

Public Hearing

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SENATE URBAN POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

"Urban problems in Irvington."

LOCATION: City Council Chambers
Irvington Municipal Building
Irvington, New Jersey

DATE: April 11, 1994
6:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Senator Dick LaRossa, Chairman
Senator Ronald L. Rice

ALSO PRESENT:

Hannah Shostack
Office of Legislative Services
Aide, Senate Urban Policy
and Planning Committee



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DICK LAROSSA
Chairman

JOHN P. SCOTT
Vice-Chairman

WILLIAM L. GORMLEY
EDWARD T. O'CONNOR, JR.
RONALD L. RICE



New Jersey State Legislature

SENATE URBAN POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE
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PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

The Senate Urban Policy and Planning Committee will hold a public hearing on Monday, April 11, 1994 in City Council Chambers, Irvington Municipal Building, Civic Square, Irvington, New Jersey at 6:00 pm.

The committee is seeking testimony from local residents and community leaders regarding urban problems in Irvington. In order to provide an opportunity for everyone to be heard, witnesses should be concise in their remarks and limit their testimony to a maximum of five minutes.

The public may address comments and questions to Hannah Shostack, Committee Aide, or make bill status and scheduling inquiries to Rita Nutt, secretary, at (609) 292-1596.

Assistive listening devices available upon 24 hours prior notice
to the committee aide(s) listed above

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SENATOR DICK LaROSSA (Chairman): Ladies and gentlemen, good evening and welcome to Irvington. I welcome myself to Irvington, if I may. If I may, I have an opening statement. Then I'd like to introduce you to the members who are up here, as well as the Committee and so on. Then we will get into the public hearing part of the day's events.

I welcome each of you here today for, again, this very important public hearing as part of the newly established New Jersey Senate Urban Policy and Planning Committee, of which the Senate President has designated me as the Chairman.

However, before we begin this evening's discussion, I just want to spend a moment on an overview of the goals of the Committee and a few words on the process. Our Senate President, in establishing this Committee, stated that over the last two years the Senate has taken its responsibility as a partner in the urban revitalization effort seriously. But I believe that in the years ahead of us, a more aggressive, a more targeted urban agenda will be needed, among them: the development and support of key initiatives that will help our cities and municipalities to balance their budgets, clean up once abandoned properties, repair aging and damaged schools, encourage tenant input into public housing decisions, and leverage economic development opportunities.

We believe that the Senate will have in place the mechanism by which to ensure that such an agenda is developed, with the formation of this new standing committee. The Committee will have a very distinct responsibility, namely, to seek out solutions that are as unique in nature as the problems facing our urban communities.

The Committee will travel into the urban areas and meet with those individuals and leaders who have the ideas that make sense for their communities. So we're here today to hear your ideas. We requested staff to invite a cross section of elected officials; civic, religious, and community leaders; and

other individuals who we know, in total, will make a substantial contribution to the identification and solution of the problems which are with us. We want each of you to know that your ideas and thoughts are most welcome.

However, there may be some limit on time, and I will ask you to please make your comments as direct and as succinct as possible. I want to emphasize that today's session is one in which we desire to bring more light than heat to the problems. Therefore, I will ask any of you to refrain from any confrontation or attack. And remember, we are speaking of urban problems and solutions.

You'll notice transcribers from our legislative staff over here. The purpose of the transcription is so that the Committee members and staff will not lose the ideas and thoughts which are presented today. If you have comments, please, as we call you up, sit and speak directly into one of the microphones, rather than doing it from your seat, because it is very, very difficult, if not impossible, to hear your comments or have the microphones pick them up from there.

In conclusion, I'd just like to add that as I see the urban situation, not only in my district which includes the City of Trenton, but studied the urban situation in New Jersey and elsewhere, I know that urban problems affect suburban areas.

Although Webster's defines urban as belonging to a city, I see in a State like New Jersey that we are one big city. The ripple effect of both the good and the bad in our urban areas touches each of us, and therefore, we must jointly solve these problems, regardless of where we live in New Jersey. In a nutshell, the reason we are here today is because, if a picture is worth a thousand words, what is seeing and hearing it firsthand worth, which is why we come into the community as well.

I introduce you, to my left, Jack Callahan, Senate Republican Committee Aide. To my right, Hannah Shostack, OLS

Committee Aide. And before we go further, I'd like to introduce you to Senator Ron Rice, our benefactor. Also, I believe Irvington is in his jurisdiction. And our host this evening, the Honorable Mayor of Irvington, Mike Steele. Mayor would you care to--

M A Y O R M I C H A E L J. S T E E L E: Most definitely. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Certainly to Senator Dick LaRossa and to the staff, to the other Senators that are with us today, Senator O'Connor and Senator Martin, we've had a very remarkable day here in the Township of Irvington. I am very delighted.

First of all, I want to thank my very good friend, Senator Ron Rice, for selecting Irvington as a site of this particular Senate Committee hearing, the Urban Policy and Planning Committee. I think this may well be one of the most important committees.

I will share with you a bit of information that I found quite remarkable. Senator LaRossa is a two-year Senator, at this point in time -- I should say two-year veteran of politics. And in fact, this is his first position that he ran for office, so he comes to us with, I believe, a fresh, practical, rational approach to the world of politics.

Today we certainly had a wonderful time, because we not only had a focus group this morning talk about some of the concerns of Irvington and the surrounding Essex County region, but we also took a tour of Irvington, and we showed the Senator and entourage some of our most prized possessions -- the swimming pool, the new schools -- but we also showed him the success stories and some of the problems.

As all of you know, Irvington is that so-called urban/suburban type community. While, yes, we have some very beautiful streets in Irvington that are tree lined and very lovely, and one- and two-family homes, we also have those streets that we have to continue to work with and upgrade. We

have the dilapidation, blight, and abandoned properties, etc. We saw a little bit of both of that today.

We also talked about the need for our urban centers such as Newark and Irvington and East Orange to work together. We took a tour along our borders, along South 20th and South 19th Street, along the City of Newark and the border of Irvington, so we saw the need for joint programs. We're working collectively.

We didn't show or try to hide any of the weak spots in our community, but we believe that all those things is what this Committee is about. We want Irvington to be looked upon, not as a typical urban community, but as a community that is doing well, within its own, as a community that's using its own resources, and as the Governor indicated, is doing more with less.

But when a community like Irvington speaks or goes to Trenton for assistance, we want them to understand, when we come there, it's not for a typical handout that perhaps many stereotypes of urban centers would suggest that we are there for. We are there because we have gone the full gamut. We are there because we've gone the extra mile. And now we know that we now need our sister State to help us, or we need the Federal government to help us. So we need that little extra push from that additional level of government.

So we're here tonight, hopefully, that our Senator and his staff have seen that in Irvington and will use Irvington, hopefully, as a model around the State for a community that is on the right track, but a community that has all the trappings of what is good, and yet, all those trapping of what is bad, as well, in the so-called urban environment.

So today, Senator, I welcome you. We certainly want to thank you for making Irvington one of your stops. And hopefully, that some of the comments that you hear tonight will benefit this Committee in terms of going back to Trenton and

establishing the kind of legislation that's going to make our lives here in Irvington and other cities like Irvington much beneficial.

So thank you very much.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you, Mayor, and also your Council President, Mr. Blasi.

C O U N C I L P R E S I D E N T A N T H O N Y B L A S I: Thank you, Senator. Let me pull up a mike so I can speak. I just want to welcome you here today. We had a nice tour, and I was very impressed. We had a little meeting with a high school student, and I think that you were impressed. So were the other Senators. So, if you could bring back the word to the rest of the Senate and legislators -- that speech that young fellow made -- I think they'll all be impressed.

Hopefully, they will be able to give us the tools that we need, so we can make our children take the right road, the right step to go to victory. Thank you, Senator, and welcome aboard.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you. And before we get formally started, our host Senator this evening, my good friend, Senator Ron Rice.

SENATOR RICE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

To the distinguished Mayor and Council President and my colleagues in government here and to those who joined us on the tour of the day, it has been a long day, but its been a very good day.

I just want to say to the residents of the district and others from outside the district that Senator LaRossa represents the type of community that I represent, one which is both urban and suburban. And he has made it his mission to get out in the community and bring the committees out to make sure that the legislators understand exactly the problems that are faced in urban America and the impact on our suburban borders. And I think today kind of reinforced some of the things that

were heard and given to him in the Trenton session, as well as Passaic, and we'll be going to other cities.

I just want to also say that, Mayor, you're doing a good job here. And for those who don't know it, the Senate recognized the Mayor some time ago. Unfortunately, the big cities, Newark and others, tend to get us to come in, and we try to reflect from the big cities what the problems of smaller communities, such as Irvington's, are. But I think when you come into a smaller community, you see that the problems here are just as common as the problems are in big cities like Newark. But there is also some uniqueness about the problems, as well as the good things happening.

So I want to commend the Chair and the Committee for moving forward into the community and for coming to the Township.

And in closing, I'd just like to say that when I was asked by the Chairman to participate on this Committee -- because, you know, I was on other committees that were good to us also -- the one question I asked is whether or not -- what we were going to do? And he said, "We're going to the people." And I said, "That's enough for me."

So I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity, for being here in the Township of Irvington in the 28th Legislative District.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you, Senator Rice. And with no further ado, again, we'd like to hear from the community, and the first person we have here to testify, we have Rosalyn Rosenhanst.

R O S A L Y N J . R O S E N H A N S T : No.

SENATOR LaROSSA: No?

MS. ROSENHANST: No, I would prefer to listen.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay, fine.

MS. ROSENHANST: But maybe I would come back to something--

SENATOR LaROSSA: That's fine. You have to understand you know, if you hold office, you'd never give that up, that's okay. (laughter)

Lawrence Perry.

Yes, and if you would, just for the record give us your name so that -- so they'll have it on tape.

LAWRENCE E. PERRY: I thought you just stated it.

SENATOR LaROSSA: I did, but that way they'll have--

MR. PERRY: They want it on the tape. Okay. No problem.

Lawrence Perry, 66 Mount Vernon Avenue, Irvington, New Jersey.

I have a problem. When the government asked us to change our year-- We were on a calendar year, and you asked us to go to a fiscal year. During that time, our town bonded \$26 million to change to this. Now that \$26 million meant a tax increase for the taxpayers of Irvington.

Now, today happens to be April the 4th, (sic) and as of yet, the Town Council has not passed a budget for this town. Now in the caucus meeting, I think, two weeks ago, they had a situation where they had to go out and borrow additional money, which is going to end up costing us another \$58,000 to \$60,000 in terms of interest, because they are going to borrow, I think, about \$20 million to pay the bill. But we were forced by the State to change from a calendar year to coincide with their fiscal year.

Now this is unfair to the taxpayers, because my great grandchildren will be paying this debt off. By the time you're through paying off \$26 million, it's no longer \$26 million, it's more like \$50 million.

And I heard someone say about urban -- improvement in urban life. I know in the State of New Jersey, police officers are allowed to live anywhere they want to live. And I think that that's a mistake, due to the fact that the police officer

only has a job in a town for eight hours. So, after that eight hours, he exits and goes to another town and lives in another area. Now, who benefits from his position as a police officer? Those other towns, because a police officer is there, and theoretically, a police officer is on duty 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week, if he is a police officer.

I think that if a police officer was required to live at least within the surrounding areas, or the county in which he lives, he would have more input and, let's say, more to lose if his community was run down. But it's just -- he enters and he leaves. So while he's here-- I'm not saying he's not doing a good job, but I'm saying while he's here, that's all we're seeing. I mean, somebody else is benefitting from the dollars that we are spending.

And in the case of let's say the past winter, we had a lot of snow. I don't have the facts or figures, but I imagine that a lot of them got snowed out -- not in, but snowed out. If he's within the city in which he lives, he's there already; he doesn't have to come in.

