



Commonwealth of Virginia

Office of Governor Bob McDonnell

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Secretary of Public Safety Marla Graff Decker Announces Governor's Vision for Public Safety

***Includes Greater Focus on Prisoner Re-Entry, Gang Reduction, and
Youth Crime Prevention***

Announces Executive Order #28 Establishing Gang and Violent Crime Executive
Committee; Results of Targeted Law Enforcement Operation: "Operation Rolling
Thunder"; New Mentoring Program for Juveniles in Detention Facilities

RICHMOND – Virginia Secretary of Public Safety Marla Graff Decker announced today Governor Bob McDonnell's vision for public safety in Virginia during a press briefing held in Richmond. Over the last year, Decker and representatives from the Office of Public Safety have been meeting with law enforcement officials and stakeholders around the state to address public safety issues in Virginia's communities. The result is a more coordinated and collaborated approach to public safety efforts statewide. Decker was joined today by representatives from the Office of Public Safety and agencies within her secretariat.

Speaking about efforts by the Office of Public Safety, Secretary Decker remarked, "The Office of Public Safety and the public safety agencies are silent partners in the Governor's job

creation efforts. In order to attract and grow businesses in the Commonwealth, people must feel safe in their communities and neighborhoods. That is why over the last year we have worked to set forth a clear vision for public safety in Virginia. It is critical that we implement effective, efficient, and responsive public safety services through partnerships that foster coordination, collaboration and strategic responses to make our communities safe. In order to implement this vision, we are initially focusing on three important areas: combating gangs, implementing strong prisoner re-entry policies, and creating targeted crime prevention outreach to youth.”

Decker continued, “I am pleased to announce today the results of a strategic law enforcement effort targeting specific violent crime. Through ‘Operation Rolling Thunder’ we piloted a coordinated effort and deployed state resources over a 30 day period to reduce a specific type of criminal activity in particular areas of the City of Richmond. Working together with state public safety agencies and local law enforcement, we successfully reduced the number of robberies in the capital City of Richmond. Going forward, this model will be used in various parts of the Commonwealth that are experiencing spikes in violent crime.”

Decker added, “Another important area of focus is prisoner re-entry. Governor McDonnell and the Office of Public Safety are committed to developing and implementing a strong prisoner re-entry strategic plan. This includes developing programs to reduce recidivism and increase outreach to troubled youth. Next year we will launch a mentoring program in our juvenile detention centers that pairs volunteers from the community with residents in our facilities. We believe that “one-on-one” mentoring is a key to changing a young person’s attitude and perspective on life, and will reduce the risk of them committing crimes.”

Decker concluded, “Finally, an ongoing issue that we must address is criminal street gangs. Gangs do not respect jurisdictional boundaries. They recruit our young people into a destructive criminal lifestyle. They also negatively impact our neighborhoods. Deputy Secretary of Public Safety John Buckovich serves as the Governor’s statewide Anti-Gang Coordinator. Over the past year, he has been leading the effort to develop a statewide strategic plan to combat gangs. Today, I am pleased to announce Executive Order #28, creating the Commonwealth’s Gang and Violent Crime Executive Committee, coordinating partnerships between state agencies other stakeholders. The committee will work to ensure that local and federal partners, businesses, as well as community and faith-based organizations are included in the efforts to implement programs and policies to address gangs.”

Deputy Secretary of Public Safety John Buckovich commented, “Reports indicate that gangs are now fully entrenched in many communities across the United States. The report indicates that criminal street gangs commit as much as 80 percent of the crime in many communities. During the past decade, concerns about the violence associated with gangs have led communities across the Commonwealth to seek new solutions to combat gang violence. The Virginia Comprehensive Gang Strategy will provide coordination to the efforts of local, state, and federal agencies in order to provide a strategic and comprehensive approach to the fight against gangs and gang related violence in the Commonwealth. The strategy will focus on communities through prevention and intervention activities, and will target criminal street gangs

through the coordinated enforcement efforts of local, state and federal law enforcement. It will also integrate with Virginia's re-entry plan to address issues related to gang members returning to their neighborhoods upon release from jail, prison, or a detention center."

