To: Governor Dannel P. Malloy

From: Mike Lawlor, Under Secretary for Criminal Justice Policy and Planning

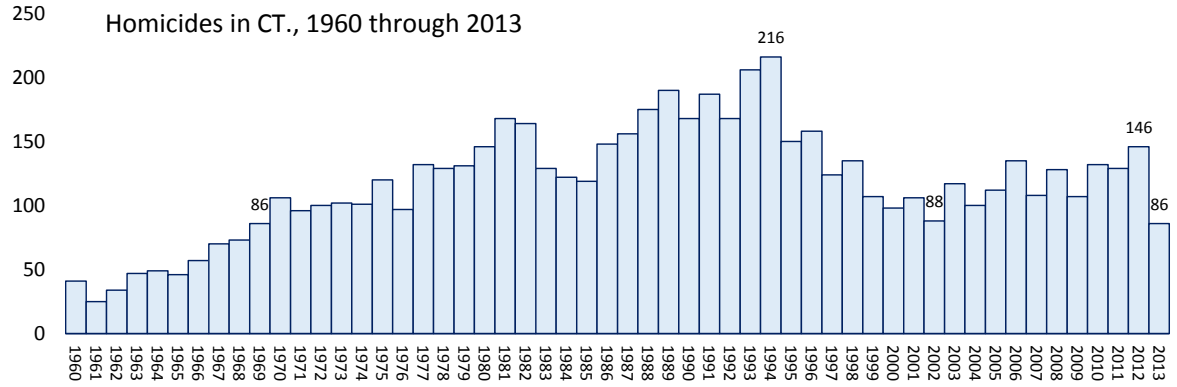
Date: August 12, 2014

Subject: 2014 Mid-Year Update on Crime Trends

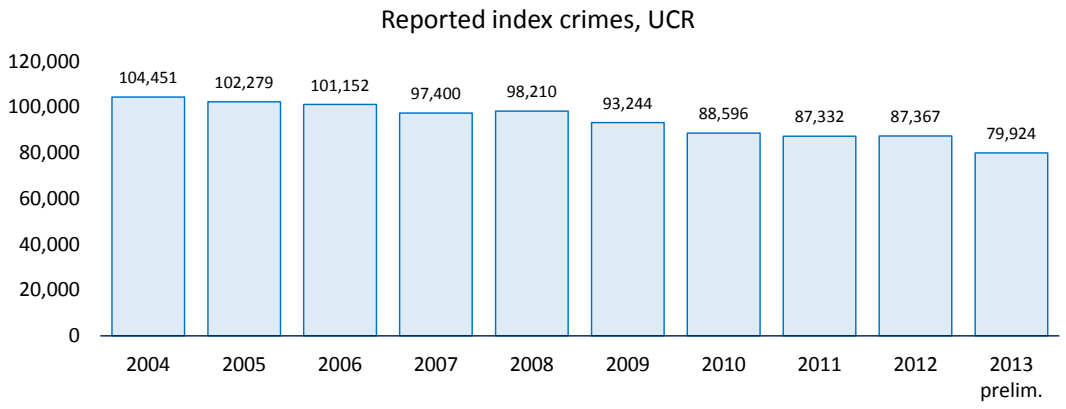
Crime Reduction

Murders are down statewide. In 2013 there were a total of 86 murders, a 32% reduction from 2011. It is the second lowest total in 40 years. In 2014, the year-to-date statewide number of homicides continues to trend at that historically low rate.

