



OFFICE OF THE SAINT LOUIS COUNTY ATTORNEY

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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Status of the Investigation Involving Steven Albert Cooper

Steven Albert Cooper and the citizens of St. Louis County deserve a fair, objective, and factual review of a recent matter in which Mr. Cooper was in illegal possession of a firearm. Under the law, Mr. Cooper is prohibited from possessing a firearm as a result of his prior convictions for crimes of violence. In 2006, Mr. Cooper shot two convenience store clerks while committing robbery. In 2010, Mr. Cooper pleaded guilty and was convicted of two counts of Attempted First Degree Murder. In July 2022, Mr. Cooper was charged under the law and available evidence for his illegal possession of a firearm. He posted bail and was released from jail on July 20, 2022.

The circumstances surrounding Mr. Cooper's possession of the firearm are under active investigation by the Duluth Police Department (DPD). The results of the investigation have taken longer than we all would have liked, due to the heavy load of cases at the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. Once this investigation is completed, DPD will bring its findings to the St. Louis County Attorney's Office. We hope to receive this information by the end of April.

This afternoon, the Duluth Branch NAACP called on County Attorney Kim Maki to drop the charges against Mr. Cooper. Members of the County Attorney's Office have already spoken with representatives of the Duluth Branch NAACP on this matter. While we appreciate and respect their perspective, we will not shortcut our responsibility to the public to ensure a thorough investigation of this matter.

The County Attorney's Office works to achieve public safety and healthy communities by providing fair and thoughtful prosecution of crime and vigorous protection of vulnerable individuals. We make charging decisions based upon the evidence and the law, without fear or favor. We are committed to providing innovative solutions and offering social services to assist people in stabilizing their lives and preventing recidivism.

We stand by the decision to charge Mr. Cooper for violating the law based on the evidence we had at the time. The statute at issue in this case is a strict liability statute, meaning that the possessor's intent isn't an element of the crime. Rather, if a prohibited person is in possession of a firearm or ammunition, whether they intend to or not, they have violated the statute.

Because the case is still developing, privacy laws, our ethical obligations, and office policy prohibiting comment on open investigations prevent us from making public statements about the details of the case. At this time, though, we can communicate our belief that it would be improper and premature to take action regarding the outcome of this case. We remain open to whatever options are warranted when the investigation is completed.

We will not, however, make legal decisions based upon community pressure or false and unfounded allegations of racism in charging decisions.

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