

FACTSHEET

Maryland's Election Crime Ads in Context --Talking Points for Advocates

Background: The Justice Policy Institute, a non-partisan, non-profit research organization, offers the following background data and findings to put the recent television and web-based campaign advertisements by the candidates for governor of Maryland into context.

"While cities like New York have been able to get violent crime under control, O'Malley promised and failed." Campaign to Re-Elect Robert Ehrlich¹

Violent crime in Baltimore, as in most major American cities, fell over the last decade.

Violent crimes in Baltimore have decreased 48 percent over the last 10 years, which is comparable to other large cities, such as New York City (53 percent drop), Washington, D.C. (48 percent), Chicago (51 percent), and Los Angeles (55 percent).²

Increased policing and use of incarceration can have a negative impact on public safety.

While some Baltimore neighborhoods still experience high rates of crime and violence, investing in more prisons and police are not effective solutions. Research from the University of Maryland found that some Maryland neighborhoods with high rates of criminal justice involvement also saw an increase in lethal violence.³ Removing integral members of a neighborhood may only cause more problems for the community.⁴

"And under his watch, prisons are out of control, with corrections officers being murdered and nearly 20 times more violent incidents involving weapons than the larger Pennsylvania prison system." Campaign to Elect Martin O'Malley⁵

If the state wants to improve safety in prisons, it should promote effective programming in prisons.

Correctional education programs have been shown to reduce idleness, promote self-esteem, supply incentives for good behavior, and create positive role models among inmates. As a recent national commission on prison abuse found, "the majority of prisons and many jails hold more people than they can deal with safely and effectively, creating a degree of disorder and tension almost certain to erupt into violence. Similarly, few conditions compromise safety more than idleness. But because lawmakers have reduced funding for programming, prisoners today are largely inactive and unproductive."⁶ A study from *Psychology, Crime and Law* found that highly structured programs that help prisoners understand the motivations underlying their actions, and the consequences of their behavior, can reduce misconduct.⁷ Investing in prison programming that meets people's educational, vocational and treatment needs will reduce the level of violence in prisons, and prepare people to return to their communities.

¹The Campaign to Re-Elect Bob Ehrlich, <http://www.bobehrllich.com/>

²FBI Uniform Crime Reports, "Crime in the United States, 1995, 2005." www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm

³Harries, Keith (2004). "Violence, Change, and Cohort Trajectories: Baltimore Neighborhoods, 1990-2000". *Urban Geography*. Vol. 25, p. 14-30.

⁴Ziedenberg, Jason (2005). "Tipping Point: Maryland's overuse of incarceration and the impact on public safety." Washington, D.C.: Justice Policy Institute.

⁵The Campaign to Elect Martin O'Malley, <http://www.martinomalley.com/>

⁶Gibbons, John J. and Nicholas de B. Katzenbach (2006). "Confronting Confinement." *Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons*, p.14. www.prisoncommission.org/report.asp

⁷Ward and Eccleston (2004). "Risk, Responsibility, and the Treatment of Offenders: Introduction to the Special Issue." *Psychology, Crime and Law* 10(3)

“He cut State drug treatment funding in Baltimore by \$3 million – from \$52.2 million in FY 2003 to \$49.2 million in FY 2005.” Campaign to Elect Martin O’Malley⁸

“Governor Ehrlich launched “Project RESTART,” his bold new plan to provide nonviolent offenders substance abuse treatment and education to help them become responsible members of the community.” Campaign to Re-Elect Robert Ehrlich⁹

While providing drug treatment to people involved in the criminal justice system can promote public safety, Baltimore, and the state as a whole, has made “slow progress” towards achieving the goal of treatment, not incarceration. Although both Maryland gubernatorial candidates have made efforts to increase the amount of drug treatment available to people in the criminal justice system, not nearly enough money has been made available to meet treatment needs in the community.

