



Tomas Ovalle / The Fresno Bee
Former U.S. Attorney Paul Seave speaks during a news conference Tuesday in Fresno announcing his appointment to head the newly created state Office of Gang and Youth Violence Policy.

State fights gangs in Fresno

Governor visits to name leader of office on youth violence.

By Charles McCarthy / The Fresno Bee
09/05/07 04:26:11

Gang violence is a local problem, but wiping it out will require a coordinated statewide solution, Gov. Schwarzenegger said Tuesday in Fresno as he announced the launch of an anti-gang initiative to boost law enforcement efforts and also provide job training for at-risk and gang-involved youths.

Schwarzenegger appointed Paul Seave of Sacramento, former U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of California, to head the new Office of Gang and Youth Violence Policy.

"As you get rid of gangs in one city, they pop up somewhere else," Schwarzenegger told a gathering in the Fresno City Hall Annex that included Fresno Mayor Alan Autry, Fresno Police Chief Jerry Dyer and California Highway Patrol Commissioner Mike Brown. "We need to do more than just lock people up."

Schwarzenegger also committed the California Highway Patrol to bolster local law enforcement agencies in gang-affected areas.

Seave will be assisted by a 10-member advisory council, including two Fresno men -- Dyer and John Shegerian, chief executive officer of Electronic Recyclers.

The initiative also includes providing \$2.8 million in Workforce Investment Act funds to local governments to expand job training for at-risk and gang-involved youths and gang members.

"Law enforcement by itself cannot solve the gang problem," Seave said.

Tuesday's appointments are part of a state program announced earlier this year that targets more than \$31 million in state and federal funding toward anti-gang efforts.

It comes a week after Dyer announced that Fresno police will be cracking down on 25 black street gangs in southwest Fresno, starting with three gangs with the most history of violence. The Westside Gang Operation is modeled after Operation Bulldog, which was launched in November to eliminate Bulldog gang members -- most of whom are Hispanic -- from Fresno.

Over the Labor Day weekend, Fresno police counted 37 felony arrests during an operation to reduce gang-related shootings in southeast Fresno. Of 17 arrested for suspected gang activity, 15 were Bulldogs, police said.

Dyer thanked Schwarzenegger for choosing Fresno to launch the anti-gang initiative.

"It is not just a local issue," Dyer said.

But appointing a panel and setting aside a few million dollars for job training won't stop California gangs, said Malcolm Klein, a retired University of Southern California professor who has written numerous books about street gangs. There is no quick fix to solving the state's gang problem, just as there are no quick fixes to the state's drug problem, Klein said.

"It's craziness," he said.

But Klein said he was encouraged to hear that the advisory panel includes people who have been involved in gang intervention and prevention efforts.

In addition to Dyer and Shegerian, the committee includes:

Sacramento police Lt. Harvey Woo.

David L. Brewer III, Los Angeles Unified School District superintendent.

Jack Calhoun, president of Hope Matters and leader of a 13-city gang prevention network in California.

Connie Rice, CEO of The Advancement Project of Los Angeles, which works to reform local government to improve services for low-income residents.

The Rev. Joseph Bryant Jr., senior pastor of San Francisco's Calvary Hill Community Church.

Darryl Charles, founding member of Overcoming Gangs in San Diego.

Deborah Aguilar, founder of A Time For Grieving, a support group for Salinas mothers who have lost children due to violent crimes.

Sandra Rodriguez, San Bernardino High School principal.