I think not only in Irvington, but in many urban cities, you have that problem. I don't think that we would go to Russia and hire a person to be a soldier in the U.S. of America. That might be a little far-fetched, but I don't think we would do that.

And two, I think that we should have a few more laws on the books that make local elected officials more accountable to our local people. I have an instance here, where I am asking for-- We have a law in the book that's called the Right-to-Know, and I think that happens to be Public Record, Right of Inspection which is 47:1A-2. I've asked for some records, not here in this town, but of a Freeholder here in Essex County. I asked for that on March 16, and as of this date, I haven't received it.

I know we pay for computers where people put their expense accounts, attendance records and all of that on the computer. Now, today happens to be April 12, (sic) so in five days it will be a month, and I made a phone call today and they are still doing research. I don't know how much time it takes to research in a computer. I called the State to ask how to get this enforced. Nobody knows. Now, what am I, as John Doe taxpayer, supposed to do? You got a law on the book, and I can't find an agency to enforce it. So how do I get this? So how do I get it, there are no teeth in the law. At this point in time, I am paying taxes for what purpose? I mean, you got a law on the books, you don't have an enforcement agent. I should be able to call somebody and say, "This is what I've done, and this is what I need," and they should be able to call somebody. I should be able to get that record.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Mr. Perry, just for your own information, before the evening is over, the Committee Aide to my left, give him your name and address, and we'll tell you how to go about getting the information.

MR. PERRY: Okay, because I have the document here. I've been down there several times for that. This is all I have to say.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you very much.

Just so that you know, the fiscal year change that occurred two years ago cost some 47 towns in New Jersey approximately \$735 million, which, by the time the interest is added to that, it's going to cost municipalities throughout the State somewhere in the vicinity of close to \$2 billion.

What we're asked to do and what we are working on now-- It's another unfunded State mandate, which again, unfortunately-- We're trying to move away from that. But one of the things that we're trying to do, and I even mentioned this to the Mayor before, is try to find a way to have the

State consolidate, the same way that you would do a bulk lien sale. But we are trying to find a way to have the municipalities or have the State consolidate all of the transition year bonds.

And then, based on the fact that the State has a AA+ rating, with interest rates where they are, Irvington's rate is somewhere underneath 5 percent or 6.5 percent. It fluctuates at any given time. But if we can consolidate that and do a bulk transition bond, we can probably guess that we can cut the interest rate on those payments -- a total somewhere by a third. Close to \$300 million to \$400 million.

Your comment is something which is well known, well founded, and very troublesome. And there are some people who are trying to work on some proactive solutions. But thank you again for bringing it up.

SENATOR RICE: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask the speaker a quick question, which others can listen to, too.

Because you are correct, and because the issues continue to come back at us -- residency of police officers-- But I believe in residency of several types of city servants and government servants. But my question is-- Let me back up and preface some remarks.

Senator O'Connor, who was with us earlier, a member of our Committee-- A couple of years ago, he and I cosponsored legislation to close the back door of residency. The way the law is now, you can give a priority like we do to a resident, but, after a period of time, they can move right out on you. So the back door has now been closed and we try to do that -- it wasn't so much the constitutionality of the bill, which was raised this morning.

I think constitutionally, we can do it. The problem is that a person -- a police officer, who operated in Deal, New Jersey, and Deal, New Jersey is a community where homes may start at \$1 million plus. You can't force someone to live in

that community, so you have to go outside of the community. But you can have a scenario where affordable housing is available -- that you can do some residency things.

My question is, until we can figure out how to close the back door, Mr. Perry and others, and something for the Committee to think about-- There are those of us who are thinking that we should give a priority to the residents in our community who live there, but strike a different salary range, where persons living there-- It's almost like a contractual arrangement, that they are going to live there for "X" number of years at a minimum, then their starting salary is one number, versus someone who is from outside of that community.

The other issue becomes -- and I used to have this debate with Mayor Gibson in Newark, when he said, "Police officers should live in Newark." And I said, "I don't disagree with you, but, Mayor, where are they going to live? All the vacant lots, all the abandoned buildings, maybe we should find some housing for them to come back to." Because many say, "I don't mind coming back, Senator, to the city, but there is no place to rent or buy housing." Then some of the laws we have structured at State and Federal government, probably the Federal more than the State, said that if you are an employee of the city, or government, or certain entities, you know, you can't bid for certain things, or you can't buy into certain programs, which I thought-- I think it's ridiculous.

Our working-class population, even though it may be low income, happen to be working right there in city halls. Our middle-class population happen to be in the school system and in city halls, and government. And if you want to have an economic diversity and some balance and some consistency in paying bills, it seems to me that the people you're paying, you want to live there. So it seems to me, if you want them to live there, where you have abandoned and vacant lots, those are the people you'll want to have an opportunity to get those things first -- to live there.

So I guess my question for you to think about, and maybe someone from the speakers can respond to it: Do you believe that at the State level we should be looking at making sure that every citizen, including employees of municipalities, can reap the same type of benefits if it's needed to have homeownership and the benefits to rehab and buy property off auction? And whether or not we should be looking at some type of legislation that set a priority in the way we pay civil servants who live in town versus those who live outside?

Thank you.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you, Senator Rice.

Herbert Ramo.

Would you just identify yourself into the microphone for the record?

HERBERT L. RAMO: Yes, I'm Herb Ramo. I live at 936 Chancellor Avenue in Irvington. I work for the Township as an Economic Development Planner and act as the Manager of the local Chamber of Commerce.

I want to thank Senator LaRossa and the distinguished members of the dias for having this hearing here in Irvington. I think it's a great idea.

The Chamber aptly named Irvington, one time, as the Gateway to the Suburbs. I think it applies very nicely. I just want to mention about the urban enterprise zones. I know Orange has it, and Newark has it. Irvington and East Orange do not have it. It creates an imbalance. When I look at Orange, I see Irvington. Many of the stores in Orange are the same stores that are in Irvington. They have an urban enterprise zone. Irvington doesn't.

Recently, I got a call, last week, a couple of times from different businessmen. One of the main questions they ask is: Does Irvington have an urban enterprise zone? It's a deterring factor, and I think the only answer is there has to be some kind of an equality in doing urban enterprise zones.

If the town is eligible, they should get it. If they are not eligible, fine. But to give one who is eligible-- And one gets it and one doesn't is an imbalance in downtown shopping and it does have an effect.

Another thing I'd just like to mention is abandoned industrial buildings. This is for the State really. There are many abandoned industrial buildings coming about through old age and economics. And I think somewhere, somewhere along the line, the State has to address the problems of ECRA and suddenly realize, we're getting too many abandoned industrial buildings here in Irvington, many in Newark, and many throughout the State.

I don't have the answer, but I would like to know, maybe somewhere along the line, somebody has to address the problems of abandoned industrial buildings. They are proliferating throughout the State. And I think in time, it's going to be a problem we're going to have to all address.

The other thing I'd like to mention is that I, myself, never get any information from the State Economic Development Authority. The only way I find out about an economic development program is when I read about it in The Star-Ledger. Since there is a State Economic Development Committee -- we have New Jersey EDA -- I wish they would send more information along to the municipalities, either to the Mayor's office, or to the Community Development office, or even an Economic Development office if they had it.

I think this is an important thing. We don't get enough information. I hate to read about a new program in the newspaper. Now I've got to go fish it out. I'd love to hear about it, maybe in more detail and in advance, in writing.

The other thing I'd like to compliment and mention is the boot camp that Senator Rice, I think-- Crime is always a problem in urban areas. The boot camp is an excellent idea. My own experience in the Air Force was that we had what they

called retraining centers, which were similar to boot camps. This is where people who got into trouble in the Air Force, and it was serious enough that they could wind up with a dishonorable discharge, they went through a special court-martial. And in the process they would say to them, "Do you want to go to the retraining center or do you want a general," or in some cases, in many cases a dishonorable discharge. It wasn't called a boot camp. The retraining center was 90 days of-- Just like the boot camps were, they were exactly the same. The bottom line was that 90 percent graduated and returned to active duty in the military services. I would say at least 90 percent graduated.

This was done at Warren Air Force Base in the 1950s. It was an eminently successful program. It took fellows who got into trouble, either through petty theft, some small degrees of violence, or certain unsocial conduct to the military, especially AWOL -- being absent without leave -- and these people were retrained and 90 percent returned to active duty, and I think the same thing could apply to civilian life.

I think Senator Rice has a great program, and I think that program should be done as soon as possible. I know there is plenty of space down in Fort Dix, now, if we're doing that.

The last thing I want to mention, just as a compliment -- the Mayor is not here. In Irvington, we have an Urban Development Action Grant Money, which we got in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This program is being recycled. We're recycling this out to small businesses. Right now, we have at least fifteen \$30,000 loans out. We're now currently doing a \$1,000 Facade Grant Program, which is having -- I'm just about filled up with it.

We have 20 to 30 businesses right now, who are taking advantage of the program. It gives the small businessman a chance to fix up the front of the store to make it appear nice. We give them \$1,000 if they spend over \$2,000, or 50

percent if it's less. The program works very well. Businessmen like it.

We're also going to have a \$100 grant program, very shortly, to get the graffiti off buildings. There's nothing worse than graffiti on a building. And we're giving these people an incentive to get it painted over and cleaned up.

And I think that about covers it, Senator. I wish to thank you for having me here and listening to my thoughts.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you, Herb.

Senator Rice, I think, volunteered to be the first commandant of the boot camp.

SENATOR RICE: No problem. I just didn't know they got in trouble in the Air Force. (laughter)

MR. RAMO: They had retraining centers. (remainder indiscernible, speaking off mike)

SENATOR LaROSSA: Next on the list we have Thomas Vena. My apologies for butchering the names.

T H O M A S R. V E N A: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Rice, Mr. President Blasi, ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Tom Vena, and I'm an attorney in private practice in South Orange Village, where I currently reside with my wife and two young children.

I'm a former trustee of the Village and was the Chairman of the Public Safety Committee of the Village for a four-year period from 1989 to 1993. I'm also currently, as I have been for the past seven years, the Deputy City Attorney for the City of Orange.

Mr. Chairman, South Orange is a village of approximately 16,000 people that is almost entirely residential in character. Perhaps more importantly, its tax base is almost entirely single-family residential.

It has for many years been judged a Tree City by national foundations, and its tree lined streets are lit by gas lights. Notwithstanding what many would call the suburban

character of South Orange Village, it has had to come kicking and screaming into the reality that its problems are no different from those faced by its urban neighbors. While the median income of South Orange is higher than its neighbors, it nonetheless suffers from many of the concerns faced by communities like Newark and Irvington.

One of the things we've come to realize in South Orange is that what benefits its adjacent urban municipalities benefits the Village. As urban programs have a positive effect on raising the standard of living in urban areas, that impact benefits the Village of South Orange.

Specifically, we in South Orange urge the State of New Jersey to continue to maximize funds available to our sister cities in the 28th Legislative District in their ongoing effort to fight crime.

However, without in the least minimizing the need for that continued level of State assistance, there must be a more regional approach to and understanding of the impact of crime without reliance upon existing artificial borders, as criminal actors do not confine their work to particular municipalities. The impact is regional, and the efforts of law enforcement to eradicate crime will only succeed in moving it from one place to another, unless the place to which it is moved is ready to deal with the situation when it occurs. That calls for close cooperation between law enforcement agencies of all municipalities, as well as close cooperation between its mayors and governing bodies.

One way in which that cooperation can be fostered is by the encouragement of the State of New Jersey. There must be some incentive to encourage neighboring municipalities to meet on a regular basis to discuss public safety concerns and economic assistance.

Using the resources of the State, pilot projects can then be developed to properly protect the public and eliminate

the criminal element, rather than simply moving it from one location to another. Perhaps the State, through either the Division of Criminal Justice or the Department of Community Affairs, can provide incentive seed money for creative pilot programs to address these needs. Again, without a regional approach, crime is just moved, not eliminated.

One example of a regional approach to public safety programs that has worked well in the very recent past is the Joint Essex/Union Auto Task Force, which has been active and effective. In its first year of operation alone, the Task Force has made 376 arrests and recovered \$4 million worth of stolen vehicles. Communities immediately adjacent to urban areas also support creative means in which to inhibit the flow of criminal traffic.

However, this requires more than just walls, fences, or cul-de-sacs. Again, it requires intermunicipal cooperation and State programmatic and financial assistance to eradicate crime through creative thinking and not revolving-door justice.

Again, I urge you to consider examining low cost, creative approaches to regionalization of public safety. If this Committee's mission is to examine urban policy and legislation that directly bears upon it, then this Committee, as the Chairman stated-- This Committee's mission is a broad one, because, after all, urban policy must be State policy.

The line between urban and suburban communities has become blurred over the years, and it should be State policy to deal with the regional impact of local needs. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to be here and thank you very much for coming to Irvington in the 28th Legislative District.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you very much for taking the time to go out and testify. Just one quick question. Being a resident of South Orange, when you talk about regional services, do you know offhand what the-- I'm assuming you have a police force in South Orange?

MR. VENA: Yes.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay. If you lost the identity of South Orange -- in terms of home rule, that always seems to be a problem-- What's you're feeling in terms of home rule, how the residents would respond to a regional service, if in fact, they had to give home rule?

MR. VENA: You know, the more I've asked that question myself, as each day goes by, the more I think the residents of the Village would recognize the need to deal with crime on a more regional basis. If that requires a supplementation of local police protection with a more regional police presence or a law enforcement presence, I think they've reached the point in which they would accept a minimal loss of home rule, while without totally abandoning the local municipal police force. Because, after all, they want people like me that they can reach, and touch, and hold, and vote out of office if they are not happy with the police protection.

As you move up the levels of government, the people don't feel as close to you. And they want to know that they can talk to their local councilman and their local mayor, and say, "I have a problem on this corner, would you send somebody over here to deal with it." That's, I think, where they fear the loss of home rule.

I don't think that they object at all to a regionalized approach and, in fact, one of the things that South Orange and Maplewood have been examining is a possible regionalization of joint fire forces, as the first step towards considering regionalization in being able to provide better service, improved service at a lower cost. And there are some legislative stumbling blocks to that process, one of which is the inability to opt out of civil service, and that's one that I know -- a piece of legislation that is currently in the Legislature.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you.

MR. VENA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you.

We have Chris Mazauskus, Township of Irvington, Office of Neighborhood Preservation.

C H R I S T O P H E R G. M A Z A U S K A S: Chris Mazauskas, it's a primer in Lithuanian, for you there.

I was able to speak with you before, but not at the meeting. There were so many things being said, and a lot of very good points that were made. I just want to reiterate that the core issues, as I saw them, were around perspective and proportion, and I think that's where a lot of the problems come around. The perspective of individuals, perspective of children, perspective of parents, of schools, of churches, of various agencies and organizations, local government, the government in Trenton, the government in D.C. -- we have to try and bring this into balance.

I think meetings like this are a good way to begin to do that. We need to open up the communication. That's the only way that we're going to be able to get things in proportion. Without that, what we're going to have are first-ring communities, like this, that get the spillage of urban centers and have proportioned amounts of the issues and problems to deal with, but don't have a proportionate access to the resources to deal with them. We've been trying to do that in this administration, especially in the area of housing.

When it began, I believe they only had one unit completed. They had less than \$100,000. They were facing sanctions from HUD, and they hadn't seen any non-Federal money in over ten years. By putting things, again, into perspective and giving proportionate emphasis on the issues of this community, and not only housing, but in this, in particular, we were able to raise over \$3.5 million since 1991. We were able to assist from that time forward, I believe, over 100 units. We have a First Time Home Buyer Assistance Program. We're

building new units with assistance, and we helped rehabilitate an acre project on 18th Avenue, as you saw, of 50 units, which prior to that had only been a magnet for drugs and crime.

If there is some way we could formalize this process, make it more formal and regular, where we could come out regularly and speak to you, perhaps we can begin to make some conscious, positive decisions to continue to address these issues.

One of the first programs we were able to bring in here, at the beginning of the administration, was the Neighborhood Rehabilitation Program. That was the first State funded program in this community in over ten years and helped begin to increase the production of affordable housing in the community and to address some of its issues. But as a result of certain cuts, that program has been cut out entirely.

I think before these kind of cuts are made, you have to look at the impact they're going to have on the various communities where they are implemented.

Thank you for visiting with us today. It's very much appreciated, and I hope you can take this back with you.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you, Chris, and I also appreciate your comments on the tour, as well.

We have Harry Paden, Payden. Could you give us the correct pronunciation.

H A R R Y P A D E N: Yes. It was the first one, Paden, Harry Paden. I live at 49 Bross Place.

Thank you, Senator LaRossa and the other distinguished dias, guests, and my good friend -- and I say that humbly -- Senator Rice and our Council President, Mr. Blasi.

I want to take the opportunity to let you know that I'm the PTA President of Irvington High School. Most of what I present to you will deal with education. But it will also round off with crime, because if you don't educate an individual, then you will find, one way or another, they'll end up in your judicial system.

Over at Irvington High School-- I'm glad that you did have an opportunity to speak to some of the youngsters from the high school. And I'm sure they represented themselves well, because I know one of the youngsters that you talked to.

But the major problem that we have, particularly at the high school, is overcrowding. The high school was built to hold 1800 students, and currently the enrollment is 2600 to 2800. That gross overcrowding has its effect in poor student attendance. Also, the students that are attending, the bright students, can't get full attention because the students that need more attention will, of course, hold them back. And the students that need the attention may not be able to get it, because of just the time restraints in that. We have tried through several avenues to get this problem addressed.

Currently, we're leasing a building from the county. It's the old Essex County Vo-tech Building, and right now a stalemate -- the negotiations are stalemated -- because of dollars and cents, like everything else. They want one price, and our board wants to pay another.

While this is happening, though, we have a great school that is being built, additions to two of our other schools that are helping with our junior high school and our elementary overcrowding-- All of our students will channel into that one high school. And I'm fortunate enough, also, to belong to the Juvenile Conference Committee, where we hear of some youngsters who are first time offenders, and how they relate to being at that school. And a lot of them are intimidated by the numbers. They don't want to attend school and it deflates any ego that they have.

So how I would like the Senators and the legislative officers in Trenton to help us is to see that each of our youngsters get the kind of education that goes on in towns such as South Orange, Maplewood, Fort Lee, and Tenafly, many of the

other cities that have a greater tax base, and they can give their children the type of education that all youngsters should have.

The Japanese do it; the Russians, before they disbanded what was their economy-- They all realized that education is important. And how I say I tie it into crime is that if you don't educate the youngster -- and I believe that education now costs between \$8000 to \$10,000 -- then you look to incarcerate the youngsters or the persons, and that's between \$25,000 to \$35,000. So you can see it behooves all of us to see that we educate each and every youngster that wants an education.

Of course, there will always be some that will end up in the judicial systems, and that's why I also like the boot camp legislation. I also like the alternative schooling for those-- These are both sponsored by Senator Rice. The alternative school legislation, where, if a youngster is identified and is not able to work in mainstream school systems, then this youngster is put into a school system where they can more so help these youngster.

I really would like for the Legislature also to call in urban PTA presidents, urban superintendents, urban parents at large, so that we can let you know of our concerns. Many times we reach out to the various legislators, but on a day-to-day basis you have hundreds of people reaching out to you, and you don't realize the importance of our trying to reach out to you.

And we really need to just look into getting programs. When I was a youngster in the early '60s -- late '60s to early '70s -- there were programs, recreation houses that the youngsters-- I lived in the Scudder Home Projects, and I see my good friend, Mr. Councilman George Branch, and I know him from those programs. Before he was a legislator, he was a community person that took us in and said, "No son, this

is not the way you do this. This is how you do it." So I can sit before you as an intelligent individual, because I was guided this way, not because I have so much on the cap that I just turned out this way. And I think we owe this to our youngsters.

We are calling on you to look into this, and it costs dollars and cents. But again, when you invest those dollars and cents correctly, then you don't have to deinvest them when you turn our youngsters into the criminal system, which is now overcrowded, you know, and seriously also has its problems.

So again, what I'd like to see done is something done to help our urban city, Irvington, with the high school, whether it's putting pressure on the powers that be to either buy a building, negotiate in good faith on the building that we are negotiating with the county, or just get us, you know -- purchase the building and say, "This is our gift."

But what we need, also, is for you to tour our building. I challenge you to tour our building on any given day, because I'm over there almost everyday. And if you saw the number of students that had to walk, each day, through that hallway, just shoulder to shoulder because the class bell has rung, you will realize that our youngsters should be commended and lauded. Because if this building is built for maybe 300 to 400 people, but if you put 5000 people in here, or you know -- let's not even use that.

If you put 1000 in here, and day after day we have to sit here among each other, we would get on each other's nerves. So a lot of our juvenile problems come from the fact that our students are in that environment.

And again, all of our efforts to relieve overcrowding in the elementary will be deterred once they go into the high school, and right now, there's not a lot that's being said about relieving that immediately. I would wish it could be relieved by September, because we owe it to our youngsters.

Again, I thank you all for coming to our city. I, again, challenge you to get into the-- You know, a lot of Legislators say, "Well, no, we don't mix with the education part; we don't interfere." But I wish you would, you know, you really need to, because our school administrators need to know that you care enough, that you're watching their shoulders. We have many great administrators. But as you go into that building, they want that building to look like it should look.

As I go into it, as a parent, they see me all the time and sometimes they say, "Well hey, you know, he's never going to be satisfied." But as you go in, as you go in, those centers will turn into the type of institutions that I remember, schools I attended, Central High School in Newark, New Jersey. And I came out of there with a supreme education.

I challenge anyone, on an educational basis, because I was challenged. My classes were honors to go to. You know, I enjoyed going to school. And I think our youngsters would do the same, if they were given the same opportunity that I was given.

So again, I thank you all for coming, and I hope that you can look into this and get our educational system to fulfill their obligations. And I'm sure you will be spending less money on your judicial obligation once we start educating each and every one of the youngsters that come through our hallowed halls.

Thank you.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Mr. Paden, thank you very much. One thing about cliches, they become cliches because they are true.

And your comments about what the cost is of incarcerating someone. Mayor Palmer in Trenton, who has become a very good friend over the last couple of years, has a phrase which he uses regularly: "It costs more to send someone to jail, than it does to send them to Yale."

And I think that kind of puts it in a nutshell.

Councilman George Branch, from Newark.

Good evening, Councilman. It's good to see you.

C O U N C I L M A N G E O R G E B R A N C H: George Branch, Councilman of the Central Ward in the City of Newark. To you, Chairman, and to all the distinguished members on the dais, and most certainly to my Councilman, Senator Rice, I want to thank him personally for asking me to come and be a part of your planning and counseling meeting this evening.

I understand that you took a tour of the upper part of the West Ward, which is adjacent to the east part of the Irvington borderline. And as you know, Senator Rice and I have been working very closely with Mayor Steele and the Police Director to deal with many of the problems that we're facing on the borderline.

It's very pleasing to join with you this evening to find out that there are some interesting concerns that you have here in the City of Newark. And looking at many of the problems that we're having, the question would be: How do we address those issues that we have been talking about when it comes to crime, stolen cars? And I was just listening to my good friend talk about education. And, you know, recreation and education go hand in hand. They're unacceptable, if we have not focused enough on those kinds of things.

