



KING COUNTY CORRECTIONS GUILD

Crime Rates up Dramatically, but Jail Population is Down

Budget Cuts Lead to More Criminals on the Streets Committing More Crimes

News reports this week confirm that budget cuts and policy decision made recently have resulted in more crimes being committed in our region, the King County Corrections Guild said today.

Budget cuts, and other policy decision designed to cut costs, have caused the Average Daily Population (ADP) in King County's jails to decline by 21% since 2007. The ADP in 2007 was 2,725 inmates. In 2008 it fell to 2,525, and today it is down to 2,159.

Predictably, more criminals on the streets have resulted in more crime. Separate stories in The Seattle Times and on the Seattle PI website included the following:

"While the FBI is reporting that violent crime and property crime largely declined nationwide last year, the picture is decidedly different in several Seattle-area cities. In Bellevue, Everett and Federal Way, for example, violent crime was up in 2008 compared to 2007, according to the FBI's annual Crime in United States report."

"Statistics from the Police Department show that violent crime in Seattle through June 2009 is up 22 percent compared to the same period in 2008."

“Between Jan. 1 and June 15, 2008, there were 219 assaults involving guns, according to police records. During the same period this year, police data show the number has jumped to 346, a 58 percent increase.”

http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/localnews/2009866617_crimestats15m.html
http://www.seattlepi.com/local/410222_violence16.html

“We recognize that times are tough and government revenue is down, but public safety is job one for city and county government, and budget cuts have already gone too far” said Doug Justus, President of the KCCG. “More cuts next year are unacceptable.”

What has caused the jail population to drop and crime to rise?

- Seattle has simply decided to not arrest as many criminals. County officials report that 90% of the decrease in jail population in 2009 is due to a sudden, dramatic, and unexplained drop in the number of overnight arrests in the city of Seattle. City officials are now citing the lower jail population numbers as justification for a new long term contract with the county to house misdemeanants, and to again postpone building a new regional jail.
- Prosecutors were cut in the 2009 county budget, and Prosecutor Dan Satterberg has stopped filing certain theft and drug crimes as felonies.
- Sheriff’s deputies were cut in the 2009 county budget, and Sheriff Sue Rahr decided her deputies will no longer investigate thefts or property crimes that caused less than \$10,000 in damage.
- And King County’s community corrections program of work release and electronic home monitoring continues to grow, and continues to include individuals charged with violent offenses. Today, prisoners charged with firearms violations, assault, home burglary, and even child molestation and rape of a child, have been diverted into these money saving but non-secure programs. A significant number of these prisoners simply walk away. Last year, 91 prisoners, including 64 felons, escaped, and there were recently 63 prisoners listed on “escaped status.”

The King County Council will begin consideration of the 2010 budget on Monday, September 28.