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Bucks County Sheriff Fred Harran, center, has bragged his office has reduced unserved bench warrants under his leadership. But the numbers suggest its less than the 40% he claims. MICHELE C. HADDON/BUCKS COUNTY COURIER TIMES

Sheriff boasts he's cut bench warrant backlog

‘While his office may have reduced its number with a technicality, those criminals are still out on the street’

Jo Ciavaglia

Bucks County Courier Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

In campaign ads and social media posts, Bucks County Sheriff Fred Harran has included reducing the backlog of outstanding bench warrants as one of his major achievements since taking office in 2022.

But it appears that Harran, a Republican running for reelection, may calculated transferred warrants, not cleared by his department, in the campaign claim. Those warrants were moved from the sheriff's office in a court-ordered change made last year.

Common Pleas Court judges order bench warrants for an individual's arrest typically for infractions like failing to appear at a scheduled court date, not completing a court-ordered program or violating parole or probation terms.

Judges in the Domestic Relations Court can also issue bench warrants for failure to pay child support or violating a protection from abuse or child custody

order.

The exact number of unserved bench warrants in a given calendar year is not readily accessible information. Bench warrants are issued, and rescinded on a daily basis.

The Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, which oversees the state's judiciary, can track the number of unserved criminal bench warrants the Common Pleas Court issued, but that data was not immediately available.

The Bucks County Domestic Court system is responsible for tracking unserved warrants involving its cases; the court did not respond to emails requesting that data.

The Bucks County Sheriff deputies are responsible for serving bench warrants and bringing those defendants before a judge who then reviews the case and can decide to rescind a warrant.

Since 2022, Harran has hired 10 additional sheriff deputies boosting their ranks to 64, the maximum budgeted, according to county provided data. It was

not immediately known how many deputies are assigned to serve bench warrants.

Harran, who is running against Democratic attorney and military veteran Danny Ceisler, has not responded to multiple emails asking about how he calculated the 40% reduction in outstanding bench warrants. His campaign also did not respond to an email.

The numbers Harran has talked about inheriting have also changed since the start of the year.

At a January county commissioner's meeting, Harran announced that his office decreased the number of unserved warrants from 7,800 in 2022 to 6,626 as of January, roughly a 15% drop.

Harran told this news organization in a May 1 email that he inherited 7,800 outstanding bench warrants and as of Dec. 2024 the number was down to 4,651, which is a 40% reduction. He did not provide records confirming the numbers, which he said were provided by his office.

In June, Harran said the number of outstanding warrants was below

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2025 ELECTION
BUCKS COUNTY DA

Dems using Jamison child abuse allegations in campaign

Jess Rohan

Bucks County Courier Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Jamison Elementary child abuse allegations have become a political flashpoint in the Bucks County district attorney's race.

Supporters of Bucks County district attorney candidate Joe Khan, a Democrat, are running an ad criticizing incumbent District Attorney Jen Schorn, a Republican, for declining to prosecute Central Bucks school staff in the alleged abuse of nonverbal children with autism.

No criminal charges have been filed against any Central Bucks employees related to those allegations, and none are expected following local and state investigations.

Officers with the Warwick Township Police Department, which led the criminal investigation at Jamison Elementary, have previously said that the district attorney's office was involved throughout the investigation.

But since April, Khan has called on Schorn to do more, including empanelling a grand jury.

“DA Schorn is the only Bucks County official who could have convened a grand jury to figure out what really happened, who should be held accountable, and what steps need to be taken to ensure that kids in our schools will be safe in the future,” Khan said Oct. 15.

Staff with both the Pennsylvania Department of Education and non-profit Disability Rights Pennsylvania — which has federal access authority to investigate public agencies on behalf of people with disabilities — investigated the Jamison claims and made findings. Both reports concluded that students were improperly restrained, and that those restraints weren't properly reported as required by state law.

The DRP report concluded that administrators misled police about the allegations after district officials received them in November 2024, providing incomplete and erroneous information, and failed to appropriately discipline the classroom teacher and educational assistant.

DRP also found that multiple

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