



March 10, 2013

Prison Realignment Must Be Reformed!

"The safety of the people shall be the highest law." This is a quote from Roman philosopher Marcus Cicero. I have been thinking about those words and how they relate to California public safety in 2013. ***Crime has gone up since the implementation of State Realignment in October of 2011. (AB109)*** The failed policy of moving prisoners from the state prison system to county jails has negatively impacted communities throughout the state. Our local police chiefs and county officials are very concerned about the rise in crime. ***Criminals feel emboldened to commit crimes because there is no deterrent effect for their criminal acts.*** Lately, we've seen the impact of crime on the nightly news. Of tragic note; the recent Christmas day shooting and murder in Pasadena and the Northridge multiple murders committed by realigned parolees who were released early. ***Similar violent crimes are happening up and down the state, many committed by criminals that should have never been out on custody in the first place.*** Custodial law enforcement is overwhelmed. They are unable to supervise the release of parolees and keep prisoners in overcrowded jails. ***The latest trend is that some parolees are cutting off their GPS monitors because no one seems to be monitoring them anyway. It was reported over 2,200 at the beginning of March.***

Since October of 2011, over 43,000 prisoners were handed over to local jails as a ***cost-saving measure*** and to meet Federal guidelines for prison populations. It is expected the number will reach 52,000 by 2014. These prisoners include ***"decertified"*** mentally disordered offenders and ***"reclassified"*** violent offenders. Many are deemed "non-serious" and "non-violent" based solely on their last offense, ***their histories of violent criminal convictions are not considered and excluded.*** The classifications were changed to require less state supervision. ***I found out the state prison budget of \$9.6 billion has increased by \$200 million. Some cost savings...***

AB109 is a mandate imposed on local jurisdictions. The state has basically said "You deal with it." Our safety is being infringed upon by the misguided policies, influence of special interests (labor unions) and wasteful spending in state government. One example is the ***diversion of \$2.1 billion in sales tax revenue from education in the 2011-2012 budget to fund the implementation of AB109.*** Another is the annual \$56,000 cost for each prisoner in California. Other states pay an average of \$26,000 per prisoner. Prison labor contracts are at the root of the high cost. Governor Brown has described the \$2 billion, ***"gold-plated"*** medical care provided to prisoners by taxpayers as needing reform. Federal decrees on prisons and caps on state prisoner population adds to the cost of prisons. Governor Brown is advocating to remove them. California taxpayers are paying \$48 million a year just for a federal monitor.

There is much that could be done to restore public safety. It starts with assuring justice is served. Convicted felons must serve their sentences. The victims and their families deserve no less. Considerations should be made to contract prisoner incarceration to out-of-state or private prison systems to assure justice is served and to save cost. ***We need to restore oversight of parolees and return them to prison if they recommit crimes.*** It is a state responsibility.

I wish we did not need prisons, but we should build more and take a smarter approach. Save current state facilities the most hardened and violent. Consider new prisons for the truly non-

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violent prisoners that actually provide opportunity for rehabilitation such as substance addiction treatment and treatment for the mental illness. Perhaps we should enhance incentives for first-time or non-violent prisoners to improve their education, jobs skills and have a true exit plan for each qualifying prisoner that includes opportunities for job placement. It is in our best interest for prisoners not to recidivate.

We cannot just accept a failure like this. We must protect our families, ourselves and our neighborhoods. We should be outraged. ***We must respectfully and constructively share our outrage with our elected State Senators and State Assembly Members. We must tell them to reform or repeal AB109.*** We must let them know we cannot sacrifice the safety of our communities for the sake of political and fiscal expediency. That's what I will do...

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