

**California District Attorneys Association
California Narcotic Officers Association
California Peace Officers' Association
California Police Chiefs Association
California State Sheriffs' Association
Chief Probation Officers of California**

January 24, 2008

The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor of the State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Law Enforcement Concerns re: 2008-09 Governor's Proposed Budget

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

On behalf of the above-mentioned law enforcement organizations, we write to convey our concerns about the destructive public safety dimensions of the proposed 2008-2009 budget as released on January 10, 2008. Although we are mindful of the fiscal throes in which the state finds itself, we simply do not believe that wholesale cuts to state and local public safety resources are a responsible part of any final budget solution.

We have established a history of working with you through difficult issues that have resulted in mutually agreeable solutions. We are committed to continuing that track record of success with you and your staff as it relates to our serious concerns regarding your public safety related items in the January 10th budget. But we would be less than candid with you if we didn't make it clear that these across-the-board cuts to basic law enforcement services cause us incalculable concern.

As you know, law enforcement is plagued by crisis levels of methamphetamine use and distribution, violent criminal street gang activity, and mental health, substance abuse, and jail overcrowding issues that complicate all of these crime trends. Not only is the nature of crime going through fundamental change, but law enforcement is currently experiencing cuts at our own jurisdictional levels and from the Federal Government in the form of Byrne Grant reductions and severe under-funding from the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP). We respectfully suggest that, measured against those realities, across-the-board cuts for law enforcement are unwise and ill-timed.

As if these problems were not bad enough, the proposed early release of more than 22,000 convicted felons from state prison exacerbates the danger to public safety that is sure to result from the above-mentioned cuts. We realize that the premature release that is contemplated is that of so-called "low-level" or "non-violent" felons, but we would

submit that these labels are misleading in that, in most every case, they will not accurately describe the type of person that will be released. Additionally, the risk would be magnified by a potential inmate release ordered by the federal three-judge panel, should one occur.

The fact is, the people who will be released from state prison are not going to be mistaken for Nobel laureates, and are capable of violent conduct. For example, Charles Manson was a so-called “low-level” or “non-violent” felon before he embarked on his rampage. The worst mass murder in Los Angeles’ history was committed by so-called “low-level” or “non-violent” felons, CHP Officer Scott Russell was recently murdered by a so-called “low-level” or “non-violent” felon, and the list could go on and on.

The reality is, the wholesale release of these felons will result in an increase in violent crime and it will negatively impact our ability to stem the tide of the current crime trends mentioned above. We expect that increase to be aggravated by the wholesale cuts that this budget delivers to front-line law enforcement.

We must respectfully, but firmly and unambiguously, take issue with this type of approach. We stand ready to work with you to better protect public safety in the final version of the budget.

Sincerely,

John Poyner
President
California District Attorneys Association



Rudy Tai
President
California Narcotic Officers Association



Sam Spiegel
President
California Peace Officers’ Association



Richard L. Word
President
California Police Chiefs Association



Laurie Smith
President
California State Sheriffs' Association



Jerry Powers
President
Chief Probation Officers of California

CC: Honorable Don Perata, President Pro Tempore of the Senate
Honorable Fabian Nunez, Speaker of the Assembly
Honorable Dick Ackerman, Senate Republican Leader
Honorable Mike Villines, Assembly Republican Leader
Honorable Denise Ducheny, Senate Budget Committee Chair
Honorable Dennis Hollingsworth, Senate Budget Committee Vice-Chair
Honorable John Laird, Assembly Budget Committee Chair
Honorable Roger Niello, Assembly Budget Committee Vice-Chair
Susan Kennedy, Governor's Chief of Staff
Tom Sawyer, Governor's Public Safety Liaison