Assistant Chief of the City of Richmond Police Department Dave McCoy noted, "Richmond was pleased to be the first locality to work with the Office of Public Safety in this innovative partnership. Operation Rolling Thunder demonstrates effective use of state and local resources, capturing each agency and department's strengths, to address a specific crime problem. In Richmond, the targeted criminal activity was robberies. The approach involved significant law enforcement presence on major high volume corridors with vehicle and pedestrian traffic. The operation worked, and the community is safer as a result of the targeted efforts of the partnership."

Helivi L. Holland, Director of the Department of Juvenile Justice, remarked, "Nationally, the establishment of mentoring relationships with local community and faith-based organizations has proven effective in assisting offenders during their transition from incarceration to the community. Because of the documented success of mentoring programs, the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice has established collaborative partnerships with organizations such as the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation to pilot a mentoring program with law enforcement and committed youth using the successful *Badges for Baseball* initiative. Additionally, the Department in collaboration with the *Virginia Mentoring Partnership* has established a mentoring program designed to pair committed youth with adults in the community who will assist them with overcoming specific risk factors following their release from direct care."

Operation Rolling Thunder

***Data Provided by the City of Richmond Police Department*

Results:

During November 2010, the 30-day period in which the operation took place, the City of Richmond experienced a 35% decrease in violent crime.

The goal of Rolling Thunder was a 20% reduction in robberies. During November, there were 33 fewer people robbed, which represents a 41% decrease in robbery of individuals. Included in this was a 44% reduction in the number of persons robbed using firearms. This represents 25 fewer people who were robbed at gunpoint.

Commercial robberies decreased from 27 in November 2009 to 8 in November 2010. This represents a 70% decrease in commercial robberies and a 66% decrease in the use of firearms during a commercial robbery.

The ABC Enforcement Division conducted multiple Under Age Buyer operations in the targeted areas. Their efforts resulted in 27 arrests, three written warnings and one administrative violation. Additionally, 15 underage buyer compliance checks were completed.

Community Corrections, District One, conducted home contacts on 46 people during the 30-day period who are on probation for robbery, drug, and gang offenses.

***Attached are the crime statistics for November, provided courtesy of the City of Richmond Police Department*

Resources:

The Virginia Department of State Police, ABC Enforcement Division, and Department of Corrections Probation and Parole assisted the Richmond Police Department during the thirty-day period.

Virginia State Police

For this operation it was determined that the resources of the Virginia State Police could best be utilized by conducting traffic enforcement in corridors which were in close proximity to areas experiencing a spike in robberies. State Police personnel were assisted by officers from the Richmond Police Department. This segment of Richmond Rolling Thunder was conducted during the evening hours on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights during the thirty-day period.

This enforcement operation led to more than 1,400 summonses and arrests.

ABC Enforcement Division

The ABC Enforcement Division was utilized to conduct underage drinking operations and club compliance activities in areas where robberies had been occurring.

Probation and Parole

Probation and Parole personnel were used to conduct home contacts on individuals who are on probation for robbery and who were certified gang members. Officers from the Richmond Police Department assisted with this effort.

EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER Twenty Eight (2010)

The Commonwealth's Gang and Violent Crime

Executive Committee

Importance of the Issue

Information from law enforcement agencies indicates that gang activity and crime, once a problem reserved for large cities, has spread outward as gang members migrate from urban areas to suburban and rural communities, threatening the safety of Virginians everywhere. The Virginia Fusion Center reports the presence of criminal street gangs throughout Northern Virginia, the Greater Richmond Area, Western Virginia, Hampton Roads and in far Southwest Virginia. Offshoots of National gangs such as the Bloods, Crips and Gangster Disciples are active throughout the Commonwealth. In order to make Virginia a safer place to raise a family and own or operate a business, it is essential that federal, state and local governments work together to address and reduce gangs and gang-related violence in the Commonwealth.

By combating gangs we impact other criminal activities including drug distribution, illegal firearms possession, assault, murder and a host of other crimes. Strong anti-gang education and prevention efforts designed to reduce gang membership; and programs for individuals who want to renounce gang life, are all essential to addressing criminal street gangs and gang related violence.

Accordingly, the Commonwealth must work collaboratively along with local and federal partners, businesses, as well as community and faith-based organizations, in establishing best practices for combating gangs and reducing gang-related crime.

