

Response to Questions on the FY 2009 Advertised Budget Plan

Request By: Supervisor Smyth


Question: Provide a status update on state funding for sex offender monitoring.

Response: See attached memorandum.



County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 7, 2008
TO: Anthony H. Griffin, County Executive
FROM: Susan E. Mittereder,  Legislative Director
SUBJECT: State Funding for Sex Offender Monitoring

During the 2006 General Assembly, and as part of the recommendation of the Crime Commission's work on sexual predators, funding was included in the 2006-2008 biennium budget for additional law enforcement positions to provide monitoring of offenders on the Sex Offender Registry (SOR). The Crime Commission had discovered that the SOR had numerous errors/inaccuracies in the addresses of the registrants, so the state provided \$5.1 million in FY 2007 and \$3.7 million in FY 2008 for 45 additional law enforcement positions through the state police to improve the accuracy of the database and as well as for monitoring efforts; 40 of those positions are for troopers conducting such investigations and five are supervisors and administrative support. This new unit, the Sex Offender Investigative Unit (SOIU), became fully operational and staffed by May 2007, according to the Virginia State Police.

Number of Offenders

The 2006-2008 biennium budget also directed that a report be produced on the implementation of the 2006 statutory changes. This report, published in December 2006, indicated that as of December 1, 2006, there were approximately 13,000 sex offenders residing in Virginia, divided into the following three groups: (1) approximately 3,000 registrants under Department of Corrections Probation and Parole Services; (2) approximately 5,000 sex offenders whose verification is conducted by the State Police; and (3) the remaining 5,000 registrants incarcerated in jails or prisons across the state.

Staffing Issues and Fairfax County Distribution

According to a January 2007 State Police newsletter, the SOIU has responsibility for monitoring sex offenders and for handling criminal investigations for the Virginia State Police pertaining to sex offender violations and related matters, including criminal matters under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections. The staffing ratio included in the 2006 General Assembly state budget calculation was one trooper per 100 sex offenders, or 40 troopers performing monitoring activities. However, according to the newsletter, as of July 2007, SOIU was responsible for monitoring approximately 5,000 sex offenders statewide, with a staffing ratio of 120 sex offenders per officer (higher than the 1:100 ratio envisioned by the 2006 GA). In addition to the 45 SOIU employees with direct responsibility for monitoring the database, the State Police conducts training for all 443 Probation and Parole Officers on use of the statewide database.

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Currently there are four or five (this number needs to be confirmed) of these new troopers assigned to Division 7 (Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William, Arlington, Alexandria), and two of those are assigned to monitor Fairfax County sex offenders. According to Senate Finance staff, the largest concentration of sex offenders in Virginia is in the Hampton Roads area, so more troopers are assigned to that area.

Verifications

According to the December 2006 report, verifications for the Northern Virginia region were 57 percent completed prior to the creation of the SOIU. The goals included in the report are to: increase the percentage of cases successfully closed involving sex offenders failing to register to 90 percent in calendar year 2007; and increase the percentage of cases successfully closed involving sex offenders failing to register to 92 percent by calendar year 2010. We do not have information on the status of implementation of these goals is at this point in time.

Other State Funding

On a separate note, there appears to be some confusion about actions taken during the most recent General Assembly (GA) session. The 2008-2010 biennium budget approved by the 2008 GA, and awaiting the Governor's signature, included \$1.5 million for the Northern Virginia Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force and the Southern Virginia Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (\$750,000 each). The \$750,000 for the Northern Virginia task force is distributed to the state police, but is separate and not related to the question of funding for monitoring of the Sex Offender Registry.

Federal Funding

Government Relations staff will continue to research how much and what type of federal grant has been used to fund the P'CASO program thus far, and other federal grant opportunities which may exist. There are indications of a possible federal COPS grant (provided through the Department of Justice) for which criteria are currently being established and which may be of assistance in funding this program. Claudia Arko has made preliminary contact with our federal contract lobbyists, Alcalde and Fay, on this issue, and she will continue to research funding availability.

Conclusions

The state did provide the funding needed for monitoring of the Sex Offender Registry according to their analysis of the issue and the number of registered sex offenders at the time, based on a ratio of one trooper per 100 sex offenders. As previously mentioned, by July 2007, this ratio was already up to one trooper per 120 offenders. Our research did not reveal the current ratio. Government Relations also did not try to assess: appropriateness of workload under this ratio; whether or not the number of troopers assigned to the County meets this ratio; or any potential duplication of efforts between state and local activities. This information would more appropriately be researched by the Police Department.

Anthony H. Griffin
April 7, 2008
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Sources: 2006-08 Appropriations Act
Discussions with Senate Finance Staff
"A Special Report on the Implementation of Sexual Offender Monitoring."
The report can be found at the following link:
[http://leg2.state.va.us/dls/h&sdocs.nsf/By+Year/HD82007/\\$file/HD8.pdf](http://leg2.state.va.us/dls/h&sdocs.nsf/By+Year/HD82007/$file/HD8.pdf)

cc: Edward L. Long, Jr., Deputy County Executive
Susan Datta, Director, Department of Management and Budget
David M. Rohrer, Chief of Police
Claudia Arko, Legislative Liaison