PUBLIC HEARING SET TO ADD 20,000 ACRES TO JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK

By Z107.7 News, on December 13th, 2016

Earlier this fall, the National Park Service solicited public comment on adding approximately 20,000 acres of federal, state, and private lands to the southern border of Joshua Tree National Park. At one time, these lands were a part of Joshua Tree National Monument. The property is bounded on the north, south, and west by Joshua Tree National Park, and on the east by the Colorado River Aqueduct. The Park Service announced yesterday (Monday) that it received more than 9,000 comments on the adjustment, and has found no significant impact on the effects of changing the park's boundary by adding these 20,000 acres.

At this time, these 20,000 acres do not include 8,600 privately owned acres in the Eagle Mountain mining area, owned by the Eagle Crest Energy Corporation. (Unless the proposed or current use of the land changes, this area is slated to be a hydroelectric power project. The project would generate energy by pumping water from the Chuckwalla aquifer to a retention pond up on the mountain. Water in the pond would then flow downhill to a hydroelectric pump to create energy.)

A public hearing on the transfer of the 20,000 acres will be held in Palm Desert January 18, and public comments will be accepted through February 16. The decision on whether to transfer the acreage to the park service will be made by the Bureau of Land Management.

https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectId=59291

Public Meeting – Notice of Proposed Withdrawal
January 18, 2017, 6 to 9 p.m.
UC Riverside Palm Desert
75080 Frank Sinatra Drive

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
David Smith, Superintendent, Joshua Tree National Park, 760-367-5502 or
Doug Herrema, Field Manager, Bureau of Land Management, Palm Springs South Coast Field Office, 760-833-7100.
Chino Hills looks back at 25 years as city

By Marianne Napoles | Posted: Saturday, December 10, 2016 8:00 am

Raising glasses with sparkling apple cider, Chino Hills residents and city leaders toasted 25 years of cityhood against the backdrop of the Community Center, where spotlights cast beams into the night sky.

About 750 people dressed warmly last Saturday to watch a laser light show with iridescent images atop nostalgic photos that ended with a surprise -- thousands of snowflakes whirling out of a blower. The snow blizzard ushered in Santa and Mrs. Claus and the tree was lighted.

Banners depicting 25 years of history lined the grass area.

Leticia Ortiz took her children to the event, including 6-year-old Lunabelle Valencia who frolicked around her. “I’m very proud to be a Chino Hills resident,” she said. “I attended the 15th anniversary party and didn’t want to miss this.”

The city was incorporated Dec. 1, 1991, when 58 percent of voters said yes to cityhood and chose the name Chino Hills over Canyon Hills.

The ballot included 17 council candidates with Gwenn Norton-Perry emerging as the top vote getter at the age of 30.

Ms. Norton-Perry of Chino Hills, who was a member of the Chino Hills Incorporation Committee, spoke about how Chino Hills came before the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) numerous times in its efforts to become a city.

“We were the little engine that could,” said Ms. Norton-Perry, who served on the council until 2012. “Every one of you should be so proud.”

The “godmother and godfather” of Chino Hills, Karen Bristow and Doug Sparkes, also addressed the crowd.

Mrs. Bristow was chairman of the Incorporation Committee and organized meetings with speakers to help candidates of the first city council understand land planning, finances and how to run a city. She traveled from Kentucky, where she recently moved, to attend the event.
Mr. Sparkes, who still lives in Carbon Canyon, preceded Mrs. Bristow as the first chairman of the Incorporation Committee and stepped out of that role to run for city council. He lost to Mr. Graham by 21 votes.

The original committee included Mr. Sparkes, Mrs. Bristow, Fred Heene, Mike Donovan, John Gerardi, the late Sue Briney, the late Bob Ellingwood, and the late Fred Burns.

The original council was Ed Graham, Ms. Norton-Perry, Gary Larson, the late Mike Wickman, and the late Jim Thalman, whose widow, Kristine Thalman attended. Only councilman Graham is still serving.
LOMA LINDA — Thanks to a recent expansion of the Ronald McDonald House across the street from Loma Linda University Children’s Hospital, an additional 33 families per night can stay close to their hospitalized children, rather than driving long distances and missing out on critical family time.