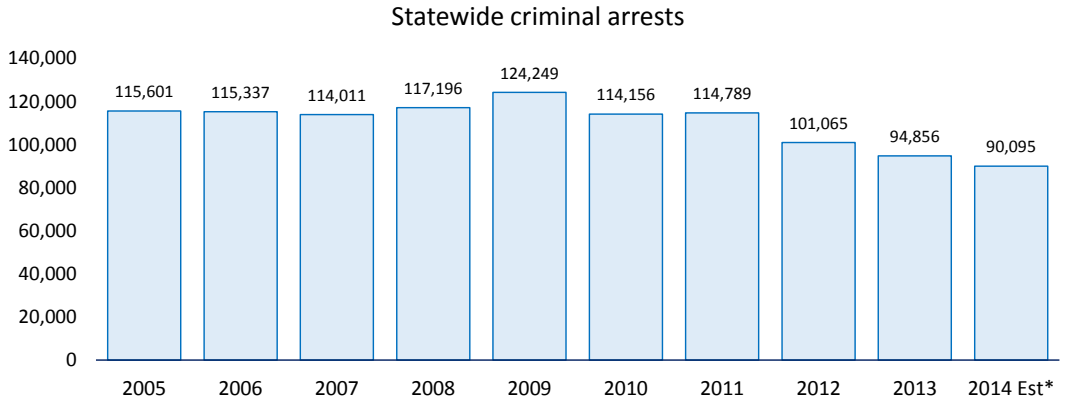
Much of this success can be attributed to a focus on reducing the number of murders in the three major cities of New Haven, Hartford and Bridgeport since 2011. In 2011 those three cities accounted for 81 of the 129 murders in Connecticut. In 2013 that number was 56, a 31% decrease. This year, the year to date comparison for the three cities shows a 16% decrease from 2013 [29 in '13 versus 24 in '14]. There has also been a 4% reduction in non-fatal shootings in those three cities compared to this time last year.



The FBI reports that "Index Crimes" (crimes involving victims, i.e. murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft and arson) dropped 11.2% in Connecticut between 2008 and 2012. The number of 2013 index crimes for Connecticut appears to be down significantly from 2012. Connecticut State Police are reporting an 8% reduction in property crime and a nearly 11% reduction in violent crime, compared to 2012. The 86,994 total for reported Index Crimes in 2012 was the lowest since 1968. The highest was 177,068 in 1990. The tentative number for 2013 is 79,924. For the three major cities, index crime was down 9% in New Haven; 7% in Hartford and 15% in Bridgeport in 2013 compared to 2012.



The total number of statewide arrests for all crimes (Index and non-index crimes combined) has dropped 23.7% between 2009 and 2013, further underscoring the drop in crime generally. In 2009 there were 124,249 arrests statewide. In 2013 there were 94,856. This year, total statewide arrests as of August 1 are running approximately 5% lower than last year.



Recidivism Reduction

Overall, recidivism among inmates leaving prison has dropped significantly in recent years. For example, the three-year return to prison rate for offenders released from prison in 2011 was 15% lower than that for those released in 2005. For the same years, the rate of re-arrest [as opposed to re-incarceration] for offenders within three years was 12% lower. Those trends appear to be continuing for releases in 2012 and 2013, although we won't have complete data until three years out from release, the customary period of time during which recidivism most often occurs. We do know that the number of new admissions to prison is down almost 17% in 2013 compared to 2009. That includes both newly sentenced prisoners and pre-trial admissions, but both categories have declined at the same rate.

It is worth noting that the total number of offenders on adult probation has also dropped almost 17% over the same period, consistent with the declining number sent to prison and the number being arrested.

Recidivism among offenders being supervised on Adult Probation is also down significantly, having dropped 7% from 2007 to 2013. The Juvenile Probation recidivism rate has also dropped by 11% over

that same period. These two rates of recidivism, as reported by the Judicial Branch, count a re-arrest as recidivating.

These dropping recidivism numbers are all the more encouraging in light of the fact that offenders entering prison tend to be higher risk and more serious than before. This is a direct result of the prioritization efforts described below. Since non-violent and lower risk offenders are less likely to be sent to prison in the first place, we are getting better outcomes with a more challenging group of offenders. This fact, assuming these trends continue, should lead directly to dropping crime rates for the foreseeable future.

Truth–in-Sentencing

Connecticut, like most states, imposes restrictions on eligibility for release depending on the type of crime and other factors. Although a 1994 law appeared to require violent offenders to serve 85% of any prison sentence imposed by a court, a wide variety of release mechanisms allowed for these offenders to be released prior to 85%.

For example, an analysis of releases from 2008, the year following the Cheshire Tragedy, shows most violent offenders convicted of Robbery 1st Degree, a Class B Violent Felony, were released well before the 85% mark. Some offenders served as little as 59% of their original sentence. This was also the case with Assault 1st Degree, another Class B violent felony. One such offender was released in 2008 after having served only 51% of the original sentence imposed by the court.

