

# Virginians Against Drug Violence

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## US Drug Czar Criticizes Gilmore Drug War Plan

### General McCaffrey calls it: "ill conceived and hastily developed"

**Richmond, VA:** Virginians Against Drug Violence [VADV] applauds General McCaffrey, the Director of the office of National Drug Control Policy (the US drug czar) for his critical comments on Governor Gilmore's SABRE drug war plan. VADV agrees with McCaffrey's criticisms of the politicization of drug policy, the reliance on mandatory minimums and the overuse of law enforcement as a solution to controlling drug abuse.

"General McCaffrey is correct in pointing out that this hastily drawn plan was written for political purposes. The upcoming elections dominated the development of this plan. It is not well thought out or sensible drug control policy rather it is one that builds on approaches that are proven failures," claimed Lennice Werth, Director of Virginians Against Drug Violence a group advocating more sensible drug policies.

General McCaffrey's letter noted "Mandatory minimums are not the way to go." He noted that advocacy of mandatory sentencing "ignored the advice of our best legal experts and the negative experience of states that took this route. Mandatory sentencing robs judges of the authority to try each case on its own merit."

Lennice Werth echoed McCaffrey's concerns noting: "During the '50s and '60s you could get life in prison in Virginia for very small amounts of marijuana. That did not prevent marijuana from becoming popular and available. Currently the state of New York is suffering from overcrowded prisons and judicial gridlock resulting from a similar set of laws passed by former Governor Nelson Rockefeller. They are now working to repeal them because releasing violent criminals to make room for the drug prisoners is against the interest of public safety there."

General McCaffrey noted that "politicizing the drug issue would do a disservice to the citizens of Virginia and the rest of the country." Werth added: "Governor Gilmore should withdraw his extremist drug war proposals. We do not need fear-mongering in Virginia politics."

A copy of the full letter, dated September 29, 1999, sent to Governor Gilmore by General McCaffrey is available from Virginians Against Drug Violence upon request.

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