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August 21, 2006

YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES WILL HELP FIGHT GANGS COUNCIL DEDICATES PUBLIC SAFETY FUNDS TO PREVENTION, INTERVENTION

The Los Angeles City Council voted unanimously to dedicate a percentage of new public safety funds towards gang intervention and prevention measures. The initiative, introduced by Councilmembers Eric Garcetti and Ed Reyes, comes as programs that provide opportunities to at-risk youth are operating at minimum levels.

“Los Angeles has made great strides in reducing gang activity,” said Council President Garcetti. “If we want those gains to last, we have to commit to fighting crime before it happens, by creating hope among those who are most at risk.”

“Public safety is not just about police officers, it is also about prevention and intervention and giving our kids something to say yes to,” said Councilwoman Janice Hahn. “Studies have shown that for every \$1 we spend in prevention, we save \$7 in enforcement-so the taxpayers in LA should know that this City Council is working to get the most their tax dollars.”

“Hiring more police officers to reduce crime is only one part of public safety,” said Tony Cardenas, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Gang Violence. “The equally important part is prevention and intervention. One without the other is a bad investment for the city.”

“When people want to change their lives, there have to be opportunities for them. I grew up in the gang lifestyle, always running, always looking over my shoulder,” said Ruben Arredondo, who changed his life through the L.A. Bridges-administered Aztec Firefighters program and today supports his family through work in set construction. “When a door opened up for me, it took me a long way. Fighting forest fires was still dangerous, but I was helping people and bettering my family.”

The policy approved by council would dedicate **a portion** of new public safety revenues to intervention and prevention programs. Revenues that come in following the reduction in the trash fee subsidy, an act expected to bring in \$9.3 million in FY06-07, would fall under the policy.

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For FY06-07, councilmembers sought to dedicate a sum of money that would equal 15% of the funds expected from the trash subsidy reduction revenue, or \$1.4 million, for intervention and prevention efforts. Using various sources other than the trash subsidy reduction, elected officials found funds totaling \$2.1 million. The policy will apply to future budget years; though the exact percentage has not been clear, council has committed to the policy sentiment that new public safety revenues should support prevention and intervention programs.

Elected officials and law enforcement personnel including Police Chief William Bratton have called for better coordination and more consistently funded intervention and prevention programs as part of the city's fight against gangs.

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