
Stop AB 953 from sidelining our law enforcement officers

By Joseph W. Brady / VVC Trustee

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Over the course of the last few months, I have written and spoken about many of the challenges that the High Desert region, San Bernardino County, and the Inland Empire face in dealing with crime.

While many of our elected officials are attempting to find ways to deal with this issue, the California Assembly and Senate have decided to implement AB 953, the Racial and Identity Profiling Act of 2015. As if the Democratic legislature and the voters of the state have not already done enough to contribute to the growing crime problem in the High Desert, implementation of AB 953 will now divert our already understaffed police and Sheriff Departments off the streets to fulfill this law's massive paperwork requirements.

This new law will require an increased amount of time by our public safety officers to fill out reports, which will do nothing to reduce crime. It will, in fact, actually increase crime. Every minute spent by an officer filling out the expanded data fields for their normal stops is precious time not spent by officers proactively patrolling and protecting schools, parks, businesses and residential neighborhoods.

According to San Bernardino County Sheriff John McMahon, a conservative estimate of the impact AB 953 will have on his department in terms of reduced available work hours per deputy is over 150,000 hours annually. That policing time will be diverted to filling out forms.

Expressed in Full Time Equivalency (FTE) measures, this will represent the loss of 90 deputy and 22 sergeant positions, or approximately one-sixth of the current patrol staffing levels.

AB 953 was originally drafted and passed by the legislature to focus on expanding the existing definition of “racial profiling,” which was already prohibited by state law. The manner in which it has been interpreted by state officials will result in city and county law enforcement agencies becoming buried in paperwork.

In simple terms, let’s assume that you and three of your friends are driving down Bear Valley Road and you are issued a speeding ticket. While in the past the officer would cite you for speeding and remind you to drive safely, now the officer needs to fill out an additional form for the driver as well as any passengers asked for identification, cited or asked to leave the vehicle order to ensure that he/she was not racially profiling the passengers.

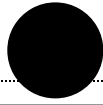
For comparison purposes, when a similar policy was adopted in the city of Chicago, arrests declined by 28 percent, police stops declined by 82 percent and, not surprisingly, violent crime skyrocketed.

Creating a system that incentivizes officers to not make proactive stops may be a “politically correct” solution, but is the exact opposite of the crime control tactics that actually enhance public safety. It will not take long for criminals to realize that they can run the streets wild, committing crimes with relative impunity, simply because policy makers, academics, and legislators allow their social philosophies to blind them to the hard realities faced by police officers on the front lines.

On the heels of AB 109, and Propositions 47, 57, and 64, as AB 953 is implemented in its new form criminals will be soon be further emboldened, effective law enforcement diminished, crime rates will continue to rise and public safety compromised to an unprecedented degree. I urge all citizens within the High Desert region and those within San Bernardino County to reach out to your elected lawmakers and ask them to immediately have this absolutely ridiculous law revised or overturned.

We must stop tying the hands of the law enforcement officers who are trying to keep our communities safe.

Joseph W. Brady is president of the Bradco Companies and a Victor Valley College trustee.



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