

# DAN MALLOY FOR GOVERNOR:

## *Public Safety: Criminal Justice in Conn.*

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### **Introduction and Background**

Because of the leadership I provided in Stamford, the city is increasingly prepared for emergencies. With a 63 percent reduction in crime, Stamford is also a much safer city today than it was I took office in 1995.

In fact, Stamford has become the safest city in Connecticut, and the FBI has ranked Stamford as one of the top eleven safest cities in the nation for eight consecutive years<sup>1</sup>.

These facts are a direct result of a successful strategy of fighting crime in Stamford. As a former Assistant District Attorney, I fostered collaboration with the police department, community leaders, and other stakeholders to make Stamford a better place to live, work, raise a family, and do business. As Governor, I'll do the same for Connecticut.

### **Goal**

Improve public safety and promote justice.

### **Proposed Action**

Connecticut is often regarded as one of the safest states in America – and on the whole, that's true. But we're second to last in New England, and that's unacceptable. And for the victims of crime, no ranking on any list will be of much comfort.

As Governor I will initiate a three pronged strategy to combat violent crime in Connecticut. This will include common sense policing strategies, as well as prevention measures and administrative steps that protect the rights of victims and ensure greater

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cityofstamford.org/content/25/52/140/214/216/3994.aspx>

accountability in the bail bond system. In order to improve our standing in the region, as Governor I'll do the following:

## ***Policing***

- **Put more cops on the street.** Our State and municipal police forces have become increasingly understaffed, with the number of State Troopers currently 55 short of the 1,248 mandated level.<sup>2</sup> We must re-invest in the State's commitment to community policing and ensure that Connecticut meets and exceeds statutorily required State Police staffing levels. The Obama administration has funded Community Oriented Policing (COPs) grants; as Governor, I would make COPs a strategic enforcement priority and partner with local municipalities to aggressively go after available funds.
  
- **Modernize the state's criminal justice information system.** The sad truth is that our current system is so outdated that even Governor Rell's new Commissioner of Corrections has said that the state's DOC information system "has been characterized as an exotic Rolodex."<sup>3</sup> We need to shift the Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) initiative away from the overly bureaucratic Department of Information Technology (DOIT) and bring it online immediately. This key reform was recommended by front-line criminal justice professionals, including police and prosecutors, in the aftermath of the Cheshire tragedy. The Rell administration has prevented this from moving forward.
  
- **End the extreme backlog at the state police crime lab,** which has resulted in unprecedented delays in processing crime scene evidence, undermining the ability of detectives and prosecutors to make arrests and try serious cases. At the start of this year, the lab had a backlog of 10,600 DNA samples from convicted criminals that had yet to be processed or entered into the state's DNA databank<sup>4</sup>. State employee retirements and budget cuts have taken a toll on personnel support for the crime lab, but by cutting essential resources from our Department of Public Safety we are being penny-wise and pound-foolish (since the long-term cost of crime will far outweigh the short-term cost of hiring a sufficient number of DNA lab techs to help reduce crime).

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<sup>2</sup> Office of Fiscal Analysis, September 21, 2010

<sup>3</sup> <http://blog.ctnews.com/dixon/2010/09/10/new-doc-commissioner-doesnt-like-antiquated-computer-system/>

<sup>4</sup> Hartford Courant, 1/31/10, accessed via: <http://evidenceblog.iape.org/category/dna/backlog/>

- **Focus on putting an end to the “stop snitching” culture**, which discourages those who live in urban areas from cooperating with police and prosecutors. Unfortunately, many urban youths are reluctant or unwilling to cooperate with police. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, to investigate and solve many of the shootings which are becoming all too commonplace in Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport and elsewhere. Community policing will help this focus, as we work to restore confidence in our criminal justice system and address racial and socioeconomic disparities in sentencing and arrests.