The house, built in 1996, can house more than double the families it used to, thanks to the expansion from 13,000 to 45,000 square feet and from 21 bedrooms to 54. New living space, kitchens and other amenities are also part of the upgrade.

As organizations responsible for funding the $12 million project gathered Sunday for a ribbon-cutting ceremony and tour of the expanded facility, Jennifer Shafer reminded them of why it matters.

Shafer, a Hesperia resident, had one infant son die, and two of her other children were later hospitalized in Loma Linda.

“They gave us an apartment when Landon was in the hospital, because it was expected to be a very long stay,” Shafer said. “We were able to have Christmas together, which we weren’t expecting. We had a tree and everything.”

It wasn’t just an emotional relief, Shafer said — it probably saved her children’s lives.

“Theyir recoveries, I fully believe, were because of the support they had, which they would not have had were it not for Ronald McDonald House allowing us to stay near our children,” she said.

More than 40 percent of patients at Loma Linda University Children’s Hospital travel more than 25 miles to receive care, which can sometimes be needed for months, according to the nonprofit. The trip is often much longer, as Loma Linda houses the only children’s trauma center in the 200,000-square mile area of San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

Because of that, by the mid-2000s the Loma Linda Ronald McDonald House was regularly full, meaning 10 to 15 families were put in hotels — costing $100,000 to $200,000 annually — and others had to be turned away.

That’s when fundraising for an expansion began in earnest, eventually including $1.25 million from McDonald’s owners and operators, $1 million from the Ontario Reign and $5.8 million from the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians.

Construction began in fall 2015.

Reflecting the broader area it serves, the house has also been rebranded as The Inland Empire Ronald McDonald House.
Put yourself in the shoes of a family from a distant part of the region who suddenly learns their child needs the hospital’s intensive treatment, said Jay Brand, chairman of the board for the local Ronald McDonald House.

“You’re scared to death,” Brand said. “You’ve got only the clothes on your back (with you), you probably haven’t even eaten, and when your child finally goes to bed, you think: ‘Now what?’ That’s when a social worker taps you on the shoulder and says, ‘Not to worry. We have a room for you across the street, and all of your toiletries are provided.’”

The house also includes a fully stocked refrigerator and kitchens. Volunteers cook meals about five times per week.

While thanking the donors who made the expansion possible, officials with the Ronald McDonald House said the expansion would mean an increase in operating expenses of about 30 percent, and said they could use more help working to assist every family.

Food, kitchen supplies and gift card donations can be delivered to the house at 11365 Anderson Street. Volunteers are also appreciated.

More information is available at 909-747-1275 or cmalcolm@rmhcsc.org.
LAKE ARROWHEAD >> SkyPark at Santa’s Village is offering deals to nearby residents.

From 2 to 6 p.m. every Monday through Friday, all San Bernardino Mountains residents can visit the park for $10.

That’s a discount of $39-$49 from the general admission price for adults, seniors and youths.

The Christmas-oriented theme park opened Dec. 2 after being closed for 18 years.

Mountain residents can experience the park, including pedaling a go-kart, visiting Santa, enjoying two restaurants, a bakery and several gift stores.

There is ice skating and a bouldering room as well.

Guests are encouraged to bring their own ice skates or bouldering shoes, or both can be rented on site.

General admission tickets for this coming weekend are sold out.

SkyPark at Santa’s Village, 28950 Highway 18 in the Skyforest neighborhood of Lake Arrowhead, is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily, weather permitting. Admission prices range from $49 to $59, and children 3 and younger are free.

Information: 909-744-9373 or skysparkantsasvillage.com.
‘Rescue Ranch’ owner pleads guilty to animal cruelty

By Stacy Moore, Hi-Desert Star | Posted: Monday, December 12, 2016 12:57 pm

JOSHUA TREE — A man accused of keeping more than 180 animals at his Morongo Valley property pleaded guilty to five felony charges of animal cruelty Friday. In exchange, the court dismissed 16 more cruelty charges.

Stephen Caro, 60, has been behind bars since Aug. 15 and will spend about two more months in county jail under the plea bargain struck with county prosecutors.

He will remain on supervised probation until Dec. 8, 2019, and was ordered to pay $72,091 to the county animal control division.

Caro will be banned from owning animals for 10 years and must undergo counseling, two standard requirements for anyone convicted of animal cruelty, prosecutor Debbie Ploghaus said.

