New Mexico Chamber of Commerce Leading Effort with AG Balderas, Mayor Keller, Retailers and Law Enforcement Partners to Combat Organized Retail Crime

ALBUQUERQUE — Today, the NM Chamber of Commerce (NMCC), New Mexico Attorney General Hector Balderas, ABQ Mayor Tim Keller, Bernalillo County District Attorney Raul Torrez, and APD Chief Harold Medina announce New Mexico’s participation in the national Auror.co program, an online interface used by retailers and law enforcement to track crime activity and gather data in real time. New Mexico will become the 20th state with an Organized Retail Crime Association (ORCA). The New Mexico Retail Crime Association (NMORCA) is a public private partnership between businesses and law enforcement created to prevent and prosecute retail crimes.

“Partnering with innovation is the best approach to combat organized retail criminals, and this powerful effort will help law enforcement quickly apprehend egregious criminals that would otherwise continue to put New Mexico families and employees in danger,” said Attorney General Balderas.

“Working across jurisdiction to conduct proactive crime fighting produces results. One year into this joint operation, over 100 criminals threatening our residents and businesses have been apprehended and tens of thousands of dollars in stolen merchandise returned,” said Mayor Keller. “We must be a city united against crime, and with the new support from the Chamber of Commerce today, we are strengthening the coordination between retailers, APD, and the Attorney General.”

“We are pleased to partner with the Attorney General, District Attorneys, law enforcement and retail businesses around the state to help prevent crime through the creation of NMORCA,” said Rob Black, President and CEO of the NMCC. "NMORCA will provide access to the Auror retail crime intelligence platform, making real time reporting of actionable intel and connecting the dots on repeat offenders much easier for both our retail and law enforcement partners."

Organized Retail Crime (ORC) has had a significant financial impact on New Mexico. According to a study prepared for the Retail Industry Leaders Association and the Buy Safe America Coalition, the 2021 impact of ORC in the state included $819 million in organized retail crime and product theft and $56.6 million in retail theft, resulting in as many as 5,118 fewer jobs and $18 million in lost state and local taxes.
“Organized retail crime presents a serious problem for our community by causing overwhelming losses for businesses, driving higher prices for consumers, and putting both employees and customers in harm’s way with the increasingly brazen professional thieves we are seeing,” said Bernalillo County District Attorney Raúl Torrez. “This public private partnership with the Bernalillo County District Attorney’s Office is combining resources, technology, and information sharing to tackle this important issue.”

ORC is a growing challenge faced by New Mexico retailers and their employees. Unlike simple shoplifting (when an individual steals an item for personal use), organized retail criminals are professional thieves who steal large quantities of merchandise or large ticket items – like small appliances, electronics, designer items, tools – from retailers and sell them domestically or even ship them to sell overseas. While the loss of merchandise and tax revenue for the state must be addressed, the primary issue with ORC is the threat of violence and trauma that is impacting frontline retail workers throughout our state.

“The success of this task force goes to show what can be accomplished through strong partnerships,” said Chief Harold Medina. “Our targeted operations have led to solid arrests and offenders being held accountable for their actions as they have preyed upon our local retailers.”

The billion-dollar industry of ORC harms both businesses and consumers in a number of ways:

- Customers and employees are in physical danger from armed thieves;
- The loss of merchandise leads to increased costs (insurance, security, labor) that the business must recoup through increased prices;
- When stolen merchandise is sold illicitly, the state loses Gross Receipts Tax on items that would otherwise be purchased through retailers;
- Stolen items not stored or labeled properly; items like infant formula and pharmaceuticals may harm people who end up consuming them; and
- ORC syndicates are often involved in other criminal activities, such as drug and human trafficking.

“Organized retail crime is a growing problem for retailers, and The Home Depot is fighting it on all fronts. We’re proud to partner with the New Mexico Chamber of Commerce to make sure our stores provide a safe shopping experience for everyone.” – Mike Combs, Director of Loss Prevention.

The NMCC is a non-partisan, state-wide organization representing every type of industry from every region of New Mexico. NMCC’s mission is to use the leadership and vision of the New Mexico business community to drive positive change by developing
and advocating for effective public policy initiatives, with the end goal of making our state a leader in industry, innovation, economic competitiveness and overall quality of life.

Retail businesses or law enforcement who want to participate and register with NMORCA can visit https://www.nmchamber.org/nmorca/.

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