The Commonwealth's Gang and Violent Crime Executive Committee

Many localities have taken steps to address the gang problem within their communities; however, additional resources are needed to aid local governments in their fight against gangs and gang related violence.

By virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor, under Article V of the Constitution of Virginia and under the laws of the Commonwealth, including but not limited to Section 2.2-134 of the *Code of Virginia*, and subject always to my continuing and ultimate authority and responsibility to act in such matters, I hereby establish the Commonwealth's Gang and Violent Crime Executive Committee

The Commonwealth's Gang and Violent Crime Executive Committee (the "Committee") shall be chaired by the Secretary of Public Safety or her designee. The Committee shall be comprised of representatives of the following agencies and organizations:

- The Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council
- The Department of Correctional Education
- The Department of Corrections – Institutions
- The Department of Corrections – Community Corrections
- The Department of Criminal Justice Services
- The Department of Education
- The Department of Health
- The Department of Housing and Community Development
- The Department of Juvenile Justice
- The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services
- The Department of Social Services
- The Department of State Police
- The Governor's Office for Substance Abuse Prevention
- The Office of the Attorney General
- The Department of Alcohol Beverage Control
- The Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court
- The Governor's Prisoner Re-Entry Coordinator
- The Virginia Regional Jail Association
- The Virginia Sheriff's Association
- The Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police
- The Virginia Association of Commonwealth's Attorneys

The Governor may appoint additional members as appropriate. Further, the Secretary of Public Safety may invite additional participation as needed. All Executive Branch agencies of the Commonwealth, upon request, shall participate in activities of the Committee. Support staff will be provided by the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety, the Department of State Police and other agencies as the Secretary of Public Safety may designate.

The Executive Committee shall:

- Develop and expand partnerships within all levels of federal, state and local government to best utilize resources to impact gang crime in the Commonwealth;
- Work with the Prisoner Re-entry Coordinator and the Virginia Prisoner and Juvenile Offender Re-entry Council in establishing strategies for successful reentry of gang members;
- Engage local agencies, community based social service providers, community organizations, faith-based organizations, as well as other stakeholders, in promoting evidence based programs like Richmond's successful and nationally recognized Gang Reduction and Intervention Program (GRIP);
- Coordinate the dissemination of gang-awareness information to citizens of the Commonwealth in order to increase their involvement in making local communities safe and fostering local opportunities for youth;
- Expand discussions and anti-gang planning to include trends and patterns of related violent crime in the Commonwealth;
- Provide the Governor, by December 1, 2011, a report that includes an analysis of state agencies anti-gang efforts, and the status of the State Police Anti-Gang Task Forces. The report should also include recommendations regarding strategic advancement of gang investigations and the development of gang intelligence as well as recommendations for educational, prevention, and re-entry strategies. Finally, the report should include best practices and anti-gang initiatives throughout the Commonwealth;

The Secretary of Public Safety, working with the Committee, shall develop a long-term strategic plan for reducing gang activity and gang violence in the Commonwealth. The plan shall identify methods of improving communication; a strategy for sharing of information; and ways of strengthening collaboration between state and local agencies. Such a plan shall be submitted to the Governor no later than December 1, 2011.

The Committee shall submit to the Governor its findings and recommendations on matters potentially impacting the development of the Executive Budget no later than September 15, 2011. The Committee shall submit a final report of its activities, findings and recommendations no later than October 1, 2011. Should the Committee be extended beyond a year, this pattern of reporting shall continue for the duration of the Committee.

Necessary funding to support the Executive Committee and its staff shall be provided from federal funds, private contributions, and state funds appropriated for the same purposes as the Committee, as authorized by Section 2.2-135 of the *Code of Virginia*, as well as any other private sources of funding that may be identified. Estimated direct costs for this Executive Committee are \$5,000.00 per year. An estimated 200 hours of staff time will be required to support the work of the Executive Committee.

Effective Date of the Executive Order

This Executive Order shall be effective upon its signing and shall remain in full force and effect for one year from its signing, unless amended or rescinded by further Executive Order.

Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia this 16th day of December, 2010.

***Executive Order #28 is available online here:*

http://www.governor.virginia.gov/Issues/ExecutiveOrders/pdf/EO_28.pdf

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