

A Positive Outlook

PUBLIC SAFETY KEY TO ECONOMIC GROWTH



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**APPLIED
ANALYSIS**

Public safety is a top priority for every community across the nation. That's no less the case here in Nevada, where tourism drives our economic engine. From Las Vegas to Reno and everywhere in between, the Silver State annually attracts more than 50 million visitors who come to gamble, dine, dance, hike and enjoy many other activities. Nevada remains a top tourist destination not only because of the unique experiences and amenities it offers, but also because of the secure environment it provides for visitors from all over the world.

Crime trends show that our state has become safer in recent years, bucking the conventional wisdom that crime rises during economic turmoil. In fact, the state's overall crime rate climbed

rapidly during the economic boom in the early 2000s before peaking in 2006. It gradually fell through the Great Recession and has remained relatively stable during the economic recovery.

In 2013 (the latest year available), the statewide crime rate had dropped by about a third from its level a decade earlier. Most of that improvement came from a dramatic fall in property crimes, though violent crime was slightly lower than where it stood shortly after the turn of the century. Those trends held true in southern Nevada, home to 73 percent of the state's residents and 84 percent of its visitors. In Clark County, the violent crime rate in the past few years was essentially unchanged from a decade ago, while property crime had fallen by roughly one-third.

Are these positive trends happenstance? *I think not.*

More officers on the streets means less crime. A decade ago, Clark County Sheriff Bill Young championed the More Cops sales tax to fund hundreds of additional officers across southern Nevada. As those officers were hired and put on the streets, the crime rates stopped growing and started shrinking, despite one of the worst economic environments in American history. Today, the More Cops sales tax is responsible for more than 800 extra officers, 25 percent of all local police officers in Clark County. Those additional officers helped southern Nevada police agencies weather a significant loss of officers from budget cuts made necessary by the severe loss of government tax revenues during the downturn.

Now Nevada has transitioned from a period of recession to one of recovery. While we probably won't see the exponential growth reported in the early 2000s anytime soon, Nevada is again among the top states in the nation for both population growth and employment growth. With more people calling Nevada home, policymakers and police officials will need to keep a watchful eye on crime trends and work to ensure the gains made in public safety during the last decade are not lost. Less crime is critical to the success of our all-important tourism industry, our economic development efforts and the quality of life for Nevada residents old and new.

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