Reforms adopted by the General Assembly in 2008 have had a significant impact on the effort to prioritize secure beds for the most dangerous, high-risk offenders. Public Act 08-01 mandated the adoption of state-of-the-art risk assessment tools to be used by the Department of Correction and the Board of Parole as they make release decisions for prisoners. Although the DOC and the Board did not begin to implement these changes until 2011, they are now routinely used to identify high-risk offenders regardless of their crime of conviction. Since 2011, violent and high-risk offenders have done a far greater percentage of their original sentences than ever before, and no violent offenders are released from DOC custody before having served at least 85% of the original sentence imposed by the Court.

In general, release decisions are much more risk-focused than before. Prior to 2011, release decisions were typically made by wardens based on limited information or by the parole board based on incomplete files using outdated risk assessment. Since then the process has been very selective and the number of inmates leaving prison has steadily declined, and has done so at a rate far in excess of the declining inmate population. Total DOC population has dropped by approximately 1,250 since January 1, 2011, or about 5%. Over that same period, the total number of releases from prison has declined by almost 18%. During the same period of time reported crime declined by almost 10%.

The most dramatic evidence of the drop in number of prison release is that the number of inmates released on discretionary parole has dropped by more than 40% compared to 2009. The number of "end of sentence" releases has dropped by 17%; the number of "transitional supervision" releases (these are prisoners sentenced to less than two years to serve and therefore not parole eligible) has dropped almost 34% since 2009.

Significant Policy Changes

A number of policy and tactical changes appear to have directly contributed to the falling violent crime rate, the drop in recidivism for inmates leaving prison, the declining prison census, the dramatic reduction of the total probation caseload, and the significant increase in percentage of time served by violent offenders.

Some of the major changes are:

- **Prioritization of crime involving violence and firearms**
  Law enforcement agencies, prosecutors and courts have increasingly embraced the requirement in CGS 51-277c to give priority to crimes involving physical violence and to crimes involving the possession of a firearm. Project Longevity and domestic violence intervention are two examples of this focus.

- **De-criminalization of minor, drug possession offenses**
  PA 11-71 has reduced the caseloads of the state's prosecutors by approximately 6,000 cases per year and allowing them to devote more time and attention to cases involving violent and other serious crime.

- **DWI Home Confinement and Ignition Interlock expansion initiatives**
  In partnership with Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the Department of Correction, the Office of Adult Probation and the Department of Motor Vehicles have focused on reducing drunk driving by active supervision of repeat drunk drivers rather than simply releasing these chronic offenders to the street. Early results indicate a dramatic effect on recidivism.

- **Focus on recidivism reduction in the Department of Correction.**
  The introduction of "SCORES', based on the Ohio Risk Assessment System and the adoption of Risk Reduction Earned Credits as an evidence-based incentive system, together with extensive training of staff has reduced crime by reducing recidivism. Our state's results were recently highlighted by a national report on recidivism reduction success in Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Wisconsin

- **Risk Assessment and Structured Decision Making at the Board of Parole.**
  Full implementation of the reforms required by Public Act 08-01 did not begin in earnest until 2011. Since then, the Board has substantially completed the reform process. Hearings and decisions are now guided by SCORES' evidence-based risk assessment, a staff psychologist evaluates the background of at-risk offenders, victims have expanded input and staff are able to provide complete backgrounds to Board members in advance of hearings.

- **"If you see something, say something" awareness regarding firearms.**
  The firearms policies required by Public Act 13-3 have now been fully implemented. Citizens have reported concerns to police with increasing frequency and law enforcement have been able to use a variety of tools to intervene in advance of a tragedy.

