Inventory of the California State Senate Public Safety Committee Records

Collection number: LP373

California State Archives
Office of the Secretary of State
Sacramento, California

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Descriptive Summary

Title: California State Senate Public Safety Committee Records
Dates: 1997-2016
Collection number: LP373
Creator: Senate Public Safety Committee
Collection Size: 82.5 cubic feet, 349 audiocassettes, 163 videocassettes (VHS), 100 audio discs (CD), 11 videodiscs (DVD)
Repository: California State Archives
Sacramento, California

Abstract: The Senate Public Safety Committee Records consist of 82.5 cubic feet of textual and audiovisual records. The Senate Public Safety Committee was created in 1997, replacing and assuming the responsibilities of the Senate Criminal Procedure Committee.

Physical location: California State Archives
Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

Access
While the majority of the records are open for research, any access restrictions are noted in the record series descriptions.

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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Senate Public Safety Committee Records, LP373:[folder number], California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento, California.

Acquisition and Custodial History
The State Archives received these records in accordance with California Government Code 9080(b) which requires legislative committees to transfer their records to the State Archives when they are no longer needed by the committee.

Committee History
The Senate Public Safety Committee was created in 1997, replacing and assuming the responsibilities of the Senate Criminal Procedure Committee. During the 1997-1998 legislative session, Senate Resolution 9 (Lockyer) changed the name at the request of the committee chair. The committee originally consisted of eight members and hears bills relating to “the Evidence Code, pertaining to criminal procedure, the Penal Code, statutes of a penal nature not related closely to a subject included in another subdivision of this rule, and bills relating to the Youth and Adult Corrections Agency” (California Legislature at Sacramento, 1997, p. 104). The committee spent much of its time on drug enforcement issues, focusing on such areas as crystal methamphetamine, crystal methamphetamine production and child endangerment, treatment and rehab versus punishment, marijuana, medical marijuana, and ecstasy (MDMA or methylenedioxymethamphetamine). Many
of the drug enforcement related bills indicate tension over punishing first time, nonviolent drug offenders and providing rehabilitation. The committee also devoted significant time to issues related to mentally ill offenders, sex offenders and human trafficking.

The committee faced significant challenges related to prison overcrowding. Beginning in the mid-1970s, California’s prison population exploded, exacerbated in the 1990s by mandatory sentencing and “three-strikes” laws. This culminated in a 2010 federal three-judge panel issuing an order requiring the state to reduce its inmate population within a certain time frame. As a result, in the 2000s, the committee required all bills presented before it to state how the bill may or may not impact the prison overcrowding crisis. At times, the committee refused to hear bills that could potentially result in an increase in the prison population.

By 1999, the committee had shrunk to six members (California Legislature at Sacramento, 1999-2000, p. 65). Yet, in 2005, the committee changed to seven members then went back to six with the loss of committee chair Senator Alquist (California Legislature at Sacramento, 2005-06, p. 118). In 2007, the committee shrunk again to five members but returned to seven members for 2009-2014.

The state senators to have held the position of Public Safety Committee chair are as follows:
John Vasconcellos (Democrat), 1997-2004
Elaine K. Alquist (Democrat), 2005
Carole V. Migden (Democrat), 2006
Gloria Romero (Democrat), 2007-2008
Mark Leno (Democrat), 2009-2010
Loni Hancock (Democrat), 2011-2014

Scope and Content
The Senate Public Safety Committee Records consist of 82.5 cubic feet of textual and audiovisual records. These records are organized into three record series: Bill Files, 1997-2014, Hearing Files, 1997-2012, and Research Files, 1999-2005. It is anticipated that the Archives will receive further records from the Senate Public Safety Committee. Researchers should check for recently received, unprocessed records of this committee.

The bill files pertain to criminal law and general public safety issues. These issues include drug enforcement, sex crimes, and “three strikes” laws. Additionally, this committee received many sex crime bills, including the following topics: monitoring, recidivism, child molestation enhancements, Jessica’s Law, Megan’s Law, Internet pornography, child pornography, predator activity, stalking, “one strike,” and “good Samaritan” laws. Many sex crime bills were concerned with child safety and the Internet. Multiple bills also covered human trafficking and managing convicted Sexually Violent Predators (SVP).

The Senate Public Safety Committee received many bills on identity theft and privacy in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Bill and hearing topics included social security number protection, attempts at limiting credit card solicitations, and criminalizing identity theft. Early attempts at limiting credit card solicitations did not succeed. While privacy was important, the legislature favored background checks to enhanced public safety over the privacy of applicants for jobs at schools. As with privacy, the legislature struggled over gang membership and public safety issues. In order to curb the influence of gangs, the legislature saw many bills relating to membership and association, gangs in prisons, and sentence enhancements for committing a crime while associated with a gang. Freedom of association and community level approaches to gang reduction often conflicted with traditional approaches to policing, including mass arrests and profiling, in the bills the committee received.

The state prison system, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), formerly the California Youth Authority (CYA), occupied much of the Senate Public Safety Committee’s time. Specific issues include prison reform, prisoner rehabilitation and recidivism, overcrowding, the building of new prisons and private prisons, free speech and press access to prisons, prisoner abuse, holding prison guards accountable, medical care for inmates, gang, racial discrimination, and county jail regulations. Education programs and the treatment of pregnant inmates and wards were also a significant focus. The committee grappled with the prison overcrowding crisis in the 2000s, with California facing a federal court order to substantially reduce its prison population. The Little Hoover Commission submitted several studies in support of prison reform. The legislature made an attempt each year at overturning the CDCR’s rules restricting press access to prisoners; however, the governor vetoed each bill.

