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INTO THE BLACK

A LOOK AT GOVERNOR CORZINE'S BUDGET PROPOSAL

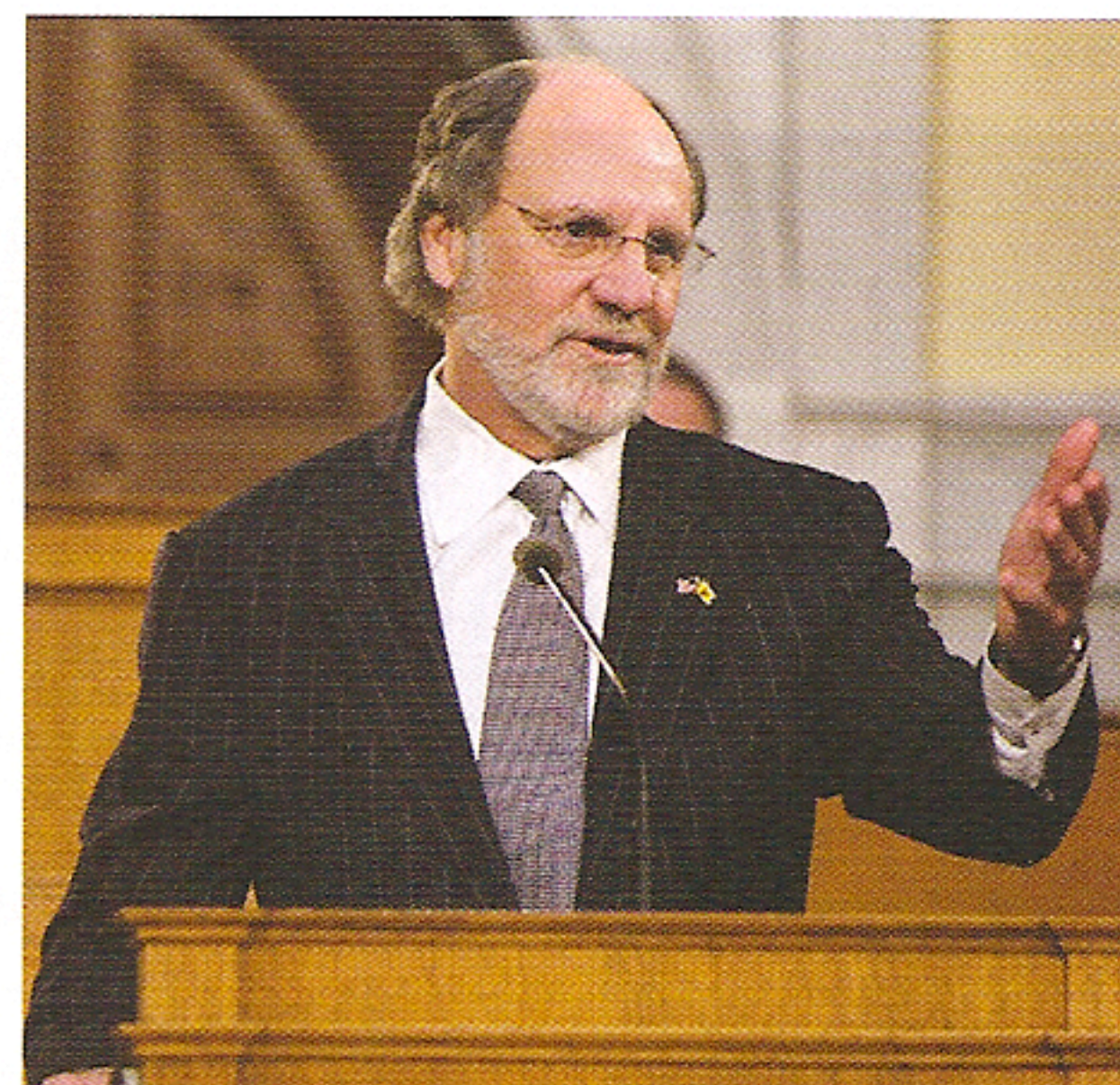
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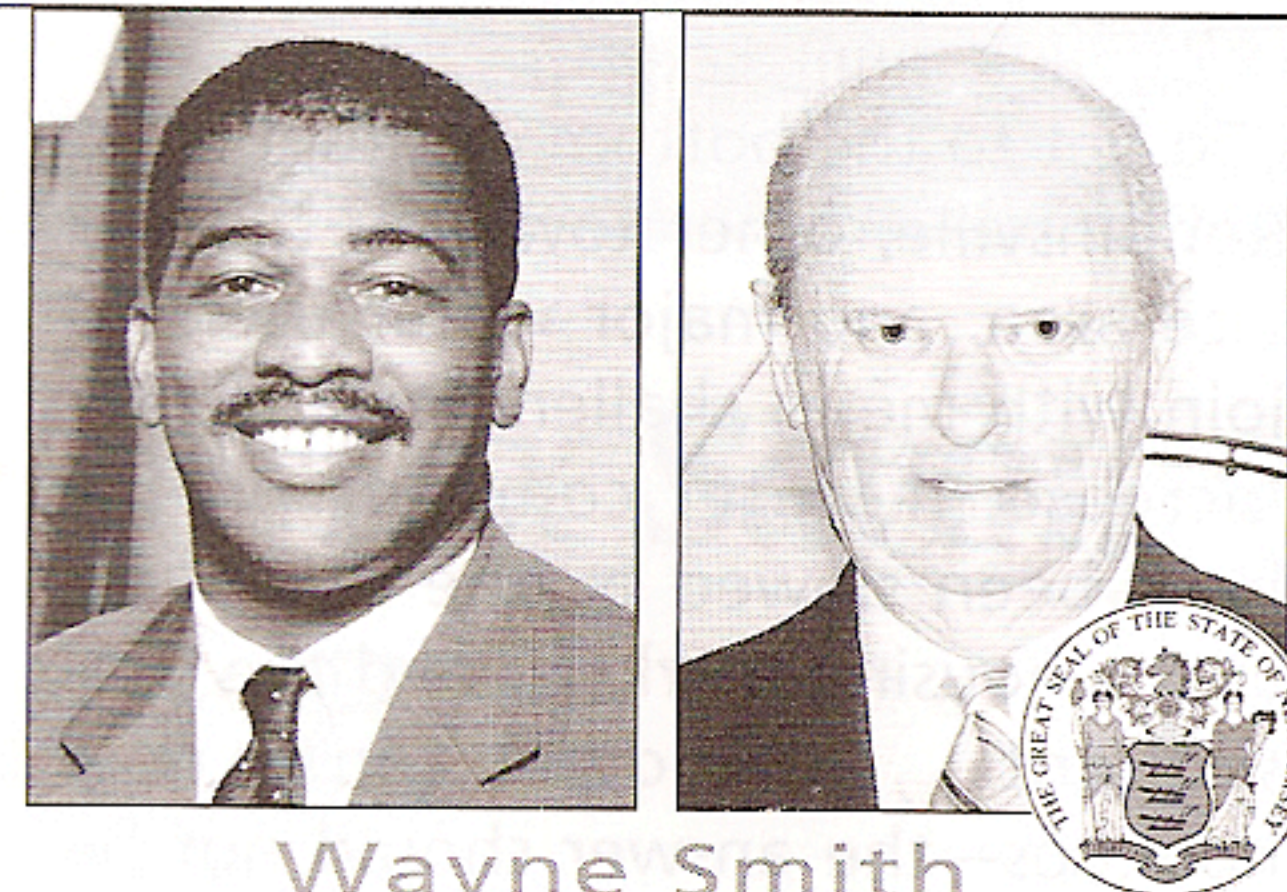


