

**Prepared Remarks of Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen**

Press Conference with Jefferson County Sheriff Paul Milbrath, City of Madison Deputy Police Chief Randy Gaber, Verona Police Chief Bernard Coughlin, McFarland Police Chief Gregory Leck, Monona Police Chief Wally Ostrenga, Marshall Police Chief Lee Hellenbrand, Jeffrey Wiswell-Wisconsin Sheriff's and Deputy Sheriff's Association & President of Wisconsin Victim Witness Professionals, Ms. Karen Rengert

**Regarding Governor Doyle's Proposed Budget  
Law Enforcement Priorities and Public Safety Impacts**

Cambridge Municipal Building

200 Spring Street

Cambridge, Wisconsin

Friday, April 3, 2009

9:30 AM

I am here today because I remain concerned, even disturbed, about the Governor's proposed budget because of its impact on law enforcement and the diminished level of public safety that will no doubt result.

My concerns are over priorities and public safety. The debate should be about facts.

What *is* true is that I disagree with the Governor about the first priority of our government. And his decisions, for example, to treat already understaffed state prosecutors to cuts while the Department of Regulation and Licensing sees increases approaching 20% are not decisions I agree with. As your Attorney General I have a duty to you and all those who serve and protect you. These recommendations, should they become law, will harm the state I care about.

I hope the legislature will listen.

I am deeply concerned about this proposed budget's impact on public safety and law enforcement's ability to keep up. These concerns quickly translate into concerns for new crime victims -- and those victims already impacted by those now soon to be let free ahead of their release dates.

Simply put -- what's being proposed is changing the rules... after Judges -- prosecutors -- and victims understood what sentence a criminal was to get -- and letting bureaucrats in Madison cut short those sentences. Releasing felons and failed parolees back in your streets with little new hope for success. From Truth-In-Sentencing to Truth-or-Dare.

Importantly, this budget contains no new resources for the treatment and supervision of these additional parolees.

This is not about fixing a failed corrections policy. It is about saving money and it will be at your expense.

If it were about fixing a failed corrections policy it would not be in the budget. If it were about fixing a failed corrections policy the Governor would be recommending resources for what are undeniably increased needs for treatment and monitoring when inmates are let loose.

When over 50% of our parolees fail and return to prison now – and some statistics show that number as high as 70% - many creating new victims – how can more parolees with less resources hope to improve anything except the certain short-term freedom of convicted criminals without sufficient supervision or resources to help them succeed and keep us safe. And it will cost you more when these newly freed parolees fail and are revoked or commit new crimes.

This is the same corrections management that paid thousands of dollars to allow inmates to watch movies – some R rated and shown to sex offenders. And, will spend \$35 million next year in overtime - \$5 million more than they did this year.

Ill advised. Pennywise and pound foolish. It's a failed proposal to save money and it will end up costing us more while risking public safety. I understand the Governor's proposal and why – lets just be up front – it's about money. But I can not understand any legislator voting yes on it and facing their constituents in the morning.

Fighting crime and a duty to Wisconsin's crime victims is in my job description. That's why I am so happy to be joined by your local law enforcement and Wisconsin victim and witness leadership who work every day on behalf of crime victims.

Let me be clear. Public safety is the first priority of any government. People expect to be safe in their homes, at their schools, and on their streets. And, if government can not keep them safe it can not hope to succeed in anything else it does.

That is why I was encouraged when Governor Doyle began his budget address by stating that the budget must first protect what's important to Wisconsin – and he included public safety in that list.

Unfortunately, the Governor's proposed budget fails to protect law enforcement's existing ability to protect public safety – clearly... and frankly – it takes dramatic steps backward.

I would ask you, your legislators and him to recall his own words six short years ago when he was standing where I am...as your Attorney General

“You certainly don't want to balance the budget by sacrificing safety. I do not believe the way you reduce the prison population is to open up the door and let people out.” James E. Doyle

The budget fails public safety in too many ways...

For example:

It calls for

- Early release of felons from prison

It calls for

- Early termination for felons on extended supervision (or parole)

It calls for

- Elimination of probation for some misdemeanants

It calls for

- Reducing GPS monitoring of sex offenders

It calls for

- Expanding opportunities for criminals to expunge (or erase) their criminal records

It calls for

- CUTS to District Attorney's budgets by 6.5% (and this is a conservative number when many other factors are considered) while increasing all government spending by almost 8% in the first biennium.

It calls for

- CUTS to shared revenues by 1% across-the-board impacting local law enforcement and fire protection

It calls for

- Elimination of the front license plate

It calls for

- Adding chargebacks of costs to local law enforcement for some crime scene investigation services

It calls for

- CUTS to law enforcement training statewide and locally

It calls for

- CUTS to drug enforcement including Special Agent resources

It calls for

- CUTS to the Department of Justice and leaves additional impending lapse and efficiency cuts to be set by the Department of Administration and unilaterally taken away without the benefit of planning, discussion, or legislative oversight

It...

- Imposes a new traffic-stop record keeping responsibility on the Department of Justice who the proposal envisions will receive and collate this data – with cuts in resources and no technical support

It...

- INCREASES the Handgun Hotline fee by more than double my requested adjustment of \$13 (which is the transaction cost) to \$30 per

check – with the extra money this generates going to pay for what had been paid for by those who violate the law.

Today we ask the Legislature to protect law enforcement and ensure public safety. We ask them to repair these flawed proposals and make public safety their first priority as it is ours.

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