Victim’s rights became a national concern in the 1990s and California was no exception. The Public Safety Committee saw numerous bills concerning victim’s rights, from integrating video conferencing into criminal hearings to increasing who has access to restitution funds. The status of victims in the criminal process was controversial as the state struggled to ensure that both the victim and the accused were represented equally in court. Concern for particularly vulnerable victims of
crime, such as elderly and dependent adults, as well as a focus on victims of domestic violence, continued in the committee's work from 2007-2014. Gun control remains a contentious issue. Such topics heard in committee were gun shows, assault weapon categories, pistols and "Saturday night special" quality regulation, bullet serial numbers, concealed firearms permits, imitation firearms and sentencing enhancements for crimes committed with a firearm. The legislature attempted to find a cost-effective method of regulating firearms and preventing criminals and children from acquiring illegal and dangerous firearms. After the September 11, 2001 attack, terrorism became a national concern. The Public Safety Committee received bills and held hearings pertaining to payment for terrorism responses.

Accruals
Further accruals are expected.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.
Sex crimes - California
Gun control
Prisons - California
Privacy, Right of
Drugs - Law and legislation - California

Related Material at the California State Archives
John Vasconcellos Papers
Assembly Public Safety Committee Records

Note to Researchers
Researchers interested in this committee are advised to check the papers of its Chairs. Committee Chairs often kept materials relating to committee operations among their personal files. For Chair papers available at the California State Archives or other repositories, this information can be found in the committee history.
Series 1 Bill Files 1997-2014

Physical Description: 1125 file folders, 4 audiocassettes, 1 videocassette (VHS), 2 videodiscs (DVD)

Arrangement
Arranged chronologically by legislative session, then numerically by bill number.

Access Information
Access to audiovisual material requires the production of use copies.
Certain records in file folders LP373:1069, LP373:1219, and LP373:1318 are restricted under California Government Code, sec 6254(c).

Scope and Content Note
Bill files of the Senate Public Safety Committee may include bill analyses, amendments and resolutions, author’s statements, testimony, press releases, newspaper clippings, correspondence, roll calls, records of votes, and committee statements. Of particular interest are those bills relating to drug enforcement, the California Youth Authority, gun control, sex offenders, law enforcement, and privacy, prisons, and prison reform.

1997-1998 SB3-SB2220, SCA30-SCA47, SJR22 (115ff, 1VHS) LP373:1-115
1997-1998 AB4-AB2816, AJR14 (119ff) LP373:116-235
1997-1998 AB6-SB2196, SCA10, SCR93-SCR95, SJR40 (84ff, 2 audiocassettes) LP373:235-319
2001-2002 SB8-SB2087, SCA15, SJR16, SB88XX (85ff) LP373:389-473
2001-2002 AB4-AB2905, ACR220-ACR229, AJR12-AJR57, AB30X (70ff, 2 audiocassettes) LP373:474-544
2003-2004 SB3-SB1900, SCA8, SB15X, SB2XXX (61ff) LP373:544-605
2003-2004 AB2-AB3059, AJR34-AJR64 (65ff) LP373:605-670
2005-2006 SB3-SB1831 (70ff) LP373:670-740
2005-2006 AB22-AB3064, ACR73 (68ff, 2 DVDs) LP373:740-808
2007-2008 SB3-SB1775, SJR 33 (45ff) LP373:1044-1089
2007-2008 AB36-AB3076, ACR7, ACR24 (48ff) LP373:1090-1139
2009-2010 SB5-SB1487, SCA27, SCR40, SJR11-SJR12 (25ff) LP373:1140-1165
2009-2010 AB14-AB2747, ACR140 (27ff) LP373:1165-1192
2011-2012 SB9-SB1569, SCA20, SJR7, SJR10 (33ff) LP373:1193-1226
2011-2012 AB12-AB2676 (41ff) LP373:1227-1268
2013-2014 AB4-AB2724 (40ff) LP373:1317-1357
Series 2 Hearing Files 1999-2012

Physical Description: 345 audiocassettes, 162 videocassettes, (VHS), 100 audio discs (CD-R), 9 videodiscs (DVD), 4 file folders.

Arrangement
Arranged chronologically by date of hearing and location.

Access Information
Access to audiovisual materials requires the production of use copies.

Scope and Content Note
Hearing files contain video and audio recordings of regular session hearings, interim hearings, informational hearings and some joint committee hearings. Audiovisual materials have been moved to a cold-storage vault for preservation purposes. Hearings are principally focused on specific bills and amendments. The committee often held joint hearings with the Assembly Public Safety Committee. These joint hearings largely focused on various propositions on the ballot and the subsequent effect on the California penal code.

The Hearing Files also include four file folders (LP373:1451-1454) which contain recording logs and/or agendas that accompany some of the hearing materials. Logs and/or agendas are arranged chronologically by legislative session.

For a list of hearing dates and topics, see Appendix A in Additional Series Information.

Hearing Files that have a log and/or agenda are noted with an asterisk (*) in Appendix A.

Additional Series Information
Appendix A: List of Hearing Files

Series 3 Research Files 1999-2005

Physical Description: 2 videocassettes (VHS)

Arrangement
Arranged chronologically by date of production.

Access Information
Access to audiovisual materials requires the production of use copies.

Scope and Content Note
The research files contain one videocassette of Bill Moyers on Addiction from 1999 and one videocassette of a press conference in which Governor Schwarzenegger announced anti-crime legislation on August 16, 2005 for the 2005-2006 legislative session.