

COMMENTARY

INSIDE REPORT

Trust key to fighting local crime

In an unlikely partnership, residents of the city's crime-plagued 70805 ZIP code, many of whom have long distrusted the Baton Rouge Police Department, are now saying they are ready to help the department in its new efforts to fight violent crime in their neighborhood.

The north Baton Rouge ZIP code area accounts for 30 percent of the city's homicides but only 13 percent of its population.

The success of the Baton Rouge Area Violence Elimination program, or BRAVE, hinges on the ability of the BRAVE unit — made up of five elite officers — to build trust with the community's law-abiding residents, who are often too afraid to report criminal activity out of fear of retaliation, said Lt. Todd Lee, who helped draft the plan.

Many residents at a community meeting Thursday said they've had enough with the crime and the violence and they are ready to help the police — if the police follow through on their promises.

Many residents also said they are now more willing to call the police because they feel BRAVE proves the police now may be more responsive to their concerns, whereas in the past, there has been a perception the Police Department was apathetic toward black-on-black crime.

"Why call 'em if they're not going to do anything?" said the Rev. Ronald Williams, whose Mount Carmel Baptist Church is located in 70805. "By and large, the opinion of the public of the city police is not good — there's some work to be done."

Eual Hall, 66, has lived in the heart of the 70805 ZIP code since 1968.

In churches, corner stores and on the streets, Hall said, he has heard much buzz about the city's new community policing plan.

The general response, Hall said, has been a mix of skepticism and optimism.

"One of the main reactions I'm hearing is, 'Is it for real?' and 'Will it be sustainable?'" Hall said. "I mean, they're saying, 'Will it be a fly-by-night kind of thing? Are they gonna work with us? Are they gonna be able to come in, in a talkative mode, before they start putting cuffs on and all that kind of stuff?'"

Even with those questions, Hall said, most agree something needs to be done.

"We certainly want to pass it along to the Police Department that we appreciate what they're doing and what BRAVE is doing. We are very thankful," Hall said.

While short-term trust may initially develop from the Police Department's inclusion of local clergymen in BRAVE, building long-term trust will be more of a "balancing act," said Adell Brown, president of 100 Black Men of Baton Rouge.

"One thing the community is very leery of is heavy-handed policing," Brown said.

In addition to the community policing, another key component of BRAVE is arresting young criminals and, using harsh sentences as leverage, offering them a chance at a better life through services like drug and alcohol counseling, GED classes, vocational training and mentoring.

Coupled with a stronger police presence, residents say they feel opportunities in an area like 70805 — where only 65 percent of the population graduated high school, 60 percent of the population is employed and 7 percent have bachelor's degrees, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau — could break the cycle of hopelessness and crime.

At the community meeting, the hope and optimism were palpable as neighbors shook hands and exchanged phone numbers with the police officers.

"I think they really got to get it rolling," said Dorothy Young, 45. "They're heading in the right direction. We're about to see some changes. That's what we need."

Naomi Martin covers crime in East Baton Rouge Parish for *The Advocate*. She can be reached at nmartin@theadvocate.com.

BOTTOM LINERS



"I'd like to get into insider trading, but I don't have a degree from a top business school."

Holder inspires contempt

WASHINGTON — Fights between Congress and the executive branch over access to information are a staple of American politics. Every president will prefer less disclosure about the messy internal processes of his administration. Congressional investigators suspecting scandal prefer more. In the end, some accommodation short of a constitutional crisis is usually achieved.

The government's "gun-walking" program would be considered a scandal in any administration, involving 2,000 loose firearms and a dead Border Patrol agent. But an accommodation with congressional investigators has not been reached. The balance of powers has become a show-down. And the main reason is Attorney General Eric Holder.

In a February 2011 letter to Congress, the Justice Department denied any knowledge of "Fast and Furious." During May congressional testimony, Holder claimed that he had only recently learned of the matter. Both letter and testimony turned out to be false. Holder's top aides had reviewed wiretapping applications containing specific details. Holder had received memos referencing the operation. Congress had been left under a false impression for nine months.

The response of the Justice Department to this disclosure was to fight further disclosures

— permitting investigation into the original program but not into the misstatements and corrections that followed. Holder has absurdly claimed credit for providing 7,600 pages (about 8 percent) of the material investigators have requested, as though the problem might not be found on page 7,601.



MICHAEL GERSON

Congress with contempt long before it considered citing him for it.

