

The effects of
californians budget
cuts on public safety:
police and fire essay
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Statement and background of the problem

The budget cuts within the California State is a common thing but unfortunately the cuts affect some of the important services that ensure the safety services that the public needs. In the recent years the Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has been approving budget cuts affecting especially the police and fire department so as to concentrate more on better quality and hiring of more teachers hence majority of the finances is usually given unto the education department and social services, that take care of children and spousal abuse. As much as this act is noble, the cuts have suggested both the police and fire department. The state of California is a large state with approximately over 20 million people hence instead of the state budget cuts affecting the police and fire department they should emphasize and spend more in these departments. Especially after the recent terrorism attacks i. e.

September 11th, the police department has been over stretched which results in demonization and slacking of the services offered by the police department, and this has also ensured that though the services are still of quality its slow in coming and hence the public safety is at a vulnerable state. The fire department is often felt that they are neglected by the state especially since most of the budget cuts affect them, hence are not able to offer quality services on time, hence a lot of property have been destroyed by fire because the fire department is overstretched. This was especially experience in the 2006-2007 where there was a huge inferno which destroyed many homes and property and the state was forced to call for reinforcements because the fire department was overwhelmed and if the <https://assignbuster.com/the-effects-of-californians-budget-cuts-on-public-safety-police-and-fire-essay-sample/>

same calamity befalls the state of California, with the budget cuts, the fire department will be unable to fully cope with the magnitude of the calamity. From the study research, results were able to show how the budget cuts affect the public safety in terms of police and fire department.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT (LITERATURE REVIEW)

Due to the states budget cuts the effects that have resulted include.

- Delivery of services.

As it is right now, both departments are overstretched hence for example the ratio of police to public is increasing on one end i. e. 1 police 200 people which shows that resources for example manpower is being affected. This has resulted the police and fire department working on more shifts than what is required for them to do, hence the quality and efficiency of the services decreases. This has demotivated the departments and often too tired to do any more work. For example if fire incidence occurs spontaneously at fire different locations, the department is unable to handle this and a lot of property and even lives have been lost due to this lack of manpower.

- Increase of human population.

California state is an attractive state to many outsiders, hence has resulted to migration of other people who coming to work, study at the local tertiary institutions, holiday spots etc, hence the population number has increased significantly and has resulted to the stretching of both departments to ensure public safety. Unfortunately due to the budget cuts, the lack of manpower, resources, the public safety is at a vulnerable state, because the

ration of police to people is increasing, and if there is any case reported it takes a while before the police department follows it up. California is known to be home for many celebrities due to Hollywood, and due to the stringent budget it puts even more strain on both police and fire department.

- Train service.

Due to change of technology day to day, the both departments need to be updated and lack of funds results in no training of the departments personnel and this jeopardizes the public safety especially with departments such as SWAT and crime negotiators. It has been observed that few people are trained on specialized skills e.g. undercover police due to budget cuts. The fire department due to budget cuts has resulted in training on basic skills to volunteers of the fire departments unfortunately this comes with risk, because of any casualty resulting to death, because of lack of proper skills and equipment, which the department would have offered to the volunteers.

- Unable to cope with any natural disaster and terrorism.

After the hurricane Katrina, the country was shown how inadequate the departments that deal with public safety were unable to cope with such a disaster. The budget cuts, will reduce the manpower and lack of training of both of the departments when it comes to handling of such a magnitude of disaster, if ever occurs in the state. After the September 11th, the police has been obligated to be on the look-out for any suspicious behavior and to engage on more of people and to engage on more of people skills so as to get any information about a suspicious behavior but unfortunately the budget cuts,

has overstretched the police departments and they are unable to even sometimes pay for their sources. With the increase of natural disasters e. g. cyclones, hurricanes and tornados, the two departments will be unable to cope with any of such a disaster.

- Hiring of more police officers and fire fighters from the respective academy.

The budget cuts have affected the number that would have been hired into both of these departments from the academics, hence the trainers are frustrated because they are not been employed and through this the police and fire departments are forced to overstretch the little manpower they have to offer the services and also unable to take employment leaves and if they do take they are recalled back due to insufficient man power. California is a state that normally has street gangs, hence without increase in police number, the crimes committed by the street gangs will increase.

- SURVEY RESEARCH.

Do you feel your safety is at risk?

Since most of the data collection will be done in the focus groups and observation, the surveys will be used to learn more on people's beliefs, preferences and satisfaction about how the budget cuts affects their safety and well-being. This will involve the use of a sampling plan which will give insight on who are to be surveyed i. e. both police and fire department together with the locals, sampling size and the procedure to be used. All this will be undertaken when doing the focus group research so as to save time and reduce the expenses.