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Police-Parole Partnerships AN ECONOMICAL PUBLIC SAFETY RESOURCE



Wayne Smith
Mayor, Township of Irvington
& Peter J. Barnes Jr.
Chairman, New Jersey State Parole Board



State Parole Board Executive Director Joseph M. Shields (left), Chairman Peter J. Barnes Jr. and Irvington Mayor Wayne Smith, at the January 18, 2008 public signing of Irvington's Police-Parole Partnership.

With violent crime a continuing concern and local budgets as tight as ever, New Jersey's municipalities must be creative in getting more out of existing law-enforcement resources. As Governor Corzine stated in his Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods, the solution must come in the form of intelligence-sharing and operational partnerships between municipal police departments, and their counterparts at the state and federal levels.

The Township of Irvington was one of the first to adopt this model, by partnering with the State Police, FBI and Drug Enforcement Agency in 2003. "Most communities don't ask for help," Mayor Wayne Smith said at the time, "but we saw no need to be proud and arrogant." Irvington has already benefited from these partnerships.

In January, Mayor Smith and Township Police Director Michael V. Damiano signed a new public safety agreement with Chairman Peter J. Barnes Jr. and Executive Director

Joseph M. Shields of the New Jersey State Parole Board. This agreement was the first of a new model of Police-Parole Partnerships that gives municipal police officers and state parole officers better eyes for investigation, and longer arms for enforcement, with no new or additional costs to the taxpayers of the township or state.

The State Parole Board and Irvington Police Department are engaging in direct data sharing, which gives municipal police an up-to-the-minute awareness of the parolees in their community, the addresses where they reside, the rehabilitative services used to address their specific risks and needs, their criminal background and details of their current offense, and the conditions under which they are supervised.

Parole Officers: "Part Cop, Part Social Worker" The State Parole Board is New Jersey's lead reentry agency, with parole officers who serve a unique law enforcement role as "part cop, part social worker." Each year, nearly

16,000 adult and juvenile offenders are released from state correctional facilities, back to the communities from which they came. More than half will be subject to a period of supervision by a state parole officer. Those officers work to fulfill the State Parole Board's mission of helping ensure these ex-prisoners "reenter," or return to society and become law-abiding citizens.

FOR TOO LONG,
MUNICIPAL POLICE
DEPARTMENTS WERE NOT
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DISTRICT OFFICE.

Many offenders face large obstacles when they leave prison. They face barriers to employment, often including poor education, few marketable skills, a limited job history, and the stigma of a criminal record. Many face chronic physical and mental health problems, including addiction. If they are unable to overcome these obstacles, many ex-prisoners revert to the same activities that led them to prison in the first place.

The State Parole Board works with government and non-profit agencies to connect parolees with vocational programs, substance abuse treatment and related services, targeted to break the cycle and risk of crime.

In addition to their reentry role, state parole officers have unique law enforcement powers and responsibilities. With 405 sworn officers, the State Parole Board is one of the largest police agencies in New Jersey. It is the second-largest, after the State Police, to deploy officers on the streets with statewide law enforcement jurisdiction.

Parole officers supervise parolees who are still serving a sentence, with strict conditions that can result in a return to incarceration. These offi-

cers have the power to make unannounced home visits, and interview parolees' families and employers. In many cases they subject parolees to nightly curfews or random drug tests, and prohibit them from associating with gang members.

While most police interact with offenders only while investigating a crime, parole officers interact with the parolees on their caseload, and with their families and support network, on a regular basis. This gives

them a unique level of intelligence about the goings-on of communities in which, unfortunately, crime takes place, gang members recruit youngsters and drug deals are made.

For too long, municipal police departments were not taking advantage of the resources and information available in their local parole district office. They were not benefiting from the wealth of criminal intelligence and law-enforcement manpower the State Parole Board represents.

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Smart Use of Public Safety Resources
Fortunately, we are leading a change. Chairman Barnes, a veteran FBI special agent and former Director of the Edison and East Brunswick Police Departments, has spearheaded intelligence sharing partnerships between the FBI and each State Parole Board district office, to take on issues including gang suppression.

The Police-Parole Partnership in Irvington, and similar partnerships we have built in communities including Camden and Trenton, enable the State Parole Board and the municipal agencies to mutually benefit from better intelligence, and from direct manpower assistance in joint field operations.

Joint Home Visits and More Because they accompany parole officers on joint home visits and warrant executions, municipal police now can rec-

ognize individual parolees and identify whether they are violating a curfew, or hanging out with known Bloods or Crips. They can then report this information to parole officers, who are authorized to take action against these technical violations that may indicate the parolee is at risk of committing a new crime.

Helping municipal officers get to know parolees in a non-confrontational manner can also help with parole's reentry mission, by reinforcing the message that society wants to help these ex-prisoners stay away from negative influences.

By working together on joint field operations, both the state parole officers and the municipal police officers benefit from serving on larger teams that can accomplish more during one shift. This is especially important with today's budget realities, in that it

comes with the addition of no new costs, just a smarter combination of currently existing state and municipal manpower and services.

As President and Chairman of the New Jersey Urban Mayors' Association, Mayor Smith urges New Jersey mayors to join with the State Parole Board in forging new Police-Parole Partnerships to enhance the safety and security of their communities. Chairman Barnes and the State Parole Board stand ready to join with mayors and municipal police departments, to promote public safety and help ensure ex-prisoners reenter society as law-abiding citizens.

Mayors and police departments interested in forming a Police-Parole Partnership with their parole district office should contact Director Thomas James of the State Parole Board's Division of Parole, at 609-633-3918. ▲

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