Ploghaus, who is assigned to San Bernardino County’s Animal Cruelty Task Force, was surprised when Caro’s lawyer announced he was ready to plead guilty at what was supposed to be a minor court appearance to schedule further hearings Friday morning.

“It shocked me that he was willing to plead so quickly,” Ploghaus said Monday.

“He was able to admit his guilt very quickly in comparison to other hoarders. He didn’t try to fight me on bail,” she said. “So my interpretation was that he was remorseful.”

But Caro’s attorney, Steve Escovar, said his client was mainly guilty of failing to supervise his employees at the Morongo Valley property where he ran the Paws Rescue Ranch, a nonprofit recognized by the IRS.

“He cares deeply about animals; that’s why he was involved in the ranch,” Escovar said in a phone interview Monday. “He probably bit off a little more than he could handle in terms of the number of animals he took, but he was motivated by the well-being of animals.”

Caro, who lived in Palm Springs, kept dogs, cats and other small animals on his property at 9333 Bella Vista Drive in Morongo Valley; some lived in small kennels outside, but most of the animals were kept inside a one-bedroom house.

In Facebook posts he made after animal control visited his house in early summer, Caro blamed his problems on employees, writing that the angry friends of a fired employee had called animal control officers.
After officers found a dog that died, possibly of heat exposure, on June 22, Caro wrote that his nephew, who was an employee, had tethered the dog without water or shade and forgotten about it.

Escovar had a similar explanation.

“Part of the culpability here stems from the employees that Caro had and their lack of diligence with the animals,” the attorney said.

“The situation was he did not supervise his employees closely enough. … Mr. Caro was mostly out doing vet runs and picking up other animals to help. That was where his mistake was.”

The prosecutor, Ploghaus, called Caro a hoarder whose animal collection got out of control. “It’s kind of the same story with all hoarders: They try to do the right thing and they get in over their heads,” she said.

Animal hoarding is probably more common in San Bernardino County than most people realize, she said. “You have these people who establish these quote ‘animal rescues,’ and there is no way to monitor them. Anyone can call themselves an animal rescue if they have a 501(c)3 and people will send them money,” she said.

“You see these things on the Internet and people are constantly sending money.”

After Caro was arrested and charged with animal cruelty, Paws Pet Ranch continued to solicit donations. A man identifying himself as Dean Krull posted on the Paws Pet Ranch Facebook page introducing himself as the new president and writing, “Donate! We urgently need financial support to address issues like operating expenses, licenses, fees and other important costs and obligations.”

The telephone number for the nonprofit has since been taken out of service, its Facebook page is down and the Paws Pet Ranch website is no longer set up to take online donations.

**County alleged needless suffering**

Animal control officers started building their case against Caro on June 16, when they inspected his yard and told him he had to provide his outdoor dogs with shade.

They returned June 22 with a warrant to search the grounds and discovered a dog that had died while tethered on a short chain. Officers seized the 11 remaining outdoor dogs and took the body of the dead dog, named Othello.

Two days later, they came back with a warrant to enter the house and seized the rest of the animals on the property — in total, approximately 180, according to animal control program manager Greg Beck.

The animals were placed at government shelters. A news release from the district attorney’s office stated that 10 of the dogs and two cats were euthanized by the county animal control department after they were seized.

Most of the rest found homes, officials have said.

The county district attorney filed charges against Caro on Aug. 4, alleging he subjected 21 dogs to “needless suffering” or failed to provide them with proper food, drink, shelter or protection from the weather.
Here’s what it’ll take to bring Uber, Lyft to the Ontario airport

By Neil Nisperos, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Sunday, December 11, 2016

ONTARIO >> Smartphone-based ride-share services like Uber and Lyft are currently unavailable at the Ontario International Airport, but that soon may change.

The Ontario International Airport Authority, which was handed control of the facility by Los Angeles World Airports earlier this year, is working on a new ground transportation plan that will likely include Lyft and Uber service, officials said. Kelly Frederick, CEO of the OIAA, said at a recent board meeting that officials aim to bring ride-share services to the airport by April 2017.

“We’re in the middle of developing a comprehensive ground transportation policy and shared ride passengers will be included,” said Dan Adamus, chief marketing officer for Ontario International Airport. “We’ll