

WASHINGTON PARISH LOSES LAW ENFORCEMENT TO LAYOFFS



Washington Parish Government

Few things make a community feel less at ease than losing some of its law enforcement professionals because of a budgetary issue. That is the case in the sheriff's office in the town of Washington Parish. The town, which is more than a million dollars in debt, is making some tough decision in order to get back into the black. This week a fair number of the officers were given the pink slip, in addition to other employees who used to be employed by the city. On the whole the job losses are only 15 people, but in a rural area or a smaller town like Washington Parish that can represent a fair number of the workers percentage wise. These cuts actually represent a cut of an officer on each shift. With a total of four deputies being cut from the rotation. Some workers were caught entirely by surprise. Kevin Gaines told his story to a reporter for [Fox8Live](#), "I was called into the office yesterday for a mandatory meeting with the warden. I didn't figure it was going to be me for one, because I've been here with them for so long. I figured they would have started with the people that was just hired on within the last several months and worked their way up the ladder. " Mr. Gaines has been working for the department for the past five years. A few months before getting his pink slip he was promoted to the rank of sergeant, so one can see where he would not expect to be laid off. The city however may have seen him as simply being more expensive than some of his more recently hired counterparts. Chief Criminal Deputy Scott Blair made the following comments to the same reporter, "We would love to have more people on the street, much less, cut people, but one man per shift is not going to hurt us that bad. We had two people quit, we're not going to replace them, and I've got two people that are retiring at the end of this month, so we're counting those into layoffs. When Sheriff Crowe took office about three and a half years ago, he was left like most other sheriffs are without a surplus of money. He had to borrow money to operate for the first six months to a year, until his tax proceeds started coming in." Residents in the town do report some issues with drugs, and related crimes in the area. This means that the loss of officers could make a bad situation worse. Previous research has shown that a drop in the presence of law enforcement professionals can lead to an increase in crime. Some of our [previous coverage](#) showed the impact that cutbacks have had in towns in New Jersey, here is an excerpt from the coverage that shows how drastic the changes can be, "The analysis looked at data from municipal courts. This data showed that when police officers are let go the department shifts in order to focus their new lower level of resources on serious crimes, instead of on the smaller ones. This means a drop in enforcement for minor crimes and traffic violations.....In Newark, between the months of January 2009 and November 2010 the average number of violations marked at "other", which includes things like noise complaints and curfew violations, were given about 5,100 times a month. Since the layoffs that number has been about 2,600 a month. That is slightly more than half of the number of violations as before the layoffs."

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