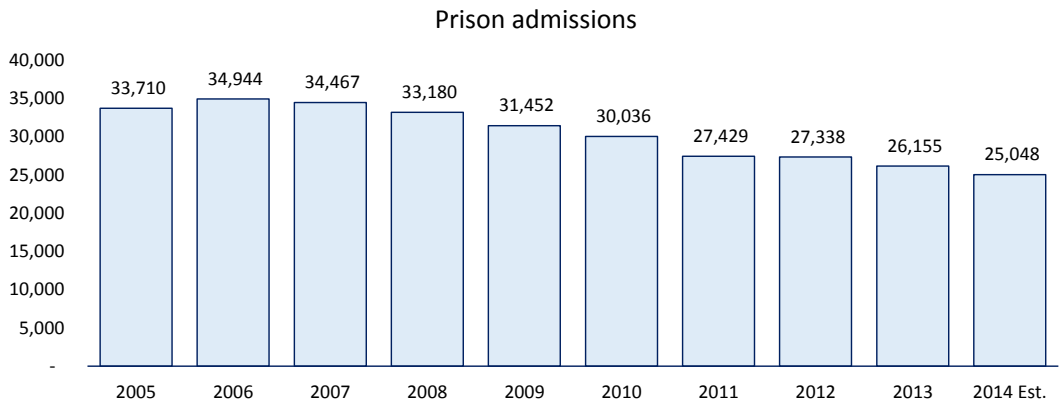
- **Full implementation of the "Raise the Age" initiative.**

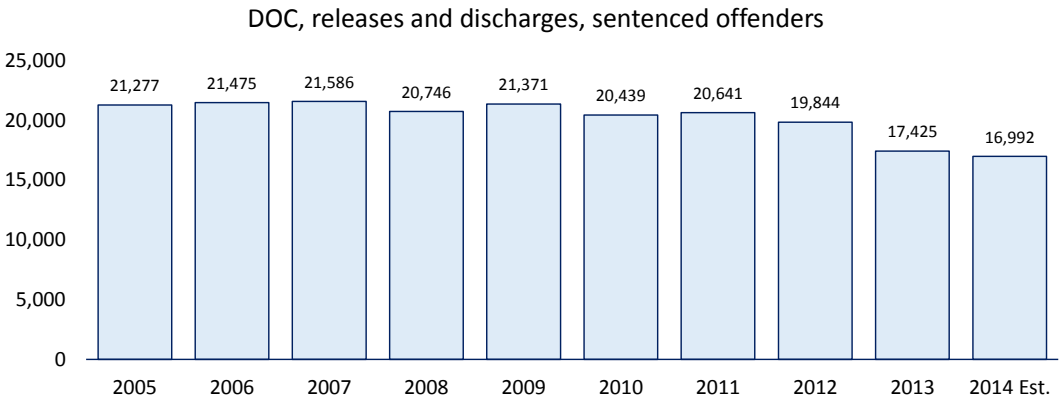
A number of policy changes have contributed to a dramatic reduction in crime among young offenders and juveniles. Even with the addition of 16 and 17 year olds to the Juvenile Court caseload, the total caseload has actually declined compared to the pre-Raise the Age years. The number of 16 and 17 year old inmates in the adult Department of Correction has dropped 80% [61 versus 307] since 2009. More importantly, the number of inmates ages 18 to 21 has dropped 42.5% over that same period, an early indication of success in diverting young people from a trajectory from juvenile court to adult prison. It is also worth noting that these same declines have reduced the racial disparity in our prison population by more than 10% over that same period.

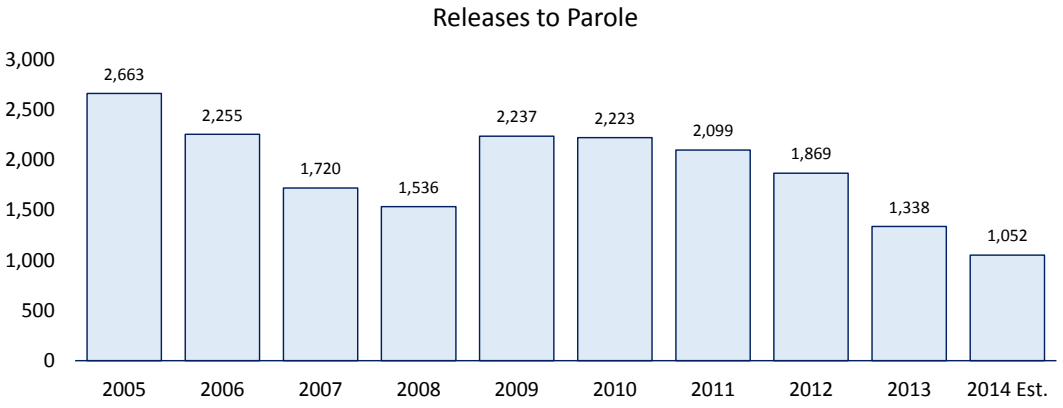
- **Community Policing and Confidence Building in urban areas.**
  Led by police departments in Hartford, Bridgeport and New Haven, the law enforcement community has accepted the challenge of regaining the confidence of African American and Latino communities. The return of the "Community Policing" model, implementation of the new racial profiling prohibition and reporting system, together with the Dream Act and the Trust Act, have improved relations between local police and immigrant communities and enabled both victims and witnesses to contact police without fear of being reported to federal immigration officials.