But with the tour of the ward, we hope that you got a bird's eye view of what the ward looks like at the upper and the lower part of the ward, where we're having a massive problem with the drugs, the hanging out on the corners. And we're always saying, "There is not enough recreation for young people." And I'm not sure whether we had enough recreation, whether it's going to deter the youngster who gets involved in drugs, because once they get lost then they're lost. And how do we get them back? How do we claim them? And what legislation is in place to help, to address some of those concerns?

We realize that money is a problem, but, you know, as you said, "It costs more to put someone in jail, than to put them in Yale." And if we can deter youngsters by developing some alternatives, which I don't think the legislators have done in the State of New Jersey-- I don't think we have concentrated on alternative education for youngsters.

I think we have to try to reach them before they drop out of school, recognizing that many of them come from homes that may have been disturbed by whatever reason, which is not your fault, but they are still our kids, and we cannot turn our backs on them.

I think that the legislators ought to start to concentrate a little bit on alternative education. I know we have the vocational school, but we don't have enough of them, to tell you the truth. If you're talking about saving kids, it costs more money to keep one in jail than to keep them out here, and you're talking about \$28,000 to \$30,000 a year, just for one inmate in the prison, if I'm right. I think my figures are kind of close to that. And how do we begin to develop some of these alternatives?

I think, at some point, we need to be looking at alternative education for kids. We need to take a survey of the whole entire school district in the State of New Jersey, in particular, urban schools, where we have major problems, and try to find out how many kids are academically inclined versus those that are vocationally inclined. You may have to separate them to try to do a one-on-one base-- With some of the school districts I have visited, they have set up such programs.

One of the schools I have visited in Houston, Texas -- they built that school starting in 1975 and it was completed in 1971. (sic) I was there in 1976, and I found out what that vocational school-- Less than 1 percent of those kids had dropped out since 1971. That means somebody was doing something right. Because what they did, they took the things

that the kids were interested in -- guys that were interested in carpentry, electrician, plumbing, photography work, and you can go on and on and on -- but they got these kids interested, and that is what they signed up for.

They separated them. Out of 4000 kids-- Now, 4000 kids during the summer months had 4000 jobs that were developed with all the corporations in Houston, Texas. And that is the way they did that when the summertime came; 4000 kids had 4000 jobs. So it kept him involved, but also you gave him his academics starting in the 9th grade. You gave him all his academics that he had, but also you were giving him some skills to be able to survive. So maybe this is one of the things that the State needs to begin to look at.

Senator Rice and maybe you might lead the ball between the two of you there and start concentrating on that. These are some of the things that we have to do. But the school has got to be willing to accept them, and that's the Superintendent and the Board.

And we have to identify a building. We're talking about closing up some buildings. We need to look at those buildings that we talk about closing up and see what we can do with those buildings. If the facility is there and it's available, we need to concentrate on that.

So I just thought it was important to bring this out, since I was invited, and then have to deter a lot of crimes and what have you. If we can get them before they drop out and get into the street, because once they get money in their pockets, there is no turning them back. If a guy walks around with \$2000 to \$3000 in his pocket a day from pushing drugs, there is no way in the world you can give him a job for \$3.75 a hour, or even \$6.00, or \$8.00 a hour. Unless he is an exceptional kid, -- say, "Well, I'm going to turn my life around, I don't want to go this route anymore." Once they get lost it's hard to get them back.

So I just want to thank you and Senator Rice, again, for having me join with you. And this should not be the last meeting now, maybe this is the first one. What we tend to do in many instances, we have one meeting, we get a little newspaper article in the paper by the media and what have you -- but it's more than that. Whatever came out of this meeting for those who spoke, we ought to follow up on that. We ought to come back at some point and say, "Of these things that you have discussed, these are some of the things that we have considered. It may cost some additional dollars; we may have to move in another direction."

But I think all of these things are important, because only the brains can do all that stuff -- the guys who are sitting there. They say that out of this discussion these are some of the things, how do you feel about them, whether you think that we can go further, and look at how we can help improve the quality of life, in particular, education; that's where it's at.

If we don't save the generation today, we won't be able to defend ourselves against them tomorrow, because he ain't got something upstairs, you have to look out. Your guns don't mean anything anymore because they got Uzis, and, when you step out, they go to firing. And so if we can save them through some alternative programs and what have you, it ought to be forced upon the schools to do that. Just don't take the Science High School where you have the top kids and you have the University Heights -- the top kids, you have Arts High, with one of the top kids--

I have talked to my superintendent about this, but he's going to need some help from you guys. And maybe he needs to incorporate them in his plan and submit that to you, the members of the Senate, so that they can begin to address some of those negatives and to see what we can come up with. Maybe we'll come up with nothing, but it's better to say, "I tried,"

than never try. I always said, "I'm never going to help a man fail. If a man fails, he failed because he can't deliver, not because I didn't try to help him to get there." So I'm here tonight to try to help you get there.

So I just wanted to thank all of you very much and thank Senator Rice once again. And we hope that we have another meeting. And we hope that you begin to address some of these concerns that we have and tell us whether it's good for you. If it's not good, tell us we can do it or we can't do it and these are the problems. And folks will feel much better about the move. When you say things like that to them, you come back, then you take the suggested ideas and they die, and the folks never know what happened to the ideas.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you, Councilman. And we will be back. It has been a promising, as we said before-- I agree with one of your comments, which is a topic which is near and dear to my heart, and obviously it's education. There has to be a fundamental change in how educational services are delivered, if not in this country, certainly in this State, because if money were the answer, the problem would have been solved a long time ago.

There's a fundamental problem with just the delivery system. And as far as one of the reasons we come back, and one of the reasons we do this and I -- you know, your comments, and Senator Rice, you know, we all really believe the same thing. Now, ideas work when people get behind them. The best ideas come from the people who live with problems. And the best solutions come from the same people who have to live them day, after day, after day.

It's very difficult, and I think the reality is that Trenton for too long has simply sat on State Street and tried to impose answers to problems in situations where they simply don't have a clue. So hopefully, what we'll be able to do is to at least bring them a clue.

COUNCILMAN BRANCH: Thank you very much.

SENATOR RICE: Mr. Chairman, if I may, for a brief moment through you.

I certainly agree with you, Councilman Branch, and with my colleague, Chairman LaRossa, but -- I'm just a firm believer that we need alternative education -- but I also believe that nothing is going to work until we change the way we do things at the inception. The drop-out law in the State of New Jersey has not been looked at since 1947.

I really believe that a youngster born today, when he or she reaches age 5 and starts school, they should know one thing: that at age 5 people start school, and they'll either graduate or turn 18 when they are emancipated. If there's no such thing as dropout, you never hear the words, you never think about it. If you think about playing hookie, maybe yes, but not dropping out and totally destroying your life.

You may think about the school system you're in versus alternative education you have available to you, if we make it available. And so I'm going to continue to push to eradicate that law, so we can start looking at education long term. It's a conditioning process for young people, and I really believe that it will work, particularly, for alternative education.

The other thing is that one thing that will stay with Senator LaRossa and I today was the message from the young lady who works in the school system with young people.

I'm going to misquote her, but she said something like, "She was working for a young fifth grader," -- not a tenth grader, not an eleventh grader, but a fifth grader -- whom they asked to write a letter to the President." And I guess it was an exercise and an educational type of situation, and the young person said that he wasn't going to write a letter, or why should he write a letter, because nothing is going to change anyway.

Apparently what he was saying, the President is not going to respond, and the world is going to remain the same. And I guess she tried to be an adult, be psychologically correct to get him to do this kind of thing, and she said, "Well, you know, why won't you write your wish?" And he indicated to her, "Why wish? It's not going to come true anyway."

So my point is that in so many words already our young people at grade five have given up, because we are not providing alternatives. And they see what has happened around us, and Senator LaRossa has committed that this Committee is going to try to change some of those things, by way of these ideas, and I know we'll be back.

We probably won't be back, with the necessity of these meetings during an all-day tour. They'd be a necessity maybe to come back and maybe spend a shorter time, but to say, "Here is what came out of our meetings up and down the State. Here's what we expect to try to do with some input from you, and it's not going to be a cure of all the problems, but I think it will bring legitimacy hopefully to the process."

Thank you.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you, Senator.

Lori -- I'm sorry, Rene Ziegler.

Is Michael Jones with you as well -- with you or separately?

R E N E Z I E G L E R: Separately.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to appear before this Committee. My name is Rene Ziegler. I'm the Community Development Director for the City of East Orange and have been for the past 10 years.

In the City of East Orange, we have tried to do as the State and Federal government has mandated over the years. We have tried to do more with less. I can point to several examples where we have brought together our nonprofit service

providers, given them technical assistance through a program that we call community linkages, so that they can know what they're doing, who they are servicing, and know who to refer people too, so that we can stop duplicating services.

We have carried out a two-year study of the needs of this City through a process entitled Community Development 2000, where we had the Citizens Advisory Committee, made up of professionals from various areas. We had six areas of concern that we studied in-depth for two years and came out with a report on where we want to see East Orange go in the year 2000.

We also sponsor housing fairs to encourage people to own homes in an urban center like East Orange -- not a center but in an urban area like East Orange -- because we're small, smaller than Newark, but we have all the same problems as Newark. But when the funding comes through, Newark gets the money and East Orange just continues with the problems.

Out of what we have been doing with East Orange in terms of our Community Development Program, in terms of our Community Education Program, there are a few points that I want to make that have come out as concerns, basic concerns within East Orange.

One -- Senator Rice just about preempted me on it, when he discussed investing in the youth -- because a jail means nothing to a person without a conscience, and a conscience is developed within the first five years of a child's life. We have got to put more investment into early childhood education, beginning from infancy if needed.

We have got to help children who are in dysfunctional families. We have got to make places where they can be cared for and stimulated during the day, while their parents go into job training or have jobs. Without investing in these children, all of the jails that we create, the monsters of facilities like Essex County Youth House that exists now, will do nothing to solve the terrible drug and crime problem.

What we have to do is invest in the young people, so that they know their alternatives; that there is something real for them, besides drugs; that the future is possible for them. And that begins before they reach high school. You have to reach them much earlier than high school. You have to reach them, as I said, in the preeducation, early education stage.

I know there have been some experiments in some places in New Jersey where they've taken the public schools and opened them up to children starting from age three. I think we need to continue with that, foster that, and, in fact, expand upon that. I think that the State needs to support the building of additional facilities for early childhood education.

We have many day cares in East Orange, about 15. All of them have extensive waiting lists. So that means that there's a mother that probably can't work because her children don't have day care. That's not profiting anyone. Or she can't go to training because there is not a day-care slot. They all have extensive waiting lists, but then, on the other hand, because of lack of funding, some of them have rooms where the ceiling is leaking or the floors don't meet State standards, but yet, there is not enough funding for them to correct these violations.

So I would ask that you go back and look at the funding that is given for early childhood education and see that there are enough funds available to create more day-care slots. And also to create the type of environment that's needed, so that they meet the State standards. The State standards are rigid and that's good, but there needs to be funding made available to help day-care providers meet those standards.

Another concern, which goes along with education -- the early education-- Then when you get to the young people that are high school age, a big part of what's missing for a lot of them is the opportunity to have a positive employment experience.

I have dealt with-- We have several summer work experience programs in East Orange. One is Federally funded through the State. And one is a program that we started, Jobs 100, where we solicit private jobs, and we give our youth a six-day training program in self-esteem, how to go to work, basic things -- how to interview, how to write a resume -- and then the private employer interviews these young people, and they will pay them.

But I have encountered young men and women, 18, 19, and 20, who have gotten out of high school and have never had a job. Now, how do you convince such a person that there is, indeed, a future for them, other than criminal activity or some other negative activity, when they've never had a job opportunity.

There is a critical need for our youth to have fulfilling job opportunities, starting from age 15, 14. We must invest in this, because once they learn that they can be productive in the workforce, then they can see an alternative to destructive behavior.

You know, there are so many children that apply for the summer work program that a lot of cities have gone to picking them by lottery. So the lottery-- Five percent get the jobs, and there is 95 percent out on the street unsupervised without enough recreational activities. So that's another big concern. The City of East Orange is trying to address that. We want the State's assistance with additional funding for that.

Another concern is that our homeless children's after-school program has been cut, in terms of this funding. It provides a continuity of service for children that live in motels or homeless shelters by giving them tutoring, a hot meal, supervised recreation, and case work assistance. This is a great program, a model program, and this funding was cut. I can't understand that personally. The most vulnerable

citizens, homeless children, the small amount of money that they were receiving from the State has been cut from that program.

Right now, we don't know if we will even be able to continue that program. We're hoping to be able to continue it through Community Development Block Grant funds, but it was originally funded through the State.

Foster children and children who turn 18 "age out of foster care, age into welfare." They turn 18, then they have no support system. The welfare -- DYFS no longer is concerned with their welfare. They tell them to go get on general assistance. What does an 18 year old or 19 year old do on general assistance with \$140 a month? What message are we sending to those young people. We have a large population that is "aging out of foster care."

Again, in East Orange, with our Board of Education, with other social service agencies, we are trying now to develop a plan of housing, comprehensive services, and job training, specifically aimed at young people who are either in disfunctional homes and should not remain there, but are yet too old, 17 or 18, and can't go into foster care and those who are "aged out of foster care." That is a very difficult age between 17 and 21. If support is not provided for them, in terms of job training and housing, what alternatives are there?

So I would like to just request that this Committee take back the fact that in cities like East Orange we are trying to do more with less. We're looking at our public sector, our private sector, our nonprofit sector; we're working together, but it is critical that we have the State support to help us form cooperative ventures for money that should come from the Federal government and that should come through the county.

There needs to be a look at the bureaucratic structure that we encounter in moving these funds from the funding source to the actual program.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR LaROSSA: We are somewhat limited on time, and we will, in fact, hear everyone who has signed up. However, I would request that to please try to make the comments as direct and as succinct as possible. The public hearing notice that was posted requests that we try to keep the comments to approximately five minutes, so that we can hear most of the people who are here to speak. I apologize, but the list has gotten longer, so at this point, we need to possibly try to impose about a five minute limit. Again, I apologize for that.

Lori McConnell.

L O R I M c C O N N E L L: Good evening. My name is Lori McConnell. I'm Director of the Irvington Public Library. I'm a 30-year employee of the Township of Irvington, and I'm pleased to say, with some humility, that I'm New Jersey Librarian of the Year -- only for a few more weeks, so I need to get that in.

I'd like to present to you that the pen is mightier than the sword. But is the pen mightier than the gun, and is the pen mightier than the stolen vehicle, and is the pen mightier than the crack abuse and the drug abuse and the crime that is going on in the streets of all our urban communities? And they are our urban communities. They are not just composed of the cities that are urban. They are the State of New Jersey.

Irvington, as you know, is a special needs district, and that means that Irvington public schools receive additional funding to do some of what they need to do for the children.

I realize that in the context of crime and distress that you're hearing about this evening that libraries may not seem like such an important issue, and I would be the first to agree that I'd just as soon have police officers and fire officers.

As a special needs district, we receive additional funding for our schools, but not one additional penny for the

public library. And why would that be necessary? Because the public library is an integral part of the educational system. There is not one child who can make it through public schools, grades kindergarten through 12, without going to the public library.

Just to keep my remarks fairly brief: We get State aid of less than \$80,000 a year. We get the maximum that we are entitled to, and yet it amounts to \$80,000 a year. If you look at the public library, which is right next door, it looks like a lovely building from here, but I can promise you that the lights you see are operating at only 50 percent capacity, because the ballasts are old and missing, the fuses are not working, the bulbs are not necessarily working, and the reflectors -- the plastic reflectors -- are old and yellow and we can't afford to replace them. So we're turning on the lights, and we're paying Public Service for the privilege to do that, but we're only getting about 50 percent of the light that we should be getting, because that public library can't afford to put in the minimal amount of equipment that is needed to turn the lights on full strength.

SENATOR RICE: Excuse me, isn't that bad for the reader's vision? So it's costing us more from the health care perspective.

MS. McCONNELL: Yes, it is. Thank you.

I wouldn't be able to work on the public floor of that building at this point. There is inadequate lighting.

State aid, as I said gives us \$80,000 a year. To meet State aid requirements, we're obligated to buy 6200 books. Sixty-two hundred books costs more than \$80,000 in a year. Most suburban libraries would think of 6200 books as being practically irrelevant. It's all we can afford.

Urban libraries are used differently from suburban libraries. They tend to be used in a more survival method. We are out there doing major research for people. People aren't

coming in to use any part of the information highway in that library, because we're not on the information highway in that library, and, in a good many of the urban libraries in this State, there is no access to the information highway for the residents of that community. Suburban libraries have wonderful capability for their people to get whatever it is they need on the information highway. Our people can't even pay the tolls. That's what it comes down to.

The library itself receives less than half of the local per capita appropriation; although I have to say that this township has been more generous in recent years, we're still terribly underfunded. We do not have computers. Building maintenance takes whatever money we would possibly be able to put into computers.

I'd like to discuss very briefly the issue of how the library is used and by whom. If you went into that library right now, you would see an art show, which takes over the entire main floor of the building. The students in Irvington Public Schools are astoundingly gifted, and we have their works on display for this entire month. Unfortunately, the students who weren't doing that art work, many of them are being highly disruptive.

What Harry Paden says about what happens when you confine a whole lot of kids into a small space in a school day-- When they come out of school, which is right across the street from the library, they get about -- what, 150 feet, 200 feet-- to get all of their aggression and hostility out of their system, and it doesn't work. They come into the library -- because that's what kids do after school -- and we have a level of theft and damage and destruction of books and property that would not be imagined in suburban libraries, where kids have access to what they need to make them real students. They have access of things to do after school. When they walk into their libraries, there is an expectation that they'll find materials

that they'll need; that there will be staff sufficient to help them. We don't have the materials. We don't have the computers. We don't have the staff. And a fair amount of our money goes to security, because otherwise we can't assure that a child will be safe in the building.

I'm presenting what appears to be a rather negative image of a library, but this is a library smack dead in the middle of an urban community. I have personally served thousands of Irvington residents over the years. I know these people; I know who they are. I have talked to thousands of Irvington residents. I know where their dreams are. I know where their hearts are. I know that what they want is a better life for themselves and their children, and it's very hard to do that if you can't have an education in school, and you can't have access to a decent library when you come out of school.

These kids want to go on to college. They haven't had the roots that it would take to get them into good colleges and to be comfortable when they get there.

The other thing that I want to say is that when we look at urban communities, maybe sometimes instead of focusing just on what's the negative-- There's a lot of energy in this room, and I'm sure as you go around the State you encounter a lot of energy of people working really hard to make better lives. I would suggest that one of the things that we do is focus on some of the positives -- build from those, work with what's there that's good, rather than just looking at the negatives.

Thank you very much, I appreciate that you were here this evening.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you very much.

Cheri Blocker.

C H E R I B L O C K E R: Cheri Blocker, 61 Lincoln Place in Irvington.

Thank you.

I was totally unprepared to speak tonight. I was just asked, as a matter of fact.

This is like deja vu for me. The first time I met Michael Steele was by him coming to a technical school I was attending, going through the REACH program. I was asked to speak to him to show the importance of day care for single parents and single parents on the REACH program. He told me when I graduated from that technical school, to come see him, and he would give me some type of employment. That was three years ago.

Today I'm working in the Irvington Police Department as a clerk typist. And I'm here not to tell you what's not working, but just to let you know that the system does work.

I'd like to thank Mayor Michael Steele, our boss; Samuel Williams, Director of the Police Department -- my chief is also here -- and to let you know that you're doing a good job.

SENATOR RICE: Mr. Chairman, a quick question if I may?

SENATOR LaROSSA: By all means.

SENATOR RICE: I've always had some concerns about the REACH program. Initially, when we funded the REACH program, I was on Appropriations, and we knew it was the right way to go. But we were not at the initial stage -- I don't know how to measure it now -- we were not as happy with the end result as related to the number of participants versus the number of dollars we were putting in the program. Then, when it came into Essex, we seemed to get a good feeling about the program.

My question has always been, to the Legislature and to others, what happened to the people on the waiting list, waiting to get into the REACH Program, who want to participate? Do we continue to fund them subsidies? Or do we accomplish some of the other goals that we may not have dollars to deal with, but are human servant needs?

And my question to you is, if a person is on fixed income welfare subsidy, waiting to get into the program, or can't maybe get into the program because maybe the young one is too young, do you believe, question number one, that the State should take a look at putting that person in a meaningful program for maybe 20 hours a week? So that if, in fact, they have no skills, they can pick up some while they are waiting? If they have skills that are going unused, they can keep them sharp until we find some employment for them. If, in fact, the youngster is too young for the parent to go to work, then maybe the parent should take that youngster and go to a day care to give some time during the week, so the other parents can go.

And there was this issue that came up earlier about needing to build more day-care facilities. I don't think we necessarily need to build more day-care facilities. I believe that most of our churches, particularly in the urban community, have space that they can provide for day care.

The State must find a way to help them retrofit it to meet code. And I believe if we did that and had some of the subsidy welfare recipients performing the services, because we're paying anyway, like part-time work, until we can get them situated.

The second part of the question was, if, in fact, a person like yourself did not go into the REACH program because of a waiting list, but you went out on-- You took employment with whatever employment was available, regardless of what it was paying -- as long as it was good, honest, meaningful work -- if we let you keep your full subsidy for one year while you collect the full benefits of the new job you have, would that make a difference in your life? And at the end of the year, we take off the subsidy because you're working. Because I hear this thing that too often, when a person gets a job, we cut the benefits and that makes it worse, and that's why some people don't acquire employment that's available to them.

MS. BLOCKER: I believe the resources are there, and it depends on the person. If they want to get out there and make something of themselves, they're going to do it any way that they can. For me, myself, I didn't want to leave my child home until he was able to go to school and talk, so that I can know what's going on with him.

But the programs are there. I see a lot of people going in and out of different programs, because they are not committed, and they don't know what they want to do with their lives. But like I said, it depends on the person.

SENATOR RICE: One quick follow-up question. You said that you made a conscious decision that you did not want to, for a period of time, leave your child. Now, I'm going to make an assumption -- I hope it's not a wrong one -- it's not to embarrass -- were you on welfare at the time you made that assumption?

MS. BLOCKER: No, because I've always been active in the workforce.

SENATOR RICE: But when you had the child, you said you weren't working.

MS. BLOCKER: No. Well, yes, I worked up until I had my child, and then after that, I had my unemployment benefits and my other benefits.

SENATOR RICE: All right, the unemployment benefits. Let's just assume that they weren't unemployment benefits, but you have to survive, our people do, and that's why we have the system. Say they were welfare benefits -- but the decision you made to at least give the youngster some growing time together, had we at the State level said, "That's fine, we think that's commendable, but we're going to give you this check, but what we want you to do is spend 10 or 15 hours at whatever day-care center with your youngster," would that upset you? Would you be comfortable with that scenario?

MS. BLOCKER: Sure, that would have posed no problem to me because I'm willing -- as long as I'm willing and able to work, I'm going to work, and if that was proposed to me, I would have accepted it, but a lot of programs -- they're not programs out there where a women can take her children and still be comfortable knowing that the child is being well taken care of.

SENATOR LaROSSA: I appreciate it very much.

MS. BLOCKER: Thank you.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Michael Jones.

I'm sorry about the confusion.

H. MICHAEL JONES: That's quite all right.

Senator LaRossa and Senator Rice, thank you very much for coming to Essex County today. We'll look forward to having you back again.

SENATOR RICE: Thank you for spending the day with us.

MR. JONES: Rene Ziegler, from the City of East Orange, made reference to some of the planning work that the city has done. I think that that's a very timely work being done by East Orange, because comprehensive planning has become an important issue at both the national and State level.

For comprehensive plans to be effective, implementation has to rely on some certainty, and there are many areas of uncertainty with respect to program support and funding that are becoming increasingly problematic for urban centers.

Just this year, for example, the gross receipts revenue was not returned via formula to all the municipalities in New Jersey. The realty transfer tax has supported balanced housing programs at the Department of Community Affairs for about the last 12 years. For reasons that I fully don't understand and have not been explained, a substantial rehabilitation portion of the Balanced Housing Program will not be funded in Fiscal Year 1994. Neighborhood Preservation

Balanced Housing simply was written out of the budget. This year the Legislature appropriated dollars to support family development programs for general assistance recipients. The Legislature debated long and hard for a year on that subject after running a pilot demonstration project in Trenton, put out an RFP. We responded along with many other counties and municipalities in the State. We were offered a contract by the State of New Jersey, only to find that contract was not executed by the Department of Human Services. We were somewhat distressed that the administration had the capability to override a decision made by the Legislature to appropriate funds for a program by simply choosing not to execute contracts.

A comment was made earlier regarding the Department of Community Affairs in ECRA and ISRA -- and they've been taking their licks pretty good, so I will be gentle with them -- but the one thing that would really help for urban centers is for the Department of Environmental Protection and Energy to tell municipalities and property owners, up front, what constitutes a clean building. That seems to be an impossible task with the DEP. When an assessment is done, you can't ask an investor to write a blank check for cleanup. You have to be able to tell a prospective developer of an industrial site what it's going to cost to clean up that site when the process begins. We have many, many cleanups underway in Essex County, none of which are completed because the budget was never given to the people who were going to do the job when the job began. I don't think we need to say too much more about that situation in DEP.

One area where I really commend DEP is its joint program with the Economic Development Authority for loans being made to organizations that will recycle products into newly manufactured products. We strongly encourage the Legislature to consider adding some additional incentives for those enterprises to locate in urban centers. This is where the concentration of their raw material, if you will, exists, and

the State should be doing everything it can to try and concentrate that industrial manufacturing process in areas where raw materials are readily available, and that's certainly in the urban centers of New Jersey.

One other area where DEP has made a request, along with the Department of Transportation, has been for a reduction in employee driven miles. The Clean Air Act is requiring us to improve air quality in New Jersey, and one of the ways the State has decided to do that is by asking that we double up in car pools and do a number of things to reduce the number of miles that we drive.

However, one provision has not been provided for. They have not given us an opportunity to use alternative fuels vehicles to improve air quality in lieu of reduction of mileage.

East Orange is slightly less than four square miles. All electric cars for certain uses by building inspectors, as an example, or the community relations bureau of the fire department is certainly a workable technical solution to that problem. We have not been given an opportunity to improve air quality through that method. We've only been asked to reduce employee driven miles by 25 percent.

SENATOR RICE: Excuse me, are you talking in general in reference to the individual drive, or in reference to those of us who have fleets of vehicles?

MR. JONES: No, I'm speaking in reference to individual employee driven miles. They did not really address the issue of fleets, which I frankly found somewhat surprising.

On the same subject of energy, especially after the comments that were made about the lighting problems in the Irvington Public Library, the State and Federal government support a program to encourage energy conservation in institutions, that is, hospitals and schools, and there are financial incentives that are offered through Federal legislation for that purpose. We believe strongly that that

legislation should be expanded to include all public buildings. There is no reason why this should not be an example of energy efficiency in the community, and right now there are no financial incentives to do that other than those that are offered by PSE&G or your local electric utility company for electric consumption, but only for electric consumption. It doesn't apply to gas consumption. And we think that there should be some incentives to improve energy efficiency through rebates and other investment incentives.

And finally you, talked about unfunded State mandates. In-ground storage tanks, right now, are a big issue in New Jersey. There is a loan fund administered by DEPE to allow private owners of gasoline stations and other petrochemical products to remove steel tanks from the ground. That loan program has not been extended to municipalities, and we would like access to some of those funds to remove the in-ground tanks that we have for fire department vehicles and for police department vehicles.

Finally, I want to commend the State Office of Planning in the Department of Treasury. They have taken a very aggressive and somewhat risky position in their request for municipalities to begin the process of developing Comprehensive Strategic Development Plans.

In East Orange, we believe strongly that that is the way to make government more efficient and more effective. You can't govern a city with government alone. Everyone has spoken about the nonprofit community in their municipality and here in the county, and they are clearly an important part of how government delivers service.

We would hope that the State will continue to work with us and other municipalities to really create a comprehensive plan that would allow all of the Federal resources, all of the State resources, all of the local resources, and all the nonprofit resources that we have in our

community to really work in unison. And we hope that the State can continue to encourage that through some financial incentives and through some technical assistance.

Senators, thank you very much.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you, Mike. Just as a point of information, even though it didn't get out of the committee but the -- I believe at the tail end of the last session when we were in lame duck about the--

SENATOR RICE: Funding--

SENATOR LaROSSA: --Tank storage.

SENATOR RICE: Extended, but no funding--

SENATOR LaROSSA: It was extended but no funding. What we tried to do in the Senate, so you know, we did, in fact, try to extend the program which would have paid about -- which would have put a billion dollars into a fund to pull them out. Also, it included the municipalities and the boards of education.

Unfortunately, the wisdom of the thought process that Senator Rice and I, you know, you see, sometimes falls on deaf ears, but it doesn't mean that we're still not trying. Because we--

MR. JONES. We appreciated the effort very much. And I should say that certainly they are important rateables in urban centers. We have a lot of gas stations, and we wanted to see them stay in business. Seeing those buildings boarded up on the side of the road is not a solution to the problem either.

SENATOR LaROSSA: We absolutely agree. Thank you very much.

MR. JONES: Thank you very much

SENATOR LaROSSA: Norma Carty, Irvington Neighborhood Improvement.

N O R M A C. C A R T Y: Good evening. My name is Norma Carty. I work at Irvington Neighborhood Improvement.

We submit our grant application four to five months prior to the following year to the Department of Citizen Services, Division of Community Action in East Orange, and we have to wait until four to five months into the new year to receive funding.

In providing emergency services, such as shelter, during that waiting period is when we need the money the most. Who's responsible for this waiting period, the county or the State?

SENATOR LaROSSA: We have to find out.

MS. CARTY: If it's the county, can we receive funding directly on all of the documentation that goes with it?

SENATOR LaROSSA: Just keep on, we're recording all of the comments, and we'll try to get you some specific answers on questions that you're posing. Because they may not-- We just don't have the ability or the resources to answer you right now.

MS. CARTY: Okay, thank you very much.

SENATOR LaROSSA: That's it?

MS. CARTY: Yes.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay. Thank you, Norma.

SENATOR RICE: Norma, let me just say, if I can, through the Chair, while he's calling the next speaker up.

It could be a combination of both. If we don't strike a budget by a certain date, then the county won't get it. If we're on time, what we do, and we get into the county and they don't direct it right away. So it could be a combination of both. And that's why the Chair said that we'll get back to you to find out.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Just as a point of information, supposedly there are calendar year towns, there are fiscal year towns, so some-- Yours may start in January, some may start in July. And the secondary problem is that once the budget has been introduced, it's supposed to be done within 90 days. We have some times where it goes seven and eight months, so it's very, very difficult to give you an answer.

We need to know what specific program and community that you're talking about. Then we can review the research on it for you.

MS. CARTY: Okay. Thank you.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you very much.

Well, I know I'm not going to have much success with this.

Bernier Lauredan. How bad was that?

B E R N I E R L A U R E D A N, M.D.: That's bad. That's French.

SENATOR LaROSSA: It's not French, obviously.

DR. LAUREDAN: Yes, Bernier Lauredan.

SENATOR LaROSSA: I wasn't that far off, with the first name, anyway. Bernier, I wasn't that far from the first name, anyhow.

DR. LAUREDAN: Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Senator Rice, and thank you members of the Committee for coming to Irvington and speaking to us directly. We have not seen this before for a long time.

I understand we have a lot of problems, one of which has been addressed by Senator Rice in the recent bill that he introduced into the Legislature. It concerns families, how families should have the upper hand to address issues of the children without being harassed by DYFS.

We've been talking a long time about problems in our society: We have children having children, we have children dropping out of high school; we have children going to jail; we have more jails than we have schools, unfortunately. They're talking about creating more space for jail than creating space for school, and we're still saying it's cheaper to go to jail maybe, than to go to school. That's probably the thinking.

We have a real problem in our own society, and the problems start with the family. We have a deterioration in the family. I was personally brought here 27 years ago from

Haiti. I was 14 years old, and my father died. I made it through high school by myself. I made it through college by myself. I am today a medical doctor, and I am a pediatrician, and, by the way, I'm also the Chairman of United Caribbean African Alliance.

If I could make it coming here without speaking English or without knowing anything, I believe a child with a little help from society could make it also. We have to start by looking at the problem at the source. We should go back to the family -- to help strengthen the family.

It should be the job of the State to have community services, to have the church, to help the parents in trouble to maintain the link between the child and the family. Then, as we talked about earlier -- somebody talked about it before -- we should have some early, very early, very early intervention. Education starts at birth. If you cannot catch it at birth, maybe we should catch it by the time the child is one or two months, or, at least, by the time the child is five years old.

Again, it should be the job of the State. Maybe there's nobody here from the Board of Education to provide some kind of money, so the children can be reached earlier. The earlier we can reach them, the easier it will be able to maintain them out of jail, or maintain them out of welfare, or maintain them out -- or helping them not to get pregnant at -- many times at 12.

And those were my comments for the Committee. I also ask the Committee to look at-- Maybe there is some failure in our own education system. Maybe we should reinvent the whole education system. We spend a lot of money in high school. We're having worse problems at the elementary level than we have in high school. We'll visit-- The children that go to high school are the children that come from elementary school.

If they could try to help them earlier, from the time they're in elementary school, maybe they will not have problems in high school.

And maybe we should also blame our criminal justice system for insensitivity to their problems. Sending them to jail does not solve the problem. We could send them to rehabilitation. We could -- more money to rehabilitation than we put in jail. We could probably get judges to be more sensitive to the issues -- than we have judges sitting in Essex County or maybe in many big counties.

And those were my comments.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you very much, Doctor.

A quick question, Doctor. You're a pediatrician, you said.

DR. LAUREDAN: I am a pediatrician here in Irvington, and I have an office in Newark.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Just for my own information: As far as the ability in a structured learning setting, what's the earliest age that you would recommend a child to be subjected to some type-- I say subjected, but you know, participate in some structured learning -- two, three, four, five years old? How young can you go and really be--

DR. LAUREDAN: I would say until the development of the child-- The child can start learning at birth. My two-year-old daughter already knows how to sing, and she knows how to count. She knows her ABCs. Given the fact there may not be resources available at home or someplace else for this child, maybe we should start at least by two, two and a half.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you very much, Doctor.

SENATOR RICE: Going through you, Mr. Chairman. You can go ahead.

Just in passing, do you believe in prekindergarden programs and preschool programs?

DR. LAUREDAN: Yes, I do. I strongly believe in that. And I think that's the only way to go.

SENATOR RICE: So you would also believe in all day kindergartens?

DR. LAUREDAN: Yes, the earlier the better.

SENATOR LaROSSA: James Gibbs.

J A M E S E. G I B B S, J R.: We both are James Gibbs. I'm sorry my name--

SENATOR LaROSSA: Oh, Junior and son. Oh, I see. It only says Junior here.

