

HOW THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA BUDGET AFFECTS  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
PUBLIC SAFETY  
BY  
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Our economic problems and California's budget crisis has impacted every level of government: state, county, and city. Painful cuts have been and will continue to be made in all areas. Inevitably up and down the state, counties and local governments are looking at another year of reduced budgets and additional cuts. I write this to share with you what impacts these cuts will have on public safety and on our communities.

Legislators wrote and passed Senate Bill 18 (SBX3 18) which took effect on January 25, 2010. This measure was written as a way for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to decrease its budget by cutting the amount of time sentenced inmates serve in prison by increasing sentencing credits for jail and prison inmates. It also removes certain prisoners who would normally be released on a "supervised parole", meaning the parolee would have a parole agent and a detailed program of re-entry and places them on unsupervised parole better known as "summary parole".

While a firm number of parolees in Los Angeles County eligible for the unsupervised parole, is not yet known, CDCR is reviewing over 7,000 Los Angeles County parolees. When the release occurs, the offender will be unsupervised, released without a plan or program for proper and safe re-entry into our communities and with no accountability. Fortunately, for the residents of Los Angeles County, we are working together with the Board of Supervisors, various county public health and human services departments, and other local law enforcement agencies in attempting to reach out to these parolees and letting them know of the services that are out there to help them and give them the support they need. This is by no means an adequate replacement for supervised parole but it's better than providing no help at all.

Unfortunately, in the state's 2010-11 budget and a Federal Court Panel's mandate, there are plans for even more serious cuts to the CDCR budget that will have an immediate negative impact on the public safety of our communities. Under the budget proposal, at least 11 current crimes in which a person could be convicted of a felony and sent to state prison, including such crimes, as grand theft, receiving stolen property, possession of methamphetamine, and auto theft, would be changed to an "administrative felony" in which the person would still be convicted of a felony, but he or she would be sentenced to 366 days and placed in the county jail. Thus, the proposal shifts the responsibility of these inmates from the state onto the local county jail system.

While this will certainly create a savings for the state, it is irresponsible to shift the costs to counties. Additionally, this will have a serious negative impact on public safety. The Los Angeles County Jail system is already a severely overcrowded system that has population controls placed on it by a federal court. If the Governor's proposal were in fact to become law, as of today, this would mean the Los Angeles County Jail would have to house approximately 1,900 additional inmates that would currently be sentenced to state prison. Since we are already at capacity, this would force me to comply with the federal court order and reduce the amount of

time one spends in jail to a fraction of what they were sentenced to. Again, the state's proposal clearly shifts the state problem onto counties and local communities.

Over the last decade, I and other local law enforcement leaders have worked closely with the Governor and legislature to deal with various public safety issues and I fully expect to continue that stance this year. However, I am increasingly concerned about proposals related to parole, county jails and increased local responsibility at a time when we are struggling to fund and manage our current responsibilities and inmate populations. We urge careful scrutiny of these proposals and that the Governor and legislature weigh fiscal benefit against public safety impact before making further changes this year.