## ***Prevention***

- **Focus on high risk, repeat violent offenders.** A recent study made it clear: those convicted of gun related crimes are the most likely to commit more crimes in the future<sup>5</sup>.
- **Enforce our current gun laws**, and attack gun trafficking which puts so many guns on our city streets.
- **Adopt anti-violence strategies** which have been effective in New York, Boston and other cities around the country<sup>6</sup>. For example, in Boston in the mid 1990s, the city convened a broad coalition of federal, state, and local government non-profit religious and resident stakeholders to develop a comprehensive anti-violence strategy. The results of these efforts included gun suppression program, expanded use of non-profit agencies to address the needs of youth and expanded community policing.<sup>7</sup> It also focused on gang abatement, including programs that: created alternatives to gang activity provided by non profits and the schools; worked to find jobs for former gang members; expanded surveillance and enforcement activities; and the "Night Light" project, where local police and state probation officers would make night time home visits to potential gang members who were under curfew.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/cjppd/cjcjpac/recidivism\\_and\\_weapons\\_report\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/cjppd/cjcjpac/recidivism_and_weapons_report_pdf.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [www.justicecenter.csg.org](http://www.justicecenter.csg.org)

<sup>7</sup> [www.justicecenter.csg.org](http://www.justicecenter.csg.org)

- **Reform our sex offender registry** to provide useful information about risk on the website and to supervise convicted sex offenders effectively after they leave prison.
- **Employ state of the art risk assessment tools throughout the criminal justice system** to identify high risk, violent offenders and make sure they receive lengthy sentences without the possibility of early release. At the same time, we can save millions of dollars by diverting appropriate low level, non-violent offenders to supervised programs to address mental health and substance abuse issues. These have proven to be effective in preventing future crimes and saving money in other states like Kansas, Michigan and Texas<sup>8</sup>. Connecticut can have similar results if we follow this risk assessment strategy.

### ***Public Policy***

- **Provide more stringent and effective enforcement of current state constitutional rights for victims of crime.** For too long victims of crime have been relegated to spectator status. We have a moral and a constitutional obligation to respond whenever an innocent victim seeks justice. As Governor, I'll work to fully fund the Office of the Victim Advocate, and I will move an existing position from within the Judicial Department into that office to specifically focus on identity theft, which is a real and growing problem.
- **Reform our bail bond system** to make sure that private bail bondsmen are not operating in a "regulation free zone"<sup>9</sup>. Many bondsmen are not forcing their clients to pay the standard 7 to 10 percent of the bond; instead they pay only 1 or 2 percent... which, as a result, "lets people arrested for dangerous crimes out on the street for relatively little money."<sup>10</sup>
- **Designate an existing position at OPM to be the administration's criminal justice policy professional within that department.** This would be a point person within OPM with specific expertise in criminal justice, overseeing comprehensive interagency policy. Connecticut has not had a high level comprehensive criminal

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<sup>8</sup> [www.justicecenter.csg.org](http://www.justicecenter.csg.org)

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.ctnewsjunkie.com/ctnj.php/archives/entry/challenging\\_connecticuts\\_bail\\_bond\\_system\\_is\\_it\\_constitutional/](http://www.ctnewsjunkie.com/ctnj.php/archives/entry/challenging_connecticuts_bail_bond_system_is_it_constitutional/)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ctlawtribune.com/getarticle.aspx?ID=33932>

justice policy person for more than 20 years. Having a designated point person can spur the implementation of the changes described above and track progress, and ensure that improvements in the criminal justice system will be one of the highest priorities of our next Governor.

## **Potential Cost**

The only short-term increase in cost this plan entails is the cost of adding a class of 55 state troopers, which would simply bring Connecticut up to the statutory number of required troopers. The cost – which includes recruitment, training, salary and benefits for a full year – is just under \$4.2 million.<sup>11</sup> This number could actually be lower as there will likely be an expenditure offset when the amount of paid overtime decreases, a natural effect of no longer being understaffed. While I obviously understand that, given the current budget deficit, any discussion of increased cost will be difficult, I refuse to place a dollar value on the safety and wellbeing of Connecticut residents.

Finally, my administration will lead a coordinated effort to partner with local municipalities in aggressively going after available federal dollars, both for improvements to our criminal justice information system and also for implementing community policing programs and putting more cops on the street.

## **Conclusion**

The issue of crime doesn't rise to the top of the list in public opinion polls the way it did a few years ago. But for victims of crime and their families, it's the most important issue there is.

I helped make Stamford a safer place to live by being vigilant, by working with our police force and community leaders, and by understanding that if you don't feel safe in your home, on your street, in your school, in your place of worship, and in your place of work, very little else matters.

That's the philosophy I'll bring to the Governor's office.

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<sup>11</sup> Office of Fiscal Analysis, September 21, 2010