



Council President Nick Licata

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Licata: Public Safety Needs Nuanced, Complex Approach
Comparison with similar cities shows Seattle second in police staffing

SEATTLE – **Council President Nick Licata**, chair of the Council’s Public Safety, Government Relations, and Arts Committee, today released a brief study comparing Seattle’s police staffing with seven similar cities on the West Coast. “We have the second highest ratio of police officers to residents,” said **Council President Licata**. “Only San Francisco has more officers per resident, however, that city’s violent crime offense rate is nine percent higher.”

The public, Councilmembers, and **Council President Licata** are all calling for higher spending on public safety as part of the review of the Mayor’s proposed 2007-2008 Budget. This budget will raise and spend \$803 million next year and \$813 million in 2008 for the City’s general fund that pays for city services including the Seattle Police Department.

“My three years of experience serving as the Seattle City Council’s Public Safety Chair taught me long ago of the need to increase police staffing levels,” says **Council President Licata**. “The impact of crime cannot be measured with statistics because crime is a personal violation in our lives.” Yet **Council President Licata** notes that a look at police staffing levels and crime statistics in seven similar West Coast cities—San Francisco, Portland, Long Beach, San Jose, Oakland, and Sacramento—reveals that more police officers does not equal less crime or a better quality of life. “We do need more police on our streets, but fighting crime is not only a matter of adding more police officers.”

That’s why **Council President Licata** is leading an effort to develop a comprehensive public safety package that could include: increased police staffing, as well as a five to seven year staffing plan for the Seattle Police Department, more money for capital investments at the police department, youth intervention and crime prevention programs, pedestrian improvements, and programs that link human services and public safety. “I am confident that Seattle can be a safer, more livable city if, this year, we begin to budget new public safety investments in staffing and programs, as well as committing to starting long-term planning for the future,” said **Council President Licata**.

The Council will be holding its second public hearing for the 2007-2008 budget deliberations on Monday, October 30 at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall.

Enclosures: Chart comparing Seattle’s police staffing and crime rates with seven similar cities and an essay by Councilmember Licata reflecting on the findings and this year’s budget.