"I take pride in being careful, not intemperate," Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, a former state Supreme Court judge, told me. "But I'm just fed up." He is particularly offended by the lack of accountability. "There were 2,000 weapons that walked. Who knows how many more agents are at risk? Yet when I asked if it happened in Texas, I got no answer. Another stonewall." These events, says Cornyn, "raise a question: What does it take to get fired in Eric Holder's Justice Department?"

Cornyn has called for Holder's

resignation. Unlike the legal determination of contempt, this is a cumulative judgment. Holder began his tenure by supporting a special prosecutor to investigate enhanced interrogation by CIA agents, even though career prosecutors found insufficient evidence for charges — leading seven former CIA directors to denounce his assault on the institution.

The attorney general proposed a New York civilian trial that would have given Khalid Sheikh Mohammed a forum to embrace martyrdom and encourage violence — leading to a revolt of New York Democratic politicians and the removal of the case from Holder's direct authority. His handling of the Fast and Furious case was botched from the start — requiring President Obama to assert executive privilege to cover a trail of incompetence and forcing Democratic members of Congress to rally in the cause of opacity and mediocrity.

The problem is not primarily a matter of ideology. Holder is the critic of enhanced interrogation who defends the use of killer drones against American citizens. He is the enemy of indefinite detention at Guantanamo Bay prison who has institutionalized indefinite detention at Guantanamo Bay prison. His views seem to conform exactly to the contours of the president's political requirements at any given moment. "Like

a cushion," David Lloyd George is reputed to have said of one opponent, "he always bore the impress of the last man who sat on him."

Yet this does not stop the lecturing. Unlike his congressional detractors, Holder was not "scared" of what Mohammed would say at trial. He prefers not to "cower." He says his critics lack "confidence in the American system of justice." It is Eric Holder's distinctive contribution to the American political system: self-righteousness without the inconvenience of principle.

"The supreme arrogance, the lack of accountability," says Cornyn, "are driving people up the wall. ... Is he going to be the chief law enforcement officer of the United States or the political arm of the administration? Every time Eric Holder has had a choice to make, he has made the political choice, not the one grounded in a reasonable interpretation of the law."

This presents an immediate, practical challenge. Holder's appointment of two prosecutors — one an Obama campaign donor — to investigate administration national security leaks is discredited before it begins. Which points to an immediate, practical need: an attorney general who inspires more trust than contempt.

Michael Gerson's column is distributed by *The Washington Post Writers Group*.

Arizona governor doesn't understand losing

WASHINGTON — Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer is many things — immigration provocateur, bête noire of Latinos, presidential irritant — but nobody has ever accused her of being a legal scholar.

On Monday morning, the Supreme Court struck down three of four contested provisions in her state's immigration law and left the fourth in jeopardy. But Brewer decided to call it a win.

"Today's decision by the U.S. Supreme Court is a victory for the rule of law," the Republican governor announced in a statement that left the strong impression it was written before the opinion was released. She used the word "victory" twice more in her written statement, and added the word "vindicated" to her oral remarks.

To be sure, the ruling left intact part of the immigration crack-down, the "show-me-your-papers" component, which the court suggested may be vulnerable to future challenge.

But Brewer certainly couldn't have called it a victory if she had read the vitriolic dissent of Justice Antonin Scalia against the opinion by a union of the court's liberal bloc with Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Anthony Kennedy.

In an extraordinary display of judicial distemper, Scalia departed entirely from the law at one point and attacked an Obama

administration policy that wasn't at issue in the case. Footnoting a New York Times news article rather than case law, Scalia opined on a recent news conference by President Obama.

Scalia's dissent, more campaign speech than legal opinion, claimed the Obama administration "desperately wants to avoid upsetting foreign powers" and is acting with "willful blindness or deliberate inattention" to Arizona's illegal immigrants. Saying the majority opinion "boggles the mind,"



DANA MILBANK

Scalia suggested that states are "at the mercy of the federal executive's refusal to enforce the nation's immigration laws."

Scalia's stump speech capped a rough couple of weeks for immigration hard-liners. The reaction to Monday's decision was overshadowed by the high court's looming health-care ruling, but the ruling was the latest in a string of political victories for Latinos, who have been alternately ignored and abused the last few years.

During the Republican presidential primaries, Mitt Romney condemned Texas Gov. Rick Perry for supporting a law that granted in-state tuition rates to the chil-

dren of illegal immigrants, and he vowed to veto the DREAM Act, which offered the possibility of citizenship for young illegal immigrants. Romney also spoke of illegal immigrants going through "self-deportation" and, in remarks his campaign later sought to clarify,

Romney described the Arizona law as a national model. No less an authority than Newt Gingrich called Romney anti-immigrant.

