

## Runner: Gang crime solution found in Proposition 6

Contributed by Sen. George Runner  
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With gang crime reaching epidemic levels across the state, local governments continue their struggle to respond to this long festering problem. But rather than prioritize existing money toward public safety, Democratic leaders continue to propose higher taxes.

In 2006, the City of Los Angeles hiked trash collection fees to raise an additional \$100 million to add another 1,000 officers to patrol the streets. When all was said and done, LA officials used a paltry \$42 million of the new funds to add a mere 400 new cops rather than the promised thousand. Recently, Mayor Villaraigosa has proposed another increase in fees to be used to pay for enhanced public safety.

The City of Sacramento is contemplating a voter initiative to pass a "gang crime" tax to deal with its rampant gang problems. Facing an election year and plagued by a rash of crime, city officials want to increase the local sales taxes to 8 percent. This would raise an estimated \$16 million a year for prevention and enforcement. Yet this sales tax proposal is ill-planned and hastily pushed and is even opposed by law enforcement leaders.

The City of Oakland joined the tax bandwagon as well by placing a parcel tax on the November local ballot. Officials promise that the money from this tax would be used to add 105 new police officers and 75 technicians. Amazingly, city officials continue to ask for more taxpayer dollars amid allegations of mishandling of existing funds, nepotism and corruption.

While these cities scheme to tax, a plan to infuse local governments with funds and tools for fighting crimes already exists. Proposition 6 &ndash; The Safe Neighborhoods Act would guarantee state funding for law enforcement and programs designed to reduce and prevent gang crime.

The LA City Council opposes Prop 6. This knee-jerk hostility toward the measure comes even though the proposition would increase the number of cops on the street &ndash; something the council continues to promise but fails to deliver.

Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums opposes Prop 6 as well, despite its benefits to his city, which is no model for public safety.

While these cities and others continue to wrangle for more taxpayer dollars, they offer few concrete plans on how the dollars will be spent. That's how the LA City Council was able to renege on its promise &ndash; by asking voters to approve higher taxes but giving few specifics on how that money would be spent.

Prop 6 will guarantee public safety spending from existing state dollars. This means more officers will patrol the street, more prevention programs, and more rehabilitation without raising taxes. Unlike individual city tax schemes, Prop 6 includes accountability. The measure will ensure that the dollars spent on prevention and rehabilitation will be used efficiently and effectively.

Prioritizing existing dollars is the winning strategy, especially since voters have clearly expressed opposition to increases in their tax burden. Recent PPIC polls show California voters overwhelmingly opposed to increases in sales tax and vehicle fees. With the passage of Prop 6, we can squeeze gangs without squeezing the taxpayers.

Senator Runner is the chairman of the Senate Republican Caucus and a co-author of Proposition 6-The Safe Neighborhoods Act. He previously authored California's Jessica's Law and Amber Alert. He represents Santa Clarita, the Antelope Valley, the Victor Valley, and portions of both the San Fernando Valley and Ventura County. Visit [SafeNeighborhoodsAct.com](http://SafeNeighborhoodsAct.com).

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