

Rise in Crime Rate Unique to California with Prop 47

Press Release from the California Police Chiefs Association

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Recent crime data compiled by the California Police Chiefs Association (CPCA) shows a dramatic crime increase in California during 2015, but not in other states. The significant increase follows a year after Proposition 47 resulted in statewide criminal justice reform that weakened sentences without requiring alternative rehabilitation for offenders.

“These numbers are more than statistics, they represent victims who have suffered theft, robbery, assault, or any number of crimes,” said Ventura Police Chief Ken Corney, President of CPCA. “Clearly, something unique is happening in California and it’s important we study this trend to understand exactly what is going on before more people get hurt.”

Through a ballot initiative, Proposition 47 reduced numerous felonies to misdemeanors, including grand theft of property under \$950, and various drug use. The goal of the initiative was to fund additional substance abuse and mental health services with the savings from lowering incarcerations. However, the savings have not materialized as predicted, there are no requirements for offenders to attend services, and statewide access to substance abuse and mental health programs is not yet available.

“To reduce sentences without having alternative services in place, and without requiring offenders to participate in rehabilitative programs, leaves law enforcement with very limited options in dealing with crime,” continued Chief Corney. “As a result, what we have seen is repeat offenders committing multiple crimes because they know they aren’t going to be held accountable.”

“Over the last year retail theft incidents have nearly doubled compared to recent years. Prop 47 is riddled with many unintended consequences and created an emboldened criminal class,” said Bill Dombrowski, President & CEO of the California Retailers Association. “We have also seen an increase in physical confrontations while trying to stop these incidents, which is causing us concern.”

Far beyond normal fluctuations, crime data reported by 311 municipal police departments from across the state shows a startling rise in crime throughout California last year. Elk Grove Police Chief Robert Lehner collected data from California’s Police Departments and compared it to the data released so far by the FBI. Those results, in the attached report, show property crime (theft, burglary, motor vehicle theft, etc.), increased 15.25% in cities with populations over 100,000, compared to a decrease of 6% across the nation. Violent crime (murder, robbery, aggravated assault, etc.) increased 15.41% in cities with populations over 100,00, in contrast to a 1.3% increase in the other states. Similar results are also seen in comparisons of smaller cities.

The increase in property crime in the California cities already reporting is the largest year-over-year increase in property crimes since at least 1960. The increase in violent crime is the largest year-over-year increase since 1990.

“Chiefs in California are committed to work with policy makers to address these issues. There are alternatives to incarceration that could work if given the chance,” states Chief Corney.