

Democratic Infighting Kills Plan To Pay DC Criminals Not To Commit Crimes

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The plan by the D.C. Council to pay criminals not to commit crimes is dead after the mayor refused to provide the necessary funding for it.

The sweeping reform, modeled after a privately-funded program in Richmond, California, proposed paying up to 200 of Washington's most violent criminals \$1,000 a month of taxpayer money to refrain from committing crimes, particularly violent offenses like homicide. The D.C. Council's judiciary committee is placing the blame on Mayor Muriel Bowser, who did not allocate money for the reform in her budget for 2017, reports The Washington Post.

The mayor never voiced support for the controversial proposal, arguing the District needs to focus resources on job training and stiffer penalties for crimes as a deterrent. The Council previously rejected criminal reform efforts from the mayor, including a bill that would have increased criminal sentences for crimes committed on city transit. Without the mayor's support, the judiciary chair said he would rather not take money out of existing programs to fund the effort.

Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie proposed the initiative and the D.C. Council unanimously approved crime legislation, which included the proposal. McDuffie's plan was largely a response to a 53 percent spike in the murder rate in 2015, the highest rate in the District in eight years.

"This is the mayor's budget, and what we've done is try to improve it where we can, but it's her budget," McDuffie told The Washington Post. "It's her ideas and her strategies for preventing crime, and it's time to see how they work. She clearly sees things differently than the 13 members of the council."

The alarming spike in homicides in the District appears to be spilling into 2016, with 39 murders already, a five percent increase over the 2015 rate. Despite the increase in homicides, Bowser felt the plan would simply create more bloated bureaucracy without addressing tougher penalties for violent offenders. "In my view the policymakers are just scrambling," Tim Lynch, director of the project on criminal justice at the Cato Institute told The Daily Caller News Foundation. "They're under pressure when the violent crime rate spikes. I think the main thing that needs to be done is to have the government put more of its focus and resources on identifying violent repeat offenders and getting them off the street."

Proponents of the proposal claimed Richmond, California's plan successfully reduces the homicide rate, however, there is no direct measurement to actually track the success of the program. The Richmond program relies on private funding, while the District's proposal would have put costs on the backs of D.C. taxpayers to the tune of roughly \$4.9 million over four years, according to NBC4.

McDuffie maintains a program to address at-risk individuals is needed to curb the growing violence in Washington D.C.. McDuffie argued a mentorship program is key to long-term crime prevention. The Bowser administration defends their approach on crime, noting they support giving assistance to reformed criminals.

Kevin Donahue, the deputy mayor for public safety told The Washington Post, "The mayor has always been for giving people a hand up who have a criminal record if they are ready to try to turn their lives around."