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Wilson OKs \$300 Million in Crime Bills

■ **Money:** Measures provide funds for juvenile programs, improvements of facilities and prevention efforts.

From the Associated Press

Gov. Pete Wilson signed six crime bills Tuesday that will provide a total of \$300 million for youth programs, additional beds in juvenile facilities and adult prisons, and programs to prevent offenders from committing more crimes.

The governor called the measures "an ambitious package of bills emphasizing prevention, intervention and suppression."

"We can only hope to minimize crime. We can't totally eliminate it despite our best efforts," Wilson said at the Los Angeles County Juvenile Detention Center, where he signed three of the bills.

The bills include a measure sponsored by Assemblyman Carl Washington (D-Paramount). It will create a five-year pilot program that will allow judges in Los Angeles County to order nonviolent adult criminals to enroll in a literacy program, or in a class to obtain high school equivalency degrees.

"The more educated a person is the greater the opportunity exists for him or her and the least likely he or she is to turn to crime as a way of life," Wilson said.

The measure capped a four-year effort by local religious leaders who were alarmed at the rising crime rate in their communities and decided to find out what they could do. They discovered that 70%

of repeat offenders could not read or write, said Richard Byrd, a pastor at Christ Unity Center of African Spirituality.

A bill sponsored by Assemblyman Rod Wright (D-Los Angeles) will provide \$100 million in grants for counties to renovate and rebuild juvenile halls and camps. About 4,500 beds in juvenile facilities—about 40% of the state's juvenile facilities—need to be repaired or renovated, Wilson said.

The bill also earmarks \$25 million for nonprofit organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club and the YMCA.

Wilson also signed a bill by Sen. Jim Brulte (R-Rancho Cucamonga) that will provide \$50 million in grants for youth programs, and add 2,000 beds by having the state Department of Corrections contract with private companies to increase capacity.

Earlier Tuesday, the governor signed a bill sponsored by Sen. John Vasconcellos (D-Santa Clara) that provides \$71 million for 1,000 new solitary confinement cells, freeing up segregated units that will be converted to two-inmate cells.

The bill also earmarks \$23.5 million for programs to prevent offenders from committing more crimes when they are released from prison by providing job training, education, drug treatment and counseling.

A bill by Assemblyman Wally Knox (D-Los Angeles) and signed by Wilson allocates \$3.5 million for similar programs for people who are on parole.

The sixth bill, sponsored by Sen. Herschel Rosenthal (D-Los Angeles), provides \$27 million for counties to create programs to prevent mentally ill offenders from committing more crimes.

LA Metro Churches



Assemblymember Washington (center) LAM President Byrd, LAM Vice-president Bell observe signing

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