



*Charlie
Crist*

A Guest Article from the **Governor of Florida**

Governor Crist Applauds Decrease In Volume Of Crime

As Governor, I am committed to upholding government's first priority of ensuring "domestic tranquility," as our nation's Constitution instructs. To that end, I am committed to making sure our law enforcement officers are equipped to protect and serve the people of Florida. Law enforcement officers across our state are essential to ensuring the protection of our state, our communities and our families.

Your enforcement efforts are impressive – proof of your enduring commitment to serve. Based on reports gathered by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, you are making a difference. According to the *2008 Crime in Florida* report, violent crime was down 4.3 percent, reversing a three-year trend of increasing violent crime. While the overall volume of crime was up slightly – less than one percentage point – the drop in violent crime confirms that our programs and policies are moving our state in the right direction.

In September, we received more good news. I had the privilege to join with **Florida Department of Law Enforcement Commissioner Gerald Bailey** in announcing the mid-year update about crime in Florida. During the first half of 2009, crime is down almost eight percent. Looking back at past years, the mid-year numbers have frequently reflected the general trend reported at the end of the calendar year, serving as an "indicator" for what the full year of crime stats will be. We are especially pleased that the decreases appeared in all seven index crime categories – in both violent and non-violent crimes.

Violent crime is down by 9.7 percent for the first six months of the year. One of the most heinous crimes tracked – murder – is down almost 19 percent. We also saw decreases in other violent crimes including an 8.9 percent drop in the number of aggravated assaults, 13 percent drop in robbery, and 4.1 percent in forcible sex crimes. And, non-violent crimes are also at lower levels, declining 7.6 percent, from January to June: Burglary dropped 3.9 percent,

larceny fell 7 percent, and motor vehicle thefts dropped by 23.1 percent statewide.

While these statistics are favorable, we must never forget that each crime represents at least one victim or several victims. These individuals are not merely numbers on paper; they are parents, siblings, children, friends and loved ones. I applaud the efforts of Florida's law enforcement agencies that work together to assist crime victims and bring these offenders to justice.

This summer, we saw an outstanding example of your

success when we announced the results of Operation Orange Tree, which resulted in the rescue of five children who were subjects of child pornography or otherwise sexually victimized. This 10-week collaborative effort among Florida's law enforcement community led to the arrest of 77 individuals on charges ranging from possession of child pornography to sexual battery. Law enforcement executed 90 search warrants and seized thousands of child pornography photos and videos. I am grateful to every officer and investigator who made Operation Orange Tree possible.

Public safety is a priority across the state, and law enforcement agencies are using proactive programs to make a

difference in keeping our streets and communities safe. I remain committed to ensuring that you have the tools and resources you need to reduce crimes in the Sunshine State – tougher laws and tighter penalties.

Across our state every day, thousands of police officers, deputy sheriffs and state law enforcement officers make it their life's work to prevent, investigate, and solve crimes. Thank you for your commitment to serving your communities and to keeping Florida a safe place to live and to visit. You make noble and selfless sacrifices on a daily basis, often putting your commitment to public safety above your own safety. On behalf of the people of Florida, I am grateful for all you do.

May God bless you and our great state, and keep our people safe. ■

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An old man and woman were married for many years, even though they hated each other.

When they had a confrontation, screaming and yelling could be heard deep into the night.

The old man would shout, "When I die, I will dig my way up and out of the grave and come back and haunt you for the rest of your life!"

Neighbors feared him. They believed he practiced black magic, because of the many strange occurrences that took place in their neighborhood.

The old man liked the fact that he was feared. To everyone's relief, he died of a heart attack when he was 98.

His wife had a closed casket at the wake. After the burial, she went straight to the local bar and began to party, as if there was no tomorrow.

Her neighbors, concerned for her safety, asked, "Aren't you afraid that he may indeed be able to dig his way up and out of the grave and come back to haunt you for the rest of your life?"

The wife put down her drink and said, "Let him dig. I had him buried upside down!"



Executive Director David Murrell meets with Governor Charlie Crist at the Florida PBA to discuss law enforcement issues.