

FLORIDA POLICE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION
PRESENTATION ON FACTORS AFFECTING COSTS OF LAW
ENFORCEMENT TO THE FLORIDA TAXATION AND BUDGET COMMISSION
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From 2005 to 2006, Florida's population increased by almost 500,000 residents. Such notable increases over the last six years totaling over 2.1 million new residents have placed a significant strain on Florida's law enforcement agencies. Increased numbers of people results in more commercial and residential development, more traffic, more traffic enforcement, more accidents, more calls for service and more crimes.

While law enforcement agencies throughout the State struggle to recruit and retain officers, they also struggle to meet the increased demands brought about by community growth. Planning for such growth is not necessarily problematic for police chiefs throughout the state; however, planning for such growth without the revenue to provide needed resources creates new challenges which may not be readily solved.

Agencies will not be able to fall back on federal grants as those revenue streams have severely diminished. They will not be able to count on their local and regional partners as everyone will be facing the same fiscal dilemmas. These dilemmas have the potential of affecting all facets of police activity including patrol and investigative operations, officer training and disaster response. That reality is closer than many believe and there are several other Chiefs here today that will speak to those issues.

While much of what we do as law enforcement officers is service related, our primary mission is to prevent crime, to solve crime when it has been committed and bring those committing crime to justice. In that regard, although the statewide crime rate (crimes per thousand residents) shows only modest increases, those perceived modest increases take on a different significance when you look at the actual numbers of crimes rather than the numbers of crime committed per 100,000 residents which are affected downwardly by population increases.

The fact of the matter is that there were 1129 people murdered last year, 248 more than in the previous year; there were 34,123 robberies committed 4,031 more than last year and while the number of aggravated assaults increased only slightly in the 82,000 range, there were 15,905 such assaults that were committed with a firearm and that is 877 more than the previous year. What this tells us is that violent crime against individuals is on the rise and has been for the last two years.

Some may say that having more police officers will not prevent these crimes but regardless of your philosophical outlook in that regard, I think it is fair to say that having less police officers on our streets has the potential of exacerbating this disturbing trend. Without sufficient resources to provide crime suppression patrol and the investigation, arrest and prosecution of these violent criminals, many of whom are repeat offenders, we will be well on the way to returning to the staggering numbers of crime experienced during the mid 1990's in Florida.

The manner in which we prepare and keep our officers current in their training and proficiency is another area being affected by lost revenues. Florida's forty-one training schools receive an allocation of Criminal Justice Standards and Training Trust Fund dollars to deliver approved Criminal Justice officer training programs. Said revenues provided for this training over the years have not kept up with the numbers of new officers being added to the ranks sharing the revenues available.

In FY 2006/2007, \$6,065,760 was dispersed to the training schools to provide training for 75,822 officers, for an allocation of \$80 per officer. The current proposed cut of \$630,000 which must now provide for 77,268 officers would result in a reduced allocation to approximately \$68-\$69 per officer. With many departments cutting training dollars from their budgets, the amount of officers receiving in-service and advance specialty training in the year to come will be reduced significantly.

There are many other factors that influence the costs of providing police services. Most municipal police budgets reflect anywhere from 75 to 85 percent for personnel costs. When considering all the factors that relate to those expenditures such as health care, pensions and salaries, one can see the challenges we as police administrators and our city's political leaders face. It is also our obligation to properly equip the men and women we task with providing a safe and peaceful environment for our citizens. That is a significant challenge as well that will worsen as we attempt to maintain positions at the cost of depleting our operating funds.

As I mentioned earlier, there are several colleagues here that will offer different perspectives based on the challenges they face in various and diverse communities throughout Florida. I hope the material provided so far has been helpful and informative. I thank you for your time, attention and consideration of these most important issues.