

**Office of the Mayor**  
City & County of San Francisco



**Gavin Newsom**  
Mayor

November 3, 2006

Dear Supervisors,

This letter communicates my veto of ordinance 060700, which mandates specific deployment of police officers by Board of Supervisors legislation. After consulting with our Chief of Police, I have concluded that this legislation is the wrong approach to an issue on which there is wide agreement and actually may threaten public safety.

The Police Department and virtually all local policy makers agree that police foot patrols can enhance public safety. As a result, the Department maintains scores of active foot patrols throughout the city, averaging 310 officers per week assigned to foot patrols in 2005. Earlier this year, foot patrols were further increased in high crime areas through our annual budget. As a result, in some districts foot patrols currently in place exceed the amount mandated in the legislation.

While hundreds of foot beats are currently walked each week throughout our city, we have been working for the past two years to increase these neighborhood patrols. By civilianizing non public-safety positions in the Police Department, sworn officers can be redeployed to our neighborhoods. In my recent State of the City Address, I explained that 23 positions will be civilianized before the end of the year that will allow reassignment of police officers to local neighborhoods. Additionally, officers who have recently completed their probationary period will be assigned to district stations, resulting in a total of 44 new officers for foot patrols. Officers will be reassigned throughout our city not only to increase foot patrols, but to ensure that all district stations are able to staff beat officers. Due to these efforts, the number of foot patrols walked in the coming year will appreciably exceed the minimum amount suggested in the legislation.

Since our current efforts to increase neighborhood patrols will exceed requirements in the legislation, it is tempting to simply return this legislation unsigned. However, several concerning provisions of this legislation require that this legislation be vetoed. First, I believe that it is very dangerous for the Board of Supervisors to dictate where police officers or for that matter firefighters are deployed. The Police Chief and her district captains have the law enforcement expertise and the legal responsibility to maximize public safety. They know better than we do in City Hall what is required to protect residents, as well as ensure their officers' safety. We create a dangerous slippery slope when City Hall undermines the day-to-day discretion of public safety professionals.

Also troubling is the fact that fundamental inequalities exist in how different neighborhoods are treated in this legislation. In the Northern Station for example, this legislation requires that foot patrols must be prioritized in three neighborhoods—Hayes Valley, Lower Haight and Western Addition— at the expense of current foot patrols in Van Ness, Civic Center, Duboce Triangle and Union Street. Such inflexible deployment to only some neighborhoods makes more difficult the redeployment of police officers to other areas as crime patterns

change. Furthermore, this legislation totally excludes the Richmond and Central Police District stations, which means that officers could be removed from these stations to comply with the legislation.

Lastly, mandating a certain amount of foot patrols through legislation means that—as a legal matter—these foot patrols must be staffed at the expense of all other police activities. If a district station has inadequate police officers to staff both foot patrols and radio cars that respond to 911 emergency calls, emergency response must be sacrificed. While the legislation makes exceptions for ‘emergency’ redeployment, it does not address how Captains would deal with this impossible choice on a regular basis.

I believe that we must pursue collaborative strategies in order to increase foot patrols in ways that do not compromise the public safety activities of the Police Department. Support of our city’s efforts to civilianize positions in the Police Department and to recruit and retain more police officers is part of this strategy. Just recently, we have proposed incentives to retain veteran officers and recruit experienced officers from other departments and tonight our Police Academy will graduate 35 new recruits. The Board of Supervisors can and should provide oversight to ensure that these efforts indeed yield more foot patrols. Working together, I know we can achieve our shared public safety goals throughout our city’s neighborhoods.

Sincerely,



Gavin Newsom