



From the desk of Joe Gardner
3129 S. Hacienda Blvd. PMB 430
Hacienda Heights, CA 91745-6304
(626) 407-7571
joegardner73@gmail.com

Public Safety...

"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. Crime takes a toll on the economy. It creates the perception of the loss of safety. Criminals feel emboldened to commit crimes because there is no deterrent effect for their criminal acts. Our local police chiefs and county officials are very concerned about the impact of AB109. They are overwhelmed and unable to supervise the release of parolees and keep prisoners in overcrowded jails. It is an unfunded mandate imposed on local jurisdictions. The state has basically said "You deal with it."

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 excluded. The classifications were changed to require less state supervision. I did some research and found out the state prison budget of \$9.6 billion has increased by \$200 million. Some cost savings...

Lately, we've seen the impact of crime on the nightly news. Of tragic note; the recent Christmas murder in Pasadena and the Northridge multiple murders committed by realigned parolees who were released early. Criminals that should have never been out on the streets in the first place.

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 sales tax revenue from education 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 been vocal about reforming the \$2 billion, "gold-plated" medical care taxpayers provide for prisoners. I support Governor Brown's effort to remove the Federal decrees on prisons and caps on state prisoner population. California taxpayers are paying \$48 million a year just for a federal monitor.

There is much more that could be done. Considerations should be made to contract prisoner incarceration to out-of-state or private resources to assure justice is served and save cost. We need to restore oversight of parolees and return them to prison if they recommit crimes. Here's another idea; how about building more prisons! We need to protect our families, ourselves and our neighborhoods. There must be justice. Each convicted felon must serve their sentence. The victims and their families deserve no less. We cannot sacrifice our public safety at the expense of political and fiscal expediency.