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Gay bars were harassed by N.J. investigators for decades. The state is now offering an apology.

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Law enforcement leaders apologized Tuesday for New Jersey's history of surveilling and punishing bars that served gay residents and formally revoked penalties issued decades ago against more than 100 businesses.

From the end of Prohibition to the late 1960's, the state at least temporarily stripped liquor licenses from places accused of hosting "female impersonators" or causing a "nuisance," which sometimes just meant undercover investigators found other male patrons to be "effeminate," officials said.

"Our Department has never reckoned with this ugly moment in its history," state Attorney General Gurbir Grewal wrote in a new directive issued at the end of Pride Month. "We recognize that our office, charged with furthering justice, set back the cause of freedom and equality in New Jersey."

Grewal also pledged new anti-bias and cultural diversity training for staff at the Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control, which is part of the attorney general's office.

The division stopped citing gay bars in 1967 after the state Supreme Court ruled those punishments were illegal.

Grewal's directive throws out all suspensions issued in the decades prior, the total number of which is unknown. But officials were able to find records detailing more than 120 actions against businesses in three dozen towns.

More than a dozen bars were targeted in Paterson and Atlantic City and nearly two dozen in Newark, officials said. Ten businesses ultimately had their licenses revoked.

Officials also published online records detailing how state investigators surveilled residents and harassed owners.

"I apologize to licensees and the LGBTQ+ community for the pain and harm caused by ... homophobic and transphobic conduct and rhetoric," James Graziano, the current head of the alcoholic beverage control division, said in a statement.

These new actions amounted to "historic acts of restorative justice," Christian Fuscarino, executive director of Garden State Equality, said in a statement.

Grewal, Graziano, Fuscarino and other local leaders are scheduled to gather in Asbury Park Tuesday evening to install a memorial at the former site of Paddock Bar, which was sanctioned at least three times from 1957 through 1960.

All five attorneys general who oversaw enforcement from that era — Walter Van Riper, Theodore Parsons, Grover Richman, Jr., David Furman and Arthur Sills — are dead.

Grewal also ordered the division to keep reviewing records to see if other communities were targeted in a “discriminatory manner.” Staff are supposed to report back by Oct. 15.