



**AN IMPORTANT UPDATE FROM STATE
PRESIDENT STEVE ROWLAND**

Dear Crime Stoppers,
I can affirm that "The wheels of legislation turn slowly" is a true statement. Please allow me to provide an update to our progress regarding our funding.

Barb Bergin, Wyllie Hodges, Bland Cologne and I were in Tallahassee this week. This trip was the third we have made in the last 30 days. We are slowly, but purposefully and responsibly, lining up our support to further our cause. I will synopsize our progress below, and illustrate how it helps us.

1) Sweeping of \$3.5M in Trust Fund dollars last year. Without any action, this would have directly impacted our programs' ability to operate, BUT THERE HAS BEEN ACTION!

a. The fingers of blame point in all directions. The Governor for posing the Trust Fund as a possible revenue source. The OAG for incorrectly understanding our accounting and the encumbered status of our funds. Crime Stoppers for not knowing the depth of engagement necessary to prevent a sweep. Crime Stoppers again for horrible pre-sweep relationships with our legislators and community leaders. (Even two weeks ago at the Florida Police Chief's Conference, many Police Chiefs were unaware of what was going on.)

b. After countless hours of conversations with legislators in person, over the phone and in emails, there is no chance this money will be available for returning. This is a "given". It is not productive to chase this rabbit with our preferential option following in "c" below.

c. As I stated in my Jan. 28 letter to the membership, we are transitioning our accounting from "collected in arrears" to being paid from the current year's collections. THIS TRANSITION INSURES THE SWEEP WILL HAVE NO EFFECT WHATSOEVER ON THE PROGRAMS' OPERATIONS!

i. We are currently being reimbursed from the remainder of funds collected July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009 (and carried over from years prior) which were raided.

ii. In parallel, funds originally intended for use next year have been accruing since July 1, 2009 and continue to accrue.

iii. When the funds from "i" above run out, we will seamlessly begin being reimbursed from funds collected in "ii". There will be a natural 8-10 months of "reserve" in the Trust Fund to assure any potential cash flow issues from slow collection months do not affect monthly reimbursements.

2) Collections in many programs' coverage areas have been decreasing. This WILL affect our programs' ability to operate. THIS ISSUE is what we are addressing legislatively this legislative year.

a. We have legislation introduced in the Senate and the House to change Florida §938.06 which directs to the Courts to assess a \$20 surcharge to any fine imposed on a guilty conviction. In some circuits, if there is no fine imposed, there is no Crime Stoppers surcharge imposed. Our language will change the statute to direct the judges to impose the \$20 charge as a court cost regardless of whether a fine is imposed or not. WE DO NOT HAVE BILL NUMBERS YET, but will immediately forward them to the programs when we receive them. THIS is what we need the support of the local legislators, community leaders and citizens to rally around.

b. AS AN ALTERNATE, we have legislators secured to offer amendments to the statute in lieu of a stand-alone bill as in "a" above. This "back-up" tactic was recommended by all legislators we have conversed with. (Sometimes an unfriendly amendment will be attached to a bill and the bill's sponsor will withdraw it from consideration to stop the amendment.)

An friendly amendment (such as ours) can be attached even while the bill is in active final debate on the legislative floor, and is usually done without much fanfare under the radar. This will most likely be the successful method that gets the legislation changed.

3) To further increase our Trust Fund contributions, our cumulative project for the coming year needs to be working with the Clerks of Court to unify the way our collections are handled. For example, if fines assessed are \$500 but the defendant only has \$250, how much does Crime Stoppers get? A full \$20 due to our position on the court's checklist? \$10, or 50%, because the Clerk imposes the fines based on the percentage paid? If \$10 is assessed, does the Clerk still take their whole \$3 service fee?

**WHY OUR WORK IS VALUABLE
FACS SUMMARY 2001-2009**

<i>Tips Provided to Law Enforcement</i>	275,791
<i>Cases Cleared</i>	63,34
<i>Arrests</i>	36,635
<i>Value of Property Recovered</i>	\$34,330,789
<i>Value of Narcotics Recovered</i>	\$88,847,214
<i>Total Rewards Approved</i>	\$7,968,649

Does it vary by circuit? These are issues all brought to light in our investigation of the drop in collections, but are way too numerous and broad reaching to handle this session.

Additionally, we are maintaining contact with the presidents of the Florida Sheriffs and Police Chiefs associations, and leadership (and lobbyists) for the FOP, PBA, Hotel and Restaurant Association, and other political influencers in Tallahassee. Coupled with continuing dialog with the OAG and their legislative team.

One further, though preliminary, note regarding the new way the Trust Fund will be administered is that the OAG is favorably considering allowing us to "roll over" programs' funds from one year to the next, thus eliminating the "spend every penny before September 30th" thought process. We have been told that this practice should be allowable, but was simply not the chosen practice of prior OAG administrations. I will continue to track this issue and let you know of its progress. PLEASE don't hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,
Steve Rowland,
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Funded by the Office of
the Attorney General,
**Crime Stoppers
Trust Fund**

