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CONCEALED WEAPONS LICENSE APPLICATIONS BACK ON TRACK

BISMARCK, ND – Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem announced today that Concealed Weapon Licenses are back on track after the backlog caused by the record-breaking 14,729 applications received in 2013, compared to 6,254 received in 2011.

The number of applications submitted to the Bureau of Criminal Investigations (BCI) last year was unprecedented – up to 350 a day at the height of the submissions – and eventually overwhelmed the staff, even with the new employees authorized by the Legislature.

In response, Stenehjem temporarily reassigned administrative staff and agents from other sections at the BCI to help process the applications, and authorized employee overtime. BCI also enlisted help from RSVP+ volunteers, who stuffed envelopes and filed completed paperwork so that BCI staff could process applications without interruption. RSVP+ matches qualified volunteers to community and government needs.

“Over the last four months, BCI has dedicated hundreds of hours of employee overtime and additional staff hours, and the average turnaround time for an application is now down to approximately 35 days, well under the statutory limit,” said Stenehjem. During two weeks in February, the BCI logged more than 245 hours in extra staff and overtime hours, and completed over 1,100 federal criminal history record checks.

The BCI has 60 days to issue a license. However, before a license can be issued or renewed, the application goes through a complex series of screenings, including fingerprint based state and federal criminal record checks. North Dakota is a “shall issue” state, requiring BCI to issue a concealed weapon license unless an applicant is ineligible under a particular section of state or federal law. If any offense is found on an applicant’s criminal history, the BCI may have to obtain a copy of the court’s file or police reports before it can determine if the offense affects the applicant’s eligibility for a concealed weapon license, particularly if the offense occurred in another state.

“The screening process is thorough and takes time, sometimes longer than we would like, but it also ensures that an eligible applicant is not unnecessarily denied their license,” said Dallas Carlson, director of the Bureau of Criminal Investigation. “We appreciated the patience of applicants as they waited for their applications to be processed.”

As of February 28, 2014, there were 30,997 active resident and non-resident concealed weapon licenses. The application form is available from the Attorney General’s Concealed Weapon License webpage at www.ag.nd.gov.

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