- **For every dollar spent on drug prisoners, only 26 cents is spent on drug treatment.** A recent report by the Justice Policy Institute found that for every dollar spent to imprison people convicted of nonviolent drug offenses, Maryland (and Baltimore City alone) spends an estimated 26 cents to provide drug treatment to patients referred by the criminal justice system.¹⁰
- **Statewide—Progress and challenges on treatment, not incarceration.** Maryland witnessed a 28 percent increase in drug treatment admissions through the criminal justice system, and saw a 7 percent drop in drug prison admissions. Advocates and treatment experts recommend a \$30 million increase in funding for drug treatment in order to expand this program and catch up with the increasing costs associated with these programs.
- **Baltimore—Progress and challenges on treatment, not incarceration.** Baltimore City invested \$16 million in criminal justice drug treatment during Fiscal Year 2005. Between 2000 and 2004, the number of treatment admissions from the criminal justice system in Baltimore rose by 50 percent, and the number of people admitted to prison for a drug offense fell by 10 percent.
- **The public safety benefits of drug treatment.** Maryland jurisdictions that relied on drug treatment were more likely to achieve significant crime rate reductions than those that relied on drug imprisonment.¹¹ Drug law reforms that make it easier to sentence defendants to treatment, rather than prison, could reduce annual corrections spending by \$20 million.¹²

⁸ <http://www.martinomalley.com/>

⁹ <http://www.bobehrich.com/>

¹⁰ Pranis, Kevin. (2006). “Progress and Challenges: An analysis of drug treatment and imprisonment in Maryland from 2000 to 2005.” Washington, D.C.: Justice Policy Institute.

¹¹ Pranis (2006)

¹² Pranis (2006)

End Parole for Violent Criminals: “The Ehrlich administration has significantly loosened standards for state prisoners who are released on parole and has continued to release violent felons. The Parole Commission has released more than 30% of prisoners for whom they have held hearings in every year since Bob Ehrlich took office. During Governor Glendening’s second term, the percentage was below 30% every year.” Campaign to Elect Martin O’Malley¹³

The public safety impact of increasing the number of people released through parole is miniscule compared to the state’s real violent crime problems. The number of people released by the parole board has increased only marginally.

- In 2005, 32 percent (2,992) of parole eligible prisoners (9,271) were released on parole in Maryland.¹⁴ In FY 2002, only 29 percent were released (2,244 of 7,838), an increase of only 2 percentage points.¹⁵ In 2002, the percentage of parolees who returned to prison within one year of release was only 9.4 percent (or 209 parolees).¹⁶ In 2004, the percentage of parolees who returned to prison increased to 11.4 percent, an increase of only 19 parolees. To put this increase into context, Maryland reports almost 40,000 violent crimes per year; 19 additional crimes should not be a great cause for concern.
- **Despite a small increase in the percentage of prisoners granted parole, violent crime rates have still dropped.** Maryland citizens reported 39,369 violent crimes in 2005,¹⁷ which is down 6 percent from 2002 (42,015 violent crimes).
- Of greater concern than the slight increase in parolees is the 25 percent of non-paroled prisoners that return to prisons within 1 year of release.¹⁸ Providing drug treatment and vocational, academic and re-entry programs are proven methods of lowering this recidivism rate and promoting public safety in Maryland’s communities.

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The Justice Policy Institute is a non-partisan Washington, D.C.-based think tank dedicated to ending society’s reliance on incarceration and promoting effective and just solutions to social problems. For more information, visit our website at www.justicepolicy.org

¹³ <http://www.martinomalley.com/>

¹⁴ Maryland State Budget Books, FY 2007. www.mdarchives.state.md.us/msa/mdmanual/34bud/html/00list.html#basis

¹⁵ Maryland Parole Commission FY 2002 Annual Report, p.7 www.dpscs.state.md.us/publicinfo/publications/research.shtml

¹⁶ Maryland State Budget Books, FY 2005, 2007. www.mdarchives.state.md.us/msa/mdmanual/34bud/html/00list.html#basis

¹⁷ FBI Uniform Crime Reports, “Crime in the United States, 2005.” www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm

¹⁸ Maryland State Budget Books, FY 2005, 2007