MR. GIBBS, JR.: My other part.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay.

MR. GIBBS, JR.: Okay, my name is James Gibbs, Jr. This is James Gibbs III. We live at 231 Vermont Avenue in Irvington and he and I-- Well, actually he, my son, we are part of the Jazz Institute of New Brunswick. Now, this is the only organization that I can find for my son since he likes music, okay, and what we do is, we work with various youths.

It's a nonfunded organization which was run by Leslie Ford. It states right there, it's five days. Right now, we're working out of a gentleman's -- his name is right there -- his house. And we teach the kids how to play various types of jazz. We teach them John Coltrane. Once they get good enough, we take them out to weddings, if they want to do weddings, and they get paid for it. And of course, I don't get paid nothing, my payment is watching them -- I'm like their advisor. All the youths that we work with, we do it to help them earn money for themselves.

For example, we did a program for Irvington, and, of course, we haven't been paid yet which -- not we, but the youth haven't been paid yet. It was \$250. That's how much we charge, because the thing is, each youth is given \$50 for their payment for their playing. We want to know, how come it takes so long for them to get paid \$50 or \$62.50, after they've put on a show for the city?

Our thing is to not to give youths, you know, not to take the youths for granted, but to help them do things that they like. A lot of them love music.

And if you notice, no matter where you go, they've got boom boxes, they're singing, some of them are trying to play instruments. There's a lot of youths in the school choir; some of them are in church choir; some of them sing on the street.

So therefore, you know, this is why I work so hard with them. I'm a volunteer person, and I enjoy working with youth. It's just that when they are promised to get paid for a job, you know, I expect the gentlemen to get paid, Because this will discourage them instead of encourage them. And we're trying to keep our youth, you know, getting-- It's not much money, but it gives them something more to look forward to.

And this is what my concern is. This is why I'm here tonight, to see that these gentlemen do get paid. It's only what, \$62? If it was five of them -- there would of been \$5.

We work with the kids, anywhere from six years old up to the age of eighteen. Right now, I'm in the process of trying to get some of the high school students from Irvington High School to go with us. I'm trying to get some of the youths from Arts High. We're trying to work on that. We're trying to get some kids from the Newark School of Art. We're trying to get youths from all over. We go as far as past New Brunswick, if we have to, to get youth off the street.

They have to learn how to read and they have to be willing to play. And the more they play, of course, the better they get.

My son, well, he plays some instruments, and I'm very proud of him. And like I said, he's my hanging partner, so where he goes, I go. When they play-- They are offered jobs a lot of places, you know, to keep them encouraged. I'm glad that we have some people that are trying to give us a hand, but by not giving them their money, all right, it's bad enough we

work and we have to wait two weeks. But right now, they're waiting. This is the eighth week, and they haven't been given their dues, and I would like to know how come it takes so long for them to do that.

SENATOR RICE: Sir, if I can, through the chair.

If you're around-- You'll see me later. That's a local matter, and I'll try to address it with the Mayor and the Council. I don't know, if it's budgetary stuff and everybody is waiting to approve a budget. Two-fifty may seem to be a small amount in local government budget, but the law governs how we can convey that, and if it's because the budget hasn't been struck and the recreation reserve budget, or whichever way it's done-- So we'll look into that locally, but I hear you loud and clear.

I just want to commend the program, and I'd like to know more about it because, you know, you're in Irvington. You know, years ago, what we used to do with jazz, when all of us were playing instruments, including myself -- young people and -- we lost the front room and all the places. But I didn't know there was such a program. I think that those programs should be looked at and referenced to all of our urban cities, because it's not just music, which enhances the mind and learning. That was my strength in school, my discipline, but there's a history to music.

MR. GIBBS, JR.: Right.

SENATOR RICE: And to be quite frank about it, there's a history that is very diverse in Jazz as related to African-Americans, as well as blues -- who are nonminorities and just the whole history.

So I would like to know more about the program.

For the young man there: Never let a thousand cents discourage you from doing something positive. Our job is to be accountable in government, so you have to hold the administration here and the Council accountable for that. But

don't let it deter you, because what you're getting from this is the wisdom and the knowledge, and I think that's important.

JAMES GIBBS III: I am very patient, though. But my father, he's just kind of complaining -- I am also -- that it takes so long to get paid.

But the reason why I gave you that is, if you have any youth in your city or anywhere, who are interested in taking music. I am attending Irvington High School. It's very easy to contact me through the principal, because she knows me real well.

So what we are trying to do is trying to build the Jazz Institute and make it a large foundation so everybody in this whole State can know. We play at conventions and stuff, you know, to buy instruments for our youngsters and stuff like that, and learn new music material and play at conventions to raise money, and they get paid also. So it's like a little job. We teach and we play. So we're trying to get the youth off of the streets and stuff like that. So trust me, it's worth it.

SENATOR LaROSSA: What we'll do is, just as a point of information, is that there is a New Jersey Council on the Arts which is chaired by someone who's a good friend of ours. What we'll do is, we'll forward the information that you supplied on to them, and see if we can at least put you in touch with them as well.

Just out of curiosity, what instruments do you play?
All of them?

MR. GIBBS III: I play so many. I play a lot.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Can't make up your mind?

MR. GIBBS III: I have a list. So--

SENATOR LaROSSA: Now my question is -- now, he's talking about John Coltrane?

MR. GIBBS III: Oh, yes that's an idol of mine, you know, because I play--

SENATOR LaROSSA: He's dating himself. You don't look that old. (laughter)

MR. GIBBS III: Oh, oh, oh, I look better than he does.

MR. GIBBS, JR.: He's better. (laughter)

MR. GIBBS III: I'm the influence of a lot of people because I play all woodwinds, brass. I even play keyboards and stuff like that. I'm trying -- I'm making a couple of songs right about now, anyway, and that's what I'm trying get people off the streets who are disrespecting ladies and stuff, and they rap and stuff. I'm trying to turn their minds around and tell them well, you know, the ladies are here-- Well, I ain't going to get into that, but to get them out of the streets and to sing, do something positive instead of trying to influence people or youngsters to kill each other through their music. And we're trying to make something positive, so that's what I'm here to state now.

SENATOR LaROSSA: We've got that recorded, and believe me, your words will definitely be forwarded on to a lot of people.

I wish the people who are sitting in here-- I just wish you could see his eyes. If the future is in our youth, and you have kids like this, we're going to have a good future.

Thank you very much.

MR. GIBBS, JR.: Thank you, sir.

SENATOR RICE: Would you call my office. I'd like to sit down to talk with you at another time.

MR. GIBBS, JR.: Yes, sir.

SENATOR RICE: Call my council office, okay.

Bet you don't play the violin?

MR. GIBBS III: Oh, give me two weeks, and I'll play it. (laughter)

MR. GIBBS, JR: Thank you very much.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Joe Gallagher.

C H I E F J O S E P H G A L L A G H E R: Senators, welcome to Irvington. I'm Joe Gallagher. I'm the Fire Chief and Director of the Irvington Fire Department, and I'm the President of the New Jersey Paid Fire Chiefs Association.

I'm here to talk to you about State mandates and the urban community. Some are good, some are bad. I'll just bring out one of them. The POSHA Protective Clothing Body Protective Compliance -- this is a not a law made by you people -- it's a rule made by a body. It is a very good rule. Today's New York Times graphically shows the bunker gear that has to be protected. But what I'm here to talk about is not the merits of the system, but the cost factor. By mandating this in these tight budget times-- We have to protect our men to the fullest, but it's also costing us manpower because we only have so much of the pie. So the more we spend on your mandates, the less manpower I could have to properly man the apparatus.

SENATOR LaROSSA: This is a State mandate that this is coming from?

MR. GALLAGHER: State mandate. I'll read -- maybe I better put on my glasses.

"Pursuant to New Jersey State Safety and Health Standards for Public Employees; general standards and standards for Firefighters adopt new rule. New Jersey A.C. 12:100-10.7 effective January 4, 1993," and you have-- They gave us two years to comply, "regarding firefighters protective clothing and body protection." This body protection will have to be complied with January 4, 1995 for career firefighters.

It's an excellent program, but like I said, the factor of us complying with it-- We have to reduce our firefighters because there's only so much in the pie. And we're here to just state to you that we need help in this area, when these other agencies are making it mandatory.

Now this is only one. I don't know if you know about the blood worn packaging that isn't complied by right now,

compliance gets the urban fire department to spend \$20,000, which is another good program.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Are all of the things you're referencing in the document that you have in front of you?

MR. GALLAGHER: Yes.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Can I just take a quick glance at them. It sounds to me like it might be Administrative Code.

MR. GALLAGHER: It is Administrative -- New Jersey A.C.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Okay, what I mean, as opposed to any statute that might have come through the Legislature--

MR. GALLAGHER: It's not a statute. No.

SENATOR RICE: Yes, that's what happened. It came from the administration.

MR. GALLAGHER: It's not a statute. And it's been adopted by, I guess it was, the Board of Health.

SENATOR LaROSSA: I'm going to ask you this in the essence of time. What I think we might be able to do is -- the information that you have, if you could supply us with a copy. There is a committee which was, I think, formed at the tail end of last year, after the -- I think the '92 November election, where the Constitution of New Jersey was amended to provide for administrative oversight -- regulatory oversight on rules and regulations. And there is a committee in State government now that will look at the administrative rules in an oversight capacity. Prior to that constitutional amendment there was nothing that we could do short of repealing it in total, but we can submit that to the Committee on Oversight and have them take a--

MR. GILLESPIE: Senator, why don't we submit it to the Community Affairs Committee that's also going to be repealing mandates -- unfunded State mandates that have been-- Senate Resolution No. 27 required the Committee to do a survey, and this would probably be more appropriate to that than to the Legislative Oversight Committee.

SENATOR LaROSSA: We do have a couple of ways to deal with that.

MR. GALLAGHER: Oh, we're not against the rule itself, because we feel it's a good rule -- the New York fireman that died a couple of weeks ago, which prompted them to get bunker uniforms -- but we're saying there's got to be funding on the mandates.

SENATOR LaROSSA: I understand, but what we need to do is, we still need to have that--

MR. GALLAGHER: I'll supply it to Senator Rice and he could-- I know you've been hearing about State mandates all night, but there's good parts and bad parts of all these regulations coming down the pike, as I would say. But we're willing -- the State Paid Fire Chiefs Association is willing to cooperate with your Committee or any other committee to look into these things to give guidance. And that's it.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you very much, Chief.

SENATOR RICE: Chief, I failed to tell you at our last meeting that I'm on the Legislative Oversight Committee, but I figured if I told you that, you would find regulations that need looking at.

MR. GALLAGHER: I failed the test.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Darryl Carrington. (no response)

Freddie Youman. (no response)

Moving along rapidly.

Mike Farley.

M I K E F A R L E Y: Thank you, Senator LaRossa, Senator Rice.

I'm Mike Farley. I'm the Executive Director of Unified Vailsburg Services Organization, a neighborhood service and community development organization dedicated to serving the Vailsburg section of the City of Newark. I want to thank you for all of the attention and listening you've given to residents of this part of Essex County throughout this day, both in the focus meeting and again this evening.

I'd like to bring a slightly different slant to your deliberations. I think you've heard an awful lot from elected officials and representatives of various offices of government. We are a private nonprofit organization, and I urge and encourage you to consider the value of the participation of strong, independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organizations in everything you do to carry forward programs and services on behalf of the people of New Jersey in Essex County.

I want to give you a couple of examples of the value of that flexibility. One has to do with intermunicipal cooperation on police and public safety issues. For several years, we've staffed a program called the Crime Line Implementation Project.

In brief, that's a project organizing 1000 new neighborhood volunteers on a crime line, which is along the four municipal borders of Vailsburg Newark, East Orange, South Orange, Maplewood and Irvington, not one against the other, but together around mutual public safety and crime concerns. Our organizers have been at the table with police officials, the chiefs, the directors of public safety in all of those towns to talk about ways that we can work together as municipalities and as police departments to solve common problems.

Our independence and flexibility permits us to carry forward that kind of a goal or that kind of objective, where it might not be as easily possible on purely an intermunicipal or purely a political dialogue.

Another example: You've heard about gas stations and underground tanks, at several points during the course of the day. We have in the works, and we're about to carry forward between the city of Newark, the State of New Jersey -- both the DEP and the Department of Community Affairs -- a project that I think will be a model to clean up a contaminated property -- an abandoned gas station property in Vailsburg as the site for the

development of affordable housing. We think that will be a prototype. We think that we will be able to carry that model forward to other abandoned properties in Vailsburg with any degree of luck and success.

Perhaps, again, that model can work elsewhere in the State. Again, I cite this as an example of what can be possible with independence and flexibility.

Finally, we're able to get more bang for the buck. Unified Vailsburg, on the services side, is a \$1.2 million operation. As 450 people served everyday, meals on wheels, child care, youth programs, after school centers, as some examples, less than half of that money comes through government contracts.

Government contracts are an essential source of support, but the independent, flexible, nonprofit organization -- and we're only one -- is able to double the bang for the buck by seeking and attracting other private and governmental resources. The same holds true in our housing development efforts. Again, with good support and leadership from Senator Rice, from others in Essex County and Newark, we have put together plans and are moving forward on plans to develop some \$3 million worth of housing over the next three years. That's new housing and gut rehabilitation of abandoned properties. One-third of that money will be from government sources. The other two-thirds will be private financing. So there's an awful lot to be gained by the partnership between the nonprofit sector, the neighborhood-based nonprofit sector, and all levels of government.

Again, thank you for your interest and attention. I want to invite and encourage you to hold one of these meetings in Vailsburg the next time around and wish you well.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Michael, thank you very much. And if you lobby Senator Rice, when we come up into Essex, we put ourselves in his good capable hands.

Miguel Vargas.

M I G U E L V A R G A S: Thank you very much.

My name is Miguel Vargas. I am the President of Hispanos Unidos de Irvington, Incorporated.

I'd like to thank you all very much and also -- especially to Senator Rice, who has been very helpful to our community. He's always with us, and he has kind of opened the doors and helped us in many areas and -- be with us, giving us moral support, and so has Mayor Steele.

I'd like to address two issues: One is about the needs of our Hispanic community, and the other one is about issues regarding participation of minority firms, women-owned, and firms owned by other minority groups, regarding the issues of Hispanics, the different needs we have. The issues are different; the problems are so different and growing everyday.

One would be, perhaps, because of the language barrier, that Hispanics are coming in every day, perhaps every week, coming to New Jersey, coming to Essex County, or coming to Irvington. Therefore, the population is increasing. Some of them may be illegal residents, but they do have their families, children, and the language barrier, perhaps, is one of the major factors that they have to -- the problems they have.

The other one, in dealing with that, may be the problems in education, the problems in finding jobs. Some of them may have some skills, but then they don't have the ability to communicate. So it's very, very difficult for them to have a job or to find any work around. It seems to me the whole entire community -- the more affluent community could benefit, if we could have some means of training programs that could help many Hispanics who are family members. They're young, in their 20s, 30s, or 40s, who are willing to learn English, and who are willing to learn some type of work that they could have perhaps a decent way of -- a decent living for their families.

I remember at Middle Avenue School, we used to have a

vocational school. I don't know the details or the reasons why, but it was actually closed down. And I remember many, many Hispanics used to attend that place, and it closed down. It went to Newark -- Of course, Newark is closer, and perhaps it's more efficient because they can serve a larger population -- but here the issues of Hispanics -- perhaps they don't drive; they don't have a driver's license. It's very difficult for them to travel or to drive, therefore, having access to a place closer to them, would be very, very helpful.

The other issue, about disseminating information we need to have in health, jobs available within the city or in the area, And we don't have it. How to fill IRS forms. How to become a US citizen and different things. We don't have it.

A little while ago, I heard talking the Director of the Library, Ms. Lori McConnell, and it was -- I could see-- actually the things she was asking and perhaps -- I was very surprised to know that the library is very poorly funded. I understand the Board of Education has a bilingual program, a multicultural program, but the library doesn't have-- It's not funded in the same manner to serve the community. The library is the center of education, the center where everybody comes together for different information that we need, and the library doesn't have that.

I wish you could somehow remember one day and think, you know, the library does need additional funding to serve the community.

I'm going to another issue regarding participation of minority firms. I've always wondered how much the State of New Jersey expends on different programs for participation of minority firms.

My research indicates that, for instance, the larger -- perhaps the largest owners or agencies like housing authorities, DOT, NJ Transit, Public Works, they're the ones who are receiving funds from the State or the Federal

government, and everybody has some legal form indicating that the contractor is going to comply with affirmative action. But it's -- that is how far -- that's all it is. They signed a document and after that, nobody is checking whether they're complying or not. So really, the law is doing a disservice to the community, to small business owners who probably need the help, need the assistance.

I don't know how much money the State is expending on different programs in every city. It seems to me like if they could have a centralized program, who knows where, or satellites of a centralized program -- and that program would offer information about contracts available, information about minority firms and how to get to those jobs. In my experience years back, when I was involved with the Housing Authority, was that participation of minority firms -- either blacks or Hispanics, that is not the issue -- was perhaps two or three of the same firms were constantly participating, but hundreds of firms that actually needed the job, needed the help or the advice, they didn't participate at all. The information was not available to them.

So it seems to me like this has to be totally redone and somehow come to a more conclusive way of doing things, instead of the way we do it now. Because basically, the law is there, but who is taking advantage, maybe one or two firms that actually don't even need it. But the ones who need it don't have the information. I don't even know where that is. That's the problem that exists.

Well, that's all. Thank you so much.

SENATOR LaROSSA: We have the information, and we have the-- Would you give us the rest anyway, as far as your address and phone number as well, because there are a number of bilingual programs that may be accessible to the issues that you've raised, and we could communicate with you as to where we might be able to direct you as well.

SENATOR RICE: Mr. Chairman?

SENATOR LaROSSA: Yes.

SENATOR RICE: Mr. Vargas, actually I just want to say that I hope the record really reflected his comments about the numbers of dollars that we're spending on contracts in State government, and let me just say to you, it's not millions, they're billions. With low bonds, \$100 billion bonds to clean up the ocean, that's contracts, you know, highway construction contracts.

Some of it is kind of a catch-22 because of union participation. Others are not, in terms of the award themselves, but you are correct, the number of dollars we spend and the number of contracts we're giving, when you lay that down to deal with it as related to minority participation -- a ratio perspective and percentagewise, too, is very, very small.

And unfortunately, some of it, if not all of it, is so political that minorities don't even stand a chance of getting through the door until we act crazy. People like myself and LaRossa act crazy and say, "It's going to reflect our district." Then we may get someone to listen to us, and they throw us a temporary bone, and we found out later that that fell apart. And I'm being honest. What you're saying is correct, but it's not just State government, it's corporate America too.

What you're saying is that to satisfy people, they would identify a small number of minorities to participate, and it's always the same minorities participating. They don't grow wide and up; they may even increase the budget.

Corporate America is good for that. They'll give you statistics and say, "Well, we gave \$1 million contracts out last year to minorities," and like you say, it may be three people. And then you say, "But we're doing better because this year we give out \$1.2 million." -- the same three people -- and

we're saying why don't the additional dollars start to go to expand the growth.

And I think, Senator, what is being said here is something we hear so much in your district and mine and throughout the State, is that we're going to have to find a way to tell the State that "Yes, we want to increase minority participation in all of our programs." By the same token, we're not saying to exclude people who are doing a good job in the program, but when you add additional dollars, find additional people to come in and get into the program.

MR. VARGAS: Thank you very much.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you, Senator. Thank you.

Holly Shader.

H O L L Y S H A D E R: Good evening.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Good evening.

SENATOR RICE: Good evening.

MS. SHADER: Thank you for coming to Irvington.

I'm Holly Shader. I'm the Director of the Irvington Literacy Program, and coming here tonight and listening, I've heard a lot of people talk about literacy or about a lot of different aspects of education. That's what I'm here to do, too.

When we think about literacy, we tend to only think about it as a personal skill or a personal problem. Someone can either read the newspaper and manage their affairs, or that individual has difficulty. But we tend to think of it as something that affects one person behind -- in their own homes, in their own lives. And I'd like to encourage you, as legislators, to start opening up the discussion into widening that thought process about how we think about literacy, because it is such a great problem that has such far reaching effects.

In the National Adult Literacy survey that was released in September -- in their executive summary -- it was stated that literacy can be thought of as a currency in this

society. Just as adults with little money have difficulty meeting their basic needs, those with limited literacy skills are likely to find it more challenging to pursue their goals whether these involve job advancement, consumer decision making, citizenship, or other aspects of their lives.

Individuals that have limited literacy skills have limited opportunity and skills to take with them to the workplace. They tend to work fewer weeks during the year. They tend to have lower paying jobs. They tend to have less currency to bring with them in their communities and into their lives. And that also affects the children that they have. Someone who cannot read or write comfortably themselves cannot help their children at school.

And more and more we're having, over at the literacy program-- I have more and more parents, who, one of their primary reasons for coming into our program is because their children are getting ahead of them at school. They can no longer help their children do their work. Then the children go to school, and if the parents aren't involved, they have a tendency to say, "It's the school's problem. School has to deal with them, because I can't."

If we, as a community, recognize the need to have available services -- available to all of our adults so that they can improve their skills -- they can lead more participatory lives with their children, with their workplace, then, as a community, we can advance both the individual's lives and the community well-being and the welfare of everyone.

Going back to Trenton, what do I want you to take back with you? I want you to take back the message that we need to have more services available, and we need to start thinking about how these services can work together. Here in Irvington we have a hodgepodge of a few different programs. My program serviced over 160 people last year. There's an adult school which services another 200 people.

We're working with some other volunteer programs, but this is not a program that can be-- This is not an issue that can be properly serviced by mainly volunteers who are taking an hour or two or five out of their week to help their neighbors. This is something which we all need to address together.

We need to recognize that the people who are on welfare have a greater than even chance that they can't read a newspaper comfortably. They can't really get a job that will pay for the needs of their families without some help. They have to be able to improve their literacy skills in order to get the type of skills that they need to service their family.

I got nervous, and I got all confused about what I wanted to say, but, you know, we looked at-- The National Adult Literacy Survey looked at the link between literacy and poverty, and they found that over 60 percent of the people who were at the lowest two levels of the literacy skills were also poor or near poor.

They found that if a child comes from a household where the parents did not have greater than an eighth grade education, that child had a likelihood of not exceeding an eighth grade education himself.

They found that there is a very strong correlation between people who are incarcerated and the ability to read. People who are incarcerated tend to have the lowest literacy levels. They find that literacy feeds into so many different areas of the community life and into people's personal lives that it's something that can no longer be ignored. And we really have to work together and start recognizing that literacy isn't something that's isolated. It doesn't affect one or two people; it affects over 40 percent of our population, and we have to work together to provide a more cohesive network of services, better quality of services, and more accessible services to the people that need it.

That's it. Thank you.

SENATOR LaROSSA: Thank you very much.

That is at least the last of the people that signed up, and at the risk of prolonging this, is there anyone who wanted to be heard that did not sign up? (no response)

With that, let me again, once again thank Senator Rice, apart from being -- hosting us in his district today and also extend my sincere thanks to Mayor Steele for a very intense, but very enlightening and very rewarding day, as well. Thank you all very much, and as I said before, we will be back. Thank you. Good night.

(HEARING CONCLUDED)