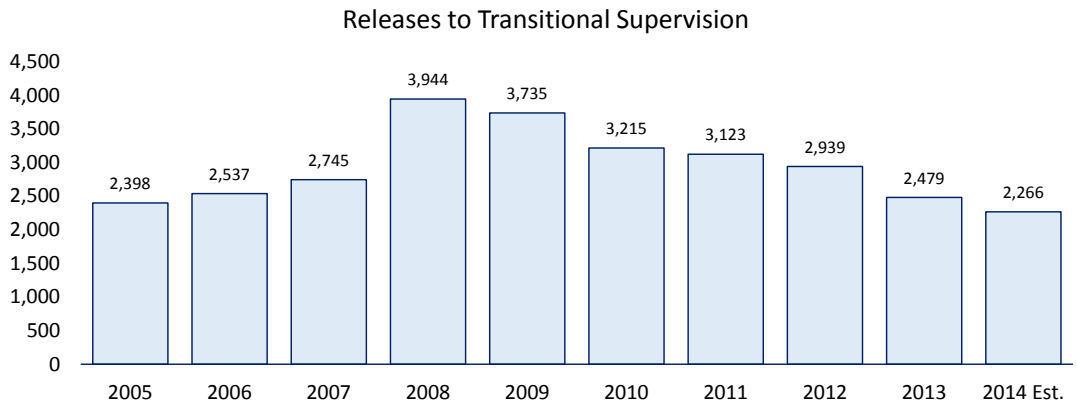
- **Renaissance of Crime Lab**
  Following several years of neglect, the state's forensic crime lab lost it accreditation in 2011. Three major responses have restored the accreditation and returned the lab to the status of "national model" that it once held. Dr. Guy Vallaro, a national leader, was brought in to lead the division within DESPP towards optimal performance; full staffing was restored and a triage system for evidence submission was agreed to by all stakeholders. The lab has also been at the forefront adopting new diagnostic practices such as the BrassTrax 3D Imaging System, a highly reliable ballistic identification methodology that produces results more quickly; latent fingerprint pre-screening which utilizes electronic evidence submission resulting in rapid, result reporting; Next Generation Identification Database which enhances latent print identification, increasing throughput utilizing robotic evidence processing in DNA; establishing a Case Management group to standardize and optimize evidence processing; and LEAN process improvements integrating lab units and streamlining manual processes. Backlogs have been almost completely eliminated allowing for the prompt resolution of major cases. A restructured management system, and newly formed quality assurance section has resulted in two flawless annual accreditation assessments.

Below are four additional charts that will provide you with a ten-year historical perspective on the changes outlined about. 2014 estimates are full year projections based on actual numbers for the first six months of the year.


Prison admissions
40,000
35,000
30,000
25,000
20,000
15,000
10,000
5,000
-
33,710
34,944
34,467
33,180
31,452
30,036
27,429
27,338
26,155
25,048
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013
2014 Est.


DOC, releases and discharges, sentenced offenders
25,000
20,000
15,000
10,000
5,000
0
21,277
21,475
21,586
20,746
21,371
20,439
20,641
19,844
17,425
16,992
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013
2014 Est.


Releases to Parole
3,000
2,500
2,000
1,500
1,000
500
0
2,663
2,255
1,720
1,536
2,237
2,223
2,099
1,869
1,338
1,052
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013
2014 Est.


Releases to Transitional Supervision
4,500
4,000
3,500
3,000
2,500
2,000
1,500
1,000
500
0
2,398
2,537
2,745
3,944
3,735
3,215
3,123
2,939
2,479
2,266
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013
2014 Est.