

# **New California Poll Shows Nearly One Million Teens Left Unsupervised After School, Threatening Public Safety**

## **Law Enforcement Leaders Call on State Legislature to Enact After-School Spending Measure**

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SACRAMENTO, CA — **Nearly one million—three in 10 California teens—are left unsupervised after school three or more days each week**, according to a new poll conducted by Opinion Research Corporation and released today by California law enforcement leaders, state legislators and the Governor's office. During a press conference inside the Governor's press room at the State Capitol, Sacramento Police Chief Albert Najera, Davis Police Chief Jim Hyde and Woodland Police Chief Carey Sullivan warned that the lack of after-school programs is a threat to public safety. They stressed the proven success of after-school activities in preventing youth crime, which peaks between 2 PM and 6 PM in California. The Governor's Senior Advisor Bonnie Reiss and State Senators Roy Ashburn (R-Bakersfield) and Tom Torlakson (D-Antioch) also spoke in support of after-school programs. "Many people believe kids are most likely to get in trouble at night or on the weekends, but it is really the after-school hours that law enforcement worries about," said **Chief Najera**. "I know that when after-school program are funded and more kids have something to do, we're going to see that spike in juvenile crime start to diminish." The law enforcement leaders cited several key findings from a new survey of California teens, ages 12 to 17, commissioned by the anti-crime organization Fight Crime: Invest in Kids California, as evidence of the need for after-school programs to prevent juvenile crime. **POLL KEY FINDINGS:**

- Teens who are left unsupervised are **three times more likely to engage in criminal behavior;**
  - More than **twice as likely to hang out with gang members;**
  - More than **three times as likely to smoke marijuana;** and
  - More than **five times as likely to use drugs other than marijuana.**
- In the past year, one in five of the teens surveyed had engaged in activities that could have resulted in arrest, and one in five had been the victim of a crime.

“Law enforcement leaders know that after-school activities help prevent juvenile crime by giving kids a safe, supervised alternative to hanging out on the streets,” **Pasadena Police Chief Bernard Melekian** said in a statement. “When these programs are not fully funded, local law enforcement loses one of its most powerful anti-crime weapons.”

Local law enforcement leaders stood with state and local officials to urge the State Assembly to move forward on enacting critical after-school legislation before the Legislature begins its summer recess on July 7. Prop. 49 will expand state after-school funding by over \$400 million in the upcoming fiscal year, but implementing legislation is needed to improve the state program in order to help attract applicants and ensure program quality.

Currently, SB 638, a bill introduced by State Senator Tom Torlakson and joint authored by State Senator Roy Ashburn, has not been assigned a hearing date by the Assembly Appropriations Committee. The bill would increase the funding level per child, raise the grant amount available per program, and allow for more flexibility in meeting local matching requirements.

“With the implementation of Prop 49 fast approaching, SB 638 puts in place key reforms to ensure high-quality programs roll-out successfully,” said Senator Torlakson. He added, “these reforms are necessary because serious financial and administrative barriers currently keep many kids from participating in great after-school programs.”

If the bill is not enacted by July 7, the application process will be delayed and new after-school programs will not be able to open their doors this fall when the school year begins, unnecessarily jeopardizing public safety by leaving hundreds of thousands of California teens without after-school activities to keep them engaged and off the streets.

“I know how important it is to watch the bottom line, but I guarantee you that the money spent on after-school programs will feel small if you end up being a victim of crime,” **Orange County Sheriff Michael Carona** said in a statement. “It’s a fact. The after-school hours are the primetime for juvenile crime. If we want to see more kids in caps and gowns instead of handcuffs, we have to fund after-school programs.”

The new poll shows that like law enforcement leaders, California teens want to see after-school programs expanded. Of the hundreds of thousands of teens without access to after-school programs, three out of four say that they would participate if programs were available. Overall, eighty-six percent of the youths polled believe that after-school activities help teens stay safe and out of trouble.

Students of all ages need after-school programs. While Prop. 49 focuses on elementary and middle school students, high school-age youth are 55 percent more likely than their middle school counterparts to be unsupervised three or more days

each week after school and nearly four times as likely as middle schoolers to engage in activities for which they could be arrested.

“After-school programs are proven to deter teenagers from crime and increase the likelihood that they will become successful, productive adults,” said State Director Barrie Becker from Fight Crime: Invest in Kids California.

Law enforcement leaders highlighted provisions in SB 638 that would substantially increase high school after-school funding out of freed-up federal after-school dollars, as more federally-funded elementary and middle school programs transition to the state program funded by Prop. 49.

“When we invest in our students, it makes them want to invest in themselves,” said **Bill Fennessy, Site Coordinator for BlairLEARNS**, an after-school program at Blair High School in Pasadena. “I have seen so many young people when they first walk through our doors, not believing that anyone, especially themselves, cared if they were going to be a success or failure, walk out of those same doors actually believing in themselves and their ability to make their life and their world better. I have seen after-school programs change lives.”

**For full poll results or to arrange interviews with local law enforcement and after-school providers, please contact Erica Derryck (510) 836-2050 x305, (510) 435-4345 cell, [ederryck@calfightcrime.org](mailto:ederryck@calfightcrime.org).**

*Fight Crime: Invest in Kids California is a bipartisan, anti-crime organization led by more than 350 sheriffs, police chiefs, district attorneys, other police leaders and victims of violence. Its mission is to take a critical look at the research about what really works to keep kids from becoming criminals. Among the strategies proven to be effective are preschool, after-school programs, and youth mental health services. [www.fightcrime.org/ca](http://www.fightcrime.org/ca)*