

# Virginians Against Drug Violence

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## **Gilmore Drug Plan Puts Violent Crime on Back Burner** **War on Drugs, SABRE plan**

**Richmond, VA:** Even though police clear only 24.2% of victimizing crimes like assault, theft and rape, Governor Jim Gilmore is asking victims of violent crime to take a back seat while he favors big government politics and get tough measures over common sense. "The government has not been able to impact the availability of illegal drugs through out many decades of the drug war. Now, Gilmore wants us to go through the folly of tough and expensive penalties all over again as if we have never tried that," said Lennice Werth of Virginians Against Drug Violence. She points out that during the '50s you could get life in prison in Virginia for very small amounts of marijuana. That did not prevent it 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 under former Governor Nelson Rockefeller. The New York State legislature is now working to repeal them because releasing violent criminals to make room for the drug prisoners is against the interest of public safety.

### Ways in which expanded drug law enforcement is counterproductive:

- Long prison sentences ultimately bring about more street violence because international crime organizations move in filling the void left by locals going to prison.
- The \$10,000 bounty scheme will encourage drug selling gangs to develop a specialty in retribution as violence against witnesses corrupts the judicial process.
- Mandatory minimum sentences are counterproductive. At the federal level they have resulted in long term incarceration of the least culpable persons such as wives and family members of drug defendants because they have no information to barter with prosecutors.
- Mandatory sentencing is not needed as Virginia already has sentencing guidelines for judges to use in imposing a sentence.

All Virginians may ultimately pay a high price for Gilmore's election year politics. Voters must learn to recognize a ploy like this as misguided. The principal beneficiaries of this plan would be the 75.8% of violent criminals left free by our diverting our limited resources to fight a war that can't be won.

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