

No matter how you slice it, Californians will be less safe if the current budget that's being considered in Sacramento is adopted. The proposed budget includes some unprecedented provisions that will place our communities distinctly at risk.

First, the budget proposes reductions in the Department of Corrections budget that will involve the wholesale accelerated release of at least 20,000 felons into our communities. Please understand that in California, felons reoffend 70% of the time over a three year period. In addition, most law enforcement studies have shown that by the time someone is arrested, they have committed approximately 13 crimes. Finally, in other states where felons have been released early, 20% of the crimes they committed were violent ones.

Putting this all together for California, this means that 14,000 felons are likely to commit over 180,000 new crimes over a three year period – 36,000 of which will be violent crimes. As a police chief, I can tell you that this is unacceptable; surely Sacramento policy makers can do better than this.

Second, the proposed budget actually undercuts the very concept of "public" safety. It does this by requiring that local police departments pay a fee each time they use the state crime lab for forensic services. They have to pay this fee even though your taxes are already paying for the state crime labs. This effectively means that public safety is no longer public. While affluent communities may be able to have the state crime lab process rape kits for essential DNA information, poorer communities will be unable to do so. This state budget – for the first time in the state's history – will mandate inferior investigative services for crime victims who live in poorer communities. This is not only terrible public safety policy, it is shameful and offensive.

Finally, the proposed budget completely destroys the 51 multi-jurisdictional methamphetamine task forces that have been our front-line defense against major methamphetamine producers. Meth operations have become increasingly sophisticated and violent and these task forces have been essential to local law enforcement. Moreover, the Mexican Drug Cartels are poised to move their operations into California. The destruction of these task forces amounts to unilateral disarmament of essential law enforcement resources.

Right now, these three proposals are all poised to be adopted. Our city will be less safe if they are.