
Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date: October 4, 2012

Contact: Tracy Young, Chief Media Advisor
(310) 567-0417 / young@scag.ca.gov



Law Enforcement Officials Discuss Public Safety Realignment with Southern California City and County Elected Leaders

Los Angeles, CA – One year after public safety realignment went into effect on October 1, 2011, law enforcement and public safety officials from the six Southern California counties met with the 84-member governing board of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Council to discuss the impact of the transfer of low-level state prisoners to the counties' jail and probation system.

Public safety officials such as Sheriffs, Police Department officials, Probation Officers along with representatives from county District Attorney's offices from Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura counties all spoke about how AB 109 is impacting their counties and departments.

Los Angeles City Council Member Dennis Zine, who represents the 3rd District, began by stating "The purpose of today's discussion is for a region-wide body of elected officials to learn if the experiences in their community is unique or common across city and county boundaries. And, where issues are arising as a result of this shift, what are the best practices that can be implemented to ensure the public's safety."

Simi Valley City Council Member Glen Becerra, President of the SCAG Regional Council also added, "As an elected official in the City of Simi Valley for over a decade, and as a husband and father, one of my top priorities is public safety. Today is an opportunity to hear directly from public safety and law enforcement officials from across the Southland the impact on our communities' county jail system and county probation departments."

A few of the challenges that were expressed included the high level of inmates with drug and substance abuse that are in need of treatment programs; ensuring a dependable source of funds to serve a new population; jails reaching and exceeding maximum capacity; a jail system that was not designed for long term incarceration in comparison to state facilities; and how best to address issues like jobs and housing that reconnects individuals and offers a future.

A number of representatives expressed how their departments are succeeding in the return of individuals back to their community's jurisdiction. Local officials are more closely connected to their neighborhoods than a state official and therefore, have more institutional knowledge

regarding problem areas and issues. In addition, they now have the ability to track what is, and is not, working in specific areas and can create solutions tailored to local needs.

A majority of attendees agreed that the local officials have the experience and knowledge, but are concerned about the long-term source of funds as was expressed by Cathedral City Council Member Greg Pettis, First Vice-President of SCAG, "Due to the recession, city and county budgets have been constrained for the past couple of years and are projected to be under pressure over the next couple of years. As an elected official, my colleagues and I are responsible for balancing public safety and the financial well-being of our cities. I will relay the important information learned at today's discussion from the leading safety officers of the Southern California region back to my council for discussion."

Hasan Ikhata, Executive Director of SCAG, concluded the meeting by saying, "Today was a unique opportunity for the Southern California Association of Governments governing board of city and county elected officials from six counties to hear from the professionals who are responsible for the safety of 18 million people. SCAG was asked to set aside time during our Regional Council meeting and we were pleased to provide the forum for today's discussion."

The discussion regarding AB 109 and the full agenda was streamed live on the SCAG website, and will be available for on-demand viewing next week at www.scag.ca.gov.

###

About SCAG

SCAG is the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 191 cities and more than 18 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to plan for a livable and sustainable Southern California now and in the future. For more information about SCAG's regional efforts, please visit www.scag.ca.gov.