Task Force Unveils Plan to Fight Louisiana Crime

General Goals, Specific Proposals Outlined

A long-range plan to improve Louisiana’s ability to fight crime was released Saturday by the Task Force on Crime of the Louisiana Goals Committee.

The report outlined general goals and specific proposals to implement these goals. It represents months of study by leading Louisiana educators, public officials, and law enforcement officers.

The report was released jointly by state Sen. Michael H. O’Keefe, chairman of the Goals for Louisiana Committee, and Louisiana Supreme Court Justice Joe W. Sanders, chairman of the Task Force on Crime.

Six other task forces are expected shortly to issue preliminary reports on subjects ranging from recreation and tourism, to education and economic development. A series of public seminars will be held in major Louisiana cities this fall to seek the views of the public about the goals recommended by the task forces.

The report of the Task Force on Crime presented seven general goals to upgrade the fight against crime and 42 supporting, specific goals to implement the program.

GOALS LISTED

The general goals listed were:

- Increase the effectiveness of law enforcement in Louisiana.
- Improve criminal justice in Louisiana through modernization of the court system and the capabilities, facilities, and processes of the judicial function.
- Increase measures to safeguard the rights of persons accused of crime.
- Provide adequate custody and maximum rehabilitation of offenders commensurate with the best interest of society.
- Utilize modern advances in science and technology to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of law enforcement, the criminal justice system and corrections.
- Effectively cope with the growing problem of organized crime in Louisiana.
- Reduce the illicit narcotics and drug abuse problem in Louisiana and establish a realistic program of rehabilitation of addicts.

Specific goals to achieve these aims and supporting arguments illustrating the necessity of each step were included in the report.

The need for increased public understanding and cooperation is listed as a specific goal under several of the general areas.

“The public, in spite of its concern over rising crime, is not yet sufficiently knowledgeable regarding what it must contribute in order to make crime control efforts effective,” said the report. “When Louisiana citizens refuse to cooperate with or participate in law enforcement, the policeman’s task moves from the formidable to the impossible.”

The report noted that a major problem in combating organized crime is that the public continues to provide the funds to operate organized crime through their support of illegal gambling.

$20 BILLION YEARLY

“Income from illegal gambling is estimated at $20 billion nationally each year and nets over $6.7 billion in profits. It is the crime syndicate’s major source of income. Citizen support of illegal gambling sustains this basic source of power for organized crime. Eliminating or reducing illegal gambling would seriously cripple organized crime,” said the report.

The report also sharply criticized the prevalent system of locking up all offenders for long terms in the state penitentiary.

“A number of Louisiana offenders pose no threat or danger to society until prolonged incarceration in a society of criminals such as is found in correctional institutions creates anti-social attitudes and behavior,” said the report.

“Other offenders have problems which are almost entirely medical rather than criminal. Despite this known fact, offenders are routinely sent through our correctional institutional system and treated largely on the basis of crime committed rather than the best interest of the offender and society.”

ADDS TO PROBLEM

“This adds to the problem of institutional overcrowding and high caseloads for the probation and parole officers. Non-court treatment facilities for persons with drug, alcoholism or addiction problems should be developed and used if it is in the best interest of both the person and society,” said the report.

The Goals program was authorized by the legislature last year and established by the Council on Governmental Reorganization. Similar goals programs have proven highly successful in Dallas and Atlanta.

The Council will prepare and introduce to the 1970 legislature any legislation necessary to implement the goals. The Council is working closely with Louisiana State University in direction of the program.

Vice chairman of the Task Force on Crime is Bishop Harold R. Perry, auxiliary Roman Catholic bishop of New Orleans.

Ex officio members are Gen. David Wade, director of the Department of Public Safety, and Neil Lamont, executive director of the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement.