



California Police Chiefs Association

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January 6, 2009

Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor of the State of California

Honorable Darrell Steinberg
President Pro Tempore of the California Senate

Honorable Dave Cogdill
Senate Republican Leader

Honorable Karen Bass
Speaker of the California Assembly

Honorable Mike Villines
Assembly Republican Leader

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger and Honorable Legislative Leaders:

The California Police Chiefs Association is the primary provider of front-line public safety services in California. Over 78% of Californians are protected by a city police officer; this means that the proposed changes in parole policies will have a disproportionately negative impact on our ability to provide public safety for our communities. Not only does the proposed budget contemplate a virtual hollowing out of local public safety resources, but the dangers inherent in the proposed parole policies embodied in the current budget proposals are exceptionally severe.

Specifically, the proposed parole policies provide that anyone convicted of a so-called non-serious, non-violent, non-sexual offense will be directly discharged upon release from state prison, without any parole accountability. In other words, they will be released from any further oversight and law enforcement will have no way of knowing the location of these criminals, no way of monitoring their activities, and no way of conducting parole searches, or drug testing. In turn, these individuals who have worked their way into the prison system by repeatedly victimizing innocent people will be granted total anonymity and not have the regulations in place that will dissuade them from being involved in criminal behavior. This is a major step backward from decades of professional police practices that have effectively protected communities.

We recognize that the state is facing significant fiscal challenges. However, parole reform of this magnitude for cost saving purposes will simply transfer a significant burden to local communities. At the local level many cities are facing increases in crime, especially "property type crimes" such as residential and vehicle burglary, auto theft, etc. In fact, these are the same

type of crimes that these so called “non-violent, non-serious” criminals are being sent to prison for. The complete elimination of parole status on these individuals will magnify these crime increases in our communities and subject our citizens to increased risk. In addition, the category

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of “non-violent, non-serious” is a comfortably misleading one. For example, Clyde Bates and Manuel Chavez were “non-violent, non-serious” offenders when they committed what is the worst mass murder in the history of the City of Los Angeles. Persons who commit domestic violence (a category from which many murderers are drawn) are categorized as “non-violent, non-serious.”

Finally, the proposal also raises the threshold fiscal levels of certain crimes before they can be classified as felonies. Perhaps some of these adjustments are proper due to inflation; but we question the “one size fits all approach.” For example, identity theft and elder abuse financial crimes are both emerging areas of criminality. We believe that raising those felony threshold levels is counterproductive public policy.

We welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with you in developing a parole strategy that will allow local law enforcement to assist with holding these individuals accountable, respond to the state’s fiscal imperatives, and without compromising our ability to protect our communities. This letter is an expression of our willingness to work closely with each of you to achieve that result.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jerry Dyer". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and "D".

Jerry Dyer

President California Police Chiefs Association

Cc: All members of the California Legislature