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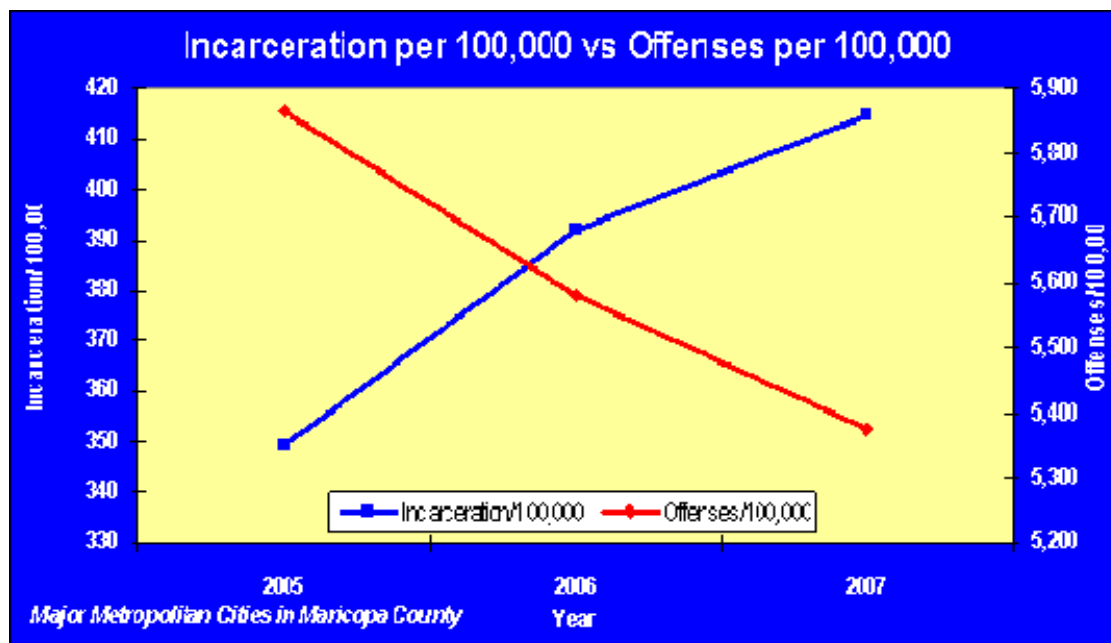
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Record Number of Career Criminals Sent to Prison *Crime Rate Falls as More Criminals Are Locked Up*

As the County Attorney's Office sets records for the number of repeat offenders sent to prison, County Attorney Andrew Thomas notes that the crime rate in Maricopa County is falling—and it's not a coincidence.

The office's newly formed Repeat Offender Bureau has achieved staggering figures. According to statistics compiled by Phoenix Police Department's Repeat Offender newsletter, 108 Career criminals were sentenced to a total of more than 854 years in the Arizona Department of Corrections from mid-June through the end of August. The Repeat Offender Bureau has been in operation since June 16, 2008. Previously one bureau handled both gangs and repeat offenders. The increased numbers of cases coming from law enforcement prompted the expansion.

More Time, Less Crime: A Graph that Speaks for Itself:



Sources: FBI Uniform Crime Report/US Census/County Attorney Database

The Repeat Offender Program is based on a Rand Corporation Study that finds that 20% of the criminals commit 80% of the crimes. Police agencies submit cases against defendants and work directly with prosecutors in the Repeat Offender Bureau to target repeat offenders for lengthy prison sentences. Tough repeat-offender policies imposed by Thomas ensure that all second-time felons go to prison. Previously, the County Attorney’s Office had allowed the courts to determine whether they received prison time. Many repeat offenders also face the office’s “plead-to-the-lead” policy, which requires defendants to plead to the most serious charge or take their chances at trial. Other policies ensure defendants cannot simply receive probation instead of being locked up, or require especially long prison sentences for certain career criminals.

As a result of these policies, the number of convicted criminals sent to the Department of Corrections from Maricopa County has increased by 29% from 2004 to 2007. Many are repeat offenders. At the same time, the crime rate in Maricopa County continues to decline despite a rising county population. Overall crime rates in the Valley’s metropolitan areas are down 12.5% since 2004, despite a 6% increase in the overall population. In 2004, 6150.2 crimes were committed per 100,000 people. In 2007, that number fell to 5377.4.

County Attorney Thomas stated, “The crackdown on repeat offenders has worked because of the dedicated men and women in law enforcement and the dedicated prosecutors in our Repeat Offender Bureau. These combined efforts take career criminals off the streets, making neighborhoods safer.”

Number of convicted criminals prosecuted by Maricopa County Attorney’s Office sent to ADOC
➤ 2004-- 6,943
➤ 2005 --7,221
➤ 2006-- 7,146
➤ 2007-- 8,974

Source: County Attorney Database

In addition, between 2005 and 2007 14,211 convicted criminals received jail time.

Thomas added that he has enforced his repeat-offender program despite protests from Governor Janet Napolitano and the Arizona Department of Corrections, which objected to the cost of incarcerating these inmates in the state prison system. The downturn in crime rates, Thomas said, vindicates his hard-line approach to crime control.

Joining Mr. Thomas at today’s news conference were :

- Donna Neill, founder and director of NAILEM, a community safety and education group that was formed in 1996 which now has 45 thousand members
- Tony Piraino, founder and director of Northwest Block Watch Coalition, a crime prevention group that formed in 1992 to assist neighborhoods in creating block watches and educating neighborhoods about public safety and graffiti
- Linda Kleiner, founder and director of Together Against Graffiti, a two thousand member community group formed in 2005 to combat graffiti and the problems associated with it
- Ann Malone, founder and director of Require the Prior, a crime prevention group formed in 2007 to shore up crime prevention in the Indian School corridor and city wide/179 businesses and 45 hundred households are members

Recent cases:

Alexander Caratachea, 19 (DOB 2/28/89)

He was sentenced to 35 years in prison for a string of robberies he committed in the West Valley between June 2007 and July 2007. Caratachea was armed with a rifle during the robberies which focused mainly on gas stations, discount and convenience stores, and fast food restaurants. During the investigation and search for him, several victims described the rifle's banana clip which led police to dub the suspect as the "Banana Boy". The defendant was sentenced on June 27, 2008 in the courtroom of Judge Jeanne Garcia.

Brandon LaRue William (DOB 2/28/85)

Justin Gabriel Lincoln (DOB 10/22/90)

These two defendants were involved in committing armed robberies at Game Stop stores when there were customers. In one store, there were two 12 year old children. On August 6, 2008 Williams was sentenced to 34 years in prison. On August 26, 2008 Lincoln was sentenced to 27 years in the department of corrections.

Diego Garcia (DOB 7/13/67)

On July 1, 2008 this defendant was sentenced to 28 years in the department of corrections. July 1, 2005 Garcia drove towards a police car nearly striking the officer, ran through several back yards while fleeing police and then fired his handgun at three officers. Thankfully, no officers were hit.

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