But now Romney, trailing Obama by 41 percentage points among Hispanics in a recent USA Today/Gallup poll, is struggling to change his image. After Obama announced that he would stop deportation of certain young illegal immigrants, Romney demurred repeatedly when CBS News' Bob Schieffer asked whether he would repeal the Obama policy.

Last week, Romney launched a 15-state Hispanic outreach effort called "Juntos con Romney," and he promised the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials he would pursue the "moral imperative" of bipartisan immigration reform.

When a report came out last week that Romney wasn't considering Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, the Republicans' Latino star, to be running mate, Romney quickly knocked down the report.

Monday's ruling on the Arizona law created a new complication for Romney, who refused to react

to the court decision other than to say it showed the need for "a president who will lead on this critical issue and work in a bipartisan fashion to pursue a national immigration strategy."

Romney, who happened to be traveling in Arizona, avoided giving reporters a chance to ask questions. The Washington Post's Phil Rucker reported that a campaign spokesman was questioned for seven minutes but declined to say whether Romney agrees with the Supreme Court or supports Arizona's law.

It wasn't exactly what immigration hard-liners had wanted: The Supreme Court invalidating most of the Arizona law in a 5-3 vote, and the Republicans' presidential standard-bearer wanting nothing to do with a law he once praised. But Gov. Brewer did not let such realities get in her way.

"The key components of our efforts to protect the citizens of Arizona to take up the fight against illegal immigration in a balanced and constitutional way has unanimously been vindicated by the highest court in the land," she declared.

Beg your pardon, governor, but would you remain inside your vehicle while we check your legal credentials?

Dana Milbank's column is distributed by *The Washington Post Writers Group*.

War against addicts hurts us more than them

Rodney King's best statement isn't what he's famous for. Twenty years ago, the African-American suffered a sadistic beating at the hands of white Los Angeles police, an event caught on tape. When the officers were acquitted of brutality charges, rioting convulsed largely black South Central Los Angeles. The pandemonium cost 53 lives and destroyed 600 buildings. In the middle of it all, King, who died this month at 47, remarked with immortal simplicity: "Can we all get along?"

In his book, "The Riot Within," King wrote (perhaps with input from his co-author), "I no longer blame them (lawyers and politicians) for taking a battered and confused addict and trying to make him into a symbol for civil rights." King knew exactly what was up. He was a drugged or drunk black ex-con tortured by racist police officers whom he had just led on a high-speed hour-long chase.

That was a recipe for pain. But to what extent did the war on drugs accelerate the downward

spiral of King and others like him? Suppose drugs were legal. King could have been open about his addiction. Perhaps he could have gotten treatment for it. If the ban on drugs hadn't driven the price of narcotics so high, perhaps his jobs could have covered his "needs."



FROMA HARROP

Instead, he traumatized me for \$35 and probably cost the city of New York over \$1,000 pursuing a case that was never closed, like many thousands of others. King reminded me of him.

King had possibilities. He held jobs. He married the mothers of his children. He tried to kick his habits. He was not particularly violent, even during the grocery

store robbery that put him in jail. And he was basically humane, delivering the "Can we all get along?" comment with genuine distress. In the book, he expresses agony at seeing a tape of Reginald Denny, a white truck driver, dragged out of his vehicle during the riots and beaten mercilessly by a mob — and his pride at the heroism of Bobby Green Jr., an African-American who rescued Denny and drove him to the hospital.

The intention isn't to nominate King for sainthood, but to note that he was a forgiving man with good qualities and fine perception. His life could have gone differently, especially if being an addict weren't itself criminal.

Other victims of the prohibition against drugs are the estimated 50,000 Mexicans murdered at the hands of the cartels. New Yorker writer Patrick Radden Keefe recently described the drug gangs' sophistication in transporting their wares to the streets of Los Angeles and other U.S. cities. They use fishing boats, 747s and

submarines. They've catapulted bales of marijuana over high-tech fences in Arizona and have constructed more than 100 tunnels under the border. To avoid smuggling costs, they've taken over public land in the United States to grow marijuana. Mexican farmers with AK-47s were found guarding their crops in the North Woods of Wisconsin.

If the war on drugs were over, the murderous drug business would be over. Americans would save about \$50 billion a year prosecuting a war in which every dealer's arrest means more profits for a competitor. Addicts could find treatment without admitting criminality. Or they could get their fix without hitting strangers over the head or ripping copper pipes out of old buildings. High-schoolers caught smoking pot wouldn't have their lives ruined by a criminal record. And a "battered and confused addict" might have some chance at a decent life.

Froma Harrop's column is distributed by *Creators.com*.