



STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE

Baltimore City Council President

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Better Schools. Safer Streets. Stronger Neighborhoods.

MEDIA ADVISORY:

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COUNCIL TO QUESTION POLICE BUDGET REDUCTIONS

Delay Hearing to Examine Police Redistricting and Correlation Between Police Budget Cuts and Recent Uptick in Homicides

BALTIMORE—Tomorrow, the City Council's Public Safety and Health Committee will conduct a hearing on City Council Resolution 09-0108R Legislative Oversight – Baltimore Police Department. Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake introduced the resolution last month to examine the impact of police overtime reductions on the City's crime fighting efforts.

In November, budget cuts were ordered for all city agencies, including \$21 million for the Police Department for this fiscal year. As of late February, gun-related homicides have increased by 47% over this time last year. "Last year, homicides were reduced to the lowest level since the 1980s—the steepest one-year decline in more than forty years," Rawlings-Blake said. "Sadly, in recent months, killings have increased and our progress has been threatened."

"As we approach budget season, we must ask ourselves whether the Police Department can continue to sustain deep budget cuts without having a negative impact on public safety," Rawlings-Blake said. "Public safety is a top priority for the City Council and it is my hope that this oversight hearing will shed some light on this important issue."

Rawlings-Blake noted that the recently approved federal stimulus package could be used to help offset potential cuts to Baltimore's crime fighting programs. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provides \$2 billion for state and local law enforcement and another \$1 billion through the U.S. Justice Department's COPS program. "We need a comprehensive strategy to use state and local law enforcement funds included in the stimulus package to bolster our crime fighting efforts," Rawlings-Blake said.

Rawlings-Blake's resolution also asks for an update from the Police Department on efforts to begin a redistricting process for city police district boundaries. "This is an opportunity to look for ways to better distribute public safety resources," Rawlings-Blake said.

WHO: City Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, Councilman Bernard C. "Jack" Young and members of the City Council.

WHAT: Public Safety and Health Committee Hearing on 09-0108R Legislative Oversight – Baltimore Police Department

WHERE: Du Burns Council Chambers, 4th Floor, City Hall.

WHEN: Tomorrow, Tuesday, March 10, 2009 at 5:00pm. The hearing will also be televised on TV25 (Comcast Channel 25).

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