Research Instruments

The instruments that will be used are:

- Interview

This will be especially used in the focus group and will involve face to face conversation and interaction. The interview will be done for at least 4 hours and will involve asking of many questions and ensuring the questions are properly understood. Through this instrument is expensive, its among the best methods because the data and information fresh.

When conducting the focus groups group the members will be asked to fill up a form with 15 questions about how they feel with issues of budget cuts. This is flexible instrument but if needs to be carefully developed instead.

Advantage of this method is that it will also give qualitative and quantitative data which has statistical validity hence the data collected will be fresh and accurate. The formatting of the questions will involve the use of open-end questions so as to create interest in the respondent and generally they are easy to answer because there are no wrong or right answers. The questions will be arranged in a logical order and use of classificatory data on the respondent will be put last to avoid the respondent loosing interest. Some of the questions will include:

1. How do you feel about the budget cuts on police and fire departments?

- Through investigation process

The police department is unable to follow leads about any offence because the budget allocation is little, hence cases that seem to involve a lot of

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manpower, and resources use are usually sidelined, till when more funds is available. This has resulted to pile up of cases that are left unsolved eg missing children, spousal abuse etc. the cases that get solved are done so in hasty manner, hence the proper investigation procedure are not followed which has resulted to many offenders walking free after they have been taken to court, because the police didn't do a thorough investigation on the alleged crime.

- Unable to replace and buy new working equipments, vehicles etc

With the change of technology day by day, the police and fire departments need to update its machinery to work more efficient, for example the fire engines, budget cuts ensures the fire department is unable to purchase more fire engines, cameras etc.

Methods of data collection.

The research methods of collecting data include use of:

1. Secondary data
2. Primary data.
3. Secondary data.

This will start the investigation by examining data that has been collected without first collecting expensive primary data. This can be from the fire and police departments and government publication. The data required will be up to date for it to be reliable, relevant and accurate. Fortunately method, less money and time will be used.

1. Primary data.

This is usually an expensive mission, but the data is more relevant to the important issue at hand. The research approaches that will be used are use of: focus group, observation, survey, since these two approaches are suitable for this research;

- Observational Research.

This will allow observation of the both departments on how reliable and efficiency their services are to the public. This will involve spending a considerable amount of time at the police and fire department to do the observation on how they handle the public and any crisis, or case those results. Using this method will give a due on what the effects of the budget cuts are to these two departments.

- Focus group research

This will involve 6-10 people from both departments who will spend a few hours being interviewed. The interview will be objective, and knowledgeable about the subject matter. The participants will be paid a small amount of money for them attending together the meeting will be held at an informal place for example the university lecture halls or cafes and refreshments will be served to increase the informality.

Together with this will also include another focus group of 6-10 people that will comprise the locals. There will be diversity in the group i. e. age, race, occupation, and gender. Use of this approach will be a useful exploratory step before designing large scale survey. It provides useful insights on the public safety, attitudes on how the local feel with the effect of budget cuts

on police and fire departments. However, care will be taken to avoid generalizing the reported feelings of the focus group members.

Contact methods.

These include the ways how the subjects will be contacted. This will involve through:

1. Telephone interview.

This is the best method for gathering information quickly especially through the head of both police and fire departments who won't have time to attend the focus group interview. Unfortunately to cut down expenses the interviews will have to be short and not personal, hence an appointment will be set so as to conduct a personal interview.

1. Personal interviewing.

This is the most versatile method because questions can be asked and recorded at the same time. Through its an expensive approach, and requires administrative planning and supervision. The forms that will be used include arranged interview with the chief of police and fire departments and mall intercept interview which will involve randomly stopping people at malls or street and requesting for a 20 minute interview.

Expected results

The expected/predicted outcome of data collection and implication will be as follows:-

1. A direct relationship exists between budget cuts and security because security depends on the budget allocations.
2. Both security and fire are most crucial services to the people. If reduction reduces people's ability to access the services very first.
3. Budget reduction leads to reduction in security officers as well as the equipment they use in the office.
4. Strong budget is meant to help in the strengthening of a state security system.
5. Both are geared towards knowing the capabilities of the people's well-being.
6. Businesses are affected by security; good security encourages more investments, as well as bad security will lead to poor and reduced investment.
7. Fire departments will be able to handle emergency cases that take place in the state.

Conclusion

Though the budget cuts have affected both departments, still with the overstretched manpower and stringent funds, the departments can still deliver and maintain its services and ensuring public safety measures are adhered to. This includes:

1. Ensuring all petty offenders and juvenile delinquents do community work instead of overcrowding them in the cells?
2. Training the locals on how to stay safe and protect property instead of relying heavily on police and fire department.

- Ensure the departments invest in up to date equipment, tools and machinery to avoid unnecessary purchase of poor quality tools.
1. Retire or offer an attractive package to officers and fighters who are reaching the retirement age.

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