enforcement agencies, similar to the investigation into today's retail theft case, to investigate organized retail crimes and trace thefts to the source. For example, the Organized Retail Crime Task Force, with support from Chicago law enforcement [recovered more than \\$1 million worth of stolen goods](#) from several Chicago-area storage units during December 2021. Raoul's goal in establishing the task force is to continue to improve communication among public and private entities and utilize a multifaceted approach to combatting organized retail theft and related criminal activity.

December 3, 2021

ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL'S ORGANIZED RETAIL CRIME TASK FORCE RECOVERS TENS OF THOUSANDS OF STOLEN GOODS

Investigators Conduct Search of Storage Units and Locate Goods Worth Millions of Dollars

Chicago — Attorney General Kwame Raoul today announced that his Organized Retail Crime Task Force recovered thousands of stolen goods at several storage units in the Chicago area. This is the first major bust as a result of the work of the Organized Retail Crime Task Force that is spearheaded by the Attorney General's office.

"The stolen merchandise recovered by the Organized Retail Crime Task Force includes tens of thousands of products worth millions of dollars, and I appreciate the cooperation of our partners in law enforcement and retail as we continue to investigate this massive theft," Raoul said. "Organized retail theft is about more than lost revenue and stolen products. Frequently, the criminal enterprises behind these crimes are connected to other crimes, such as the drug trade and human trafficking. I am committed to identifying the perpetrators behind this and other organized retail crimes in Illinois."

Investigators with Raoul's Organized Retail Crime Task Force, with support from Chicago law enforcement including the Chicago Police Department, executed search warrants at eight storage units in two locations. The units contained four semitrailers of merchandise, including apparel, beauty products, furniture, food items and electronics from multiple nationwide retailers. While a complete inventory is ongoing, the stolen goods are estimated to be worth millions of dollars.

The Organized Retail Crime Task Force's investigation will continue over the coming weeks.

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