

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 2, 2010

RE: Early Prison Release

To the Honorable Senators and Representatives of the Florida Legislature

The Florida State Lodge, Fraternal Order of Police is deeply concerned with proposed 2010 legislation that would seek to authorize the early release of dangerous felons from Florida Prisons back into our communities in an effort to save money.

House Bill 23 and Senate Bills 184 and 484 are examples of bad legislation that would put our law abiding citizens at risk. Our professional law enforcement officers have a very demanding job today, stopping crime and protecting the public. The early release of dangerous felons simply to save money would in effect cost the state and the public dearly in a rapid rise in recidivism crime.

This experiment was tried in the 1980's and was a disaster. Crime rates surged across the state of Florida which led to an initiative by Attorney General Bill McCollum and Governor Charlie Crist to make sure that violent criminals serve at a minimum 85% of their sentence. The "Stop Turning Out Prisoners" bill in 1995 has been very effective in keeping prisoners behind bars resulting in a decade of declining crime rates.

These are tough economic times and we recognize that. However, it is wrong to reward violent criminals with early release in order to pass a budget.

The risk and danger that more criminals on Florida streets create for our already overburdened law enforcement officers is not worth the price. The state of Florida has the unwelcome distinction of leading the nation in the number of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty over the last few years.

For those who would say "we can't afford to keep sending people to prison" we say "we can't afford not too". Not when our law enforcement members pay the price with their lives and dedication to public safety.

The Florida State Lodge Fraternal Order of Police will oppose any legislation that would turn out criminals. It is the right thing to do.

Florida's economy will recover and our future remains bright but not by emptying our prisons of dangerous felons.

Sincerely,

James W. Preston, President
Florida State Lodge

CC: Honorable Governor Charlie Crist
Honorable Attorney General Bill McCollum
House Speaker Larry Cretul
Senate President Jeff Atwater