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Contact:
NAME, PHONE

County Supervisors Say Ballot Measure Needed to Protect Funds for Local Governments to Manage New Offender Population

Say counties cannot successfully take over new public safety responsibilities from state without a guaranteed source of funding that cannot be taken by legislature in future

City, CA –Supervisors and public safety officials today called on state lawmakers to place a measure on the November 2012 ballot that will provide a protected funding source to counties for taking over responsibility for monitoring, tracking and incarcerating low-risk offenders who were previously the responsibility of the state. This change begins to go into effect October 1. County and local law enforcement leaders claim this ballot measure is vital to protect public safety.

In the wake of a US Supreme Court decision requiring the state to reduce its prison population by 33,000 offenders, the State acted to move responsibility for many low-level offenders to counties for incarceration, monitoring and rehabilitation. While the state provided funding to counties for this budget year, there are no guarantees that future legislatures won't raid the funds, potentially leaving counties with the offenders and no resources to manage them.

"The state has to reduce its prison population, so these prisoners are coming. The question is whether or not we here at the local level are going to be given the resources to adequately protect the public's safety," said XX. "Unfortunately, Sacramento politicians shifted responsibility to local governments without providing a reliable, ongoing source of funding to let us do the job. In order to plan for the future and adequately protect the public's safety, local sheriffs, probation officers and other law enforcement officials need assurances that the money will be there year in and year out."

The Governor recently said he is committed to putting a constitutional protection measure on the November 2012 ballot to make sure counties have the resources to deal with these offenders.

"If the state shifts responsibility to provide a service to the county level, the state must provide a reliable revenue source to counties for that expense, said Supervisor XX. "We are extremely concerned about the significant new responsibilities the state has imposed on us without any guarantee of ongoing funding that cannot be raided by future legislatures. We stand ready to

work side-by-side with the Governor to go to the voters to protect funding for these critical public safety services.”

Supervisor XX added: “Giving counties more responsibility for low-level offenders and other services for neglected and abused children and seniors can work. Local governments are more responsible, accountable and better understand local needs. Voters have time and again said they want to keep local funds local, to fund important local services. With this initiative, we want to give voters the opportunity to protect their local services again.”

The legislature has until next summer to place a constitutional protection measure on the November 2012 ballot. In the meantime, counties say they are prepared to go to the ballot with their own measure if the legislature fails to act.

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