

**SEVENTY-SIXTH NATIONAL CONVENTION
OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA
SEPTEMBER 6-8, 1994**

Resolution No. 170: Combating Violent Crime in America

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

(As amended)

WHEREAS, One of the major principles contained in the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion is "... to maintain law and order"; and

WHEREAS, Although the United States in its history has endured previous periods of high crime rates. Americans in recent years have been experiencing an unprecedented crime wave characterized by escalating and senseless violence and perversion which have permeated all communities and affected all age categories and walks of life; and

WHEREAS, Statistics show that four out of every five Americans will become a victim of violent crime at least once in their lives, and a violent crime occurred once every 22 seconds in 1993; and

WHEREAS, Persons under the age of 21 committed one-third of all murders in 1990, and young people are also increasingly becoming victims of violent crime; and

WHEREAS, Violent offenders serve on the average only 37 percent of their sentences, so that at any given time approximately 75 percent of convicted criminals are either on probation or parole; and

WHEREAS, The link between federal funding and state performance is vital as 95 percent of all violent crime is covered by state, not federal statutes; and the "war on crime", with a hope of victory, will require a get-tough federal-state partnership to apprehend criminals, put them in prison, and keep them there; and

WHEREAS, The deterrent effect of the current judicial system of punishment and reprisal from society have become less intimidating to would-be criminals, and the elevation of the rights of criminals has surpassed the rights of their victims and survivors; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that the time has come for the Federal and State Governments to implement stiffer and more consistent penalties that are as tough and distasteful as the crimes inflicted upon innocent victims; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, September 6, 7, 8, 1994, That The American Legion recommends that the following measures be considered by municipal and state authorities for application to repeat juvenile offenders:

- 1. More frequent charging of juveniles as adults.**
- 2. Separate prison facilities for chronic, violent juvenile offenders.**
- 3. Mandatory sentences for gang-related crimes and for violent crimes committed with firearms.**
- 4. More incarceration for certain first-time offenders.**
- 5. Holding parents responsible for fines imposed on youthful offenders, as appropriate.**

6. Establishing more boot camps for youthful offenders; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion further recommends that the current system of paroles and probations be drastically revised; that parole for first degree murder be abolished; that the system of endless appeals and delays for executions be more realistically curtailed; that "good time" and community service paroles be eliminated for violent felony convictions; that more drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs be established in adult and juvenile prison systems; and that the criminal justice system work faster and more effectively, and that convicted criminals be required to make monetary restitution to their victims or to surviving family members, as appropriate; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion firmly believes that these types of penalties can impact on reducing repeated criminal activity; and in the final analysis, we are convinced that the most effective deterrent to crime is the strong influence of families and family-oriented programs that foster, strengthen and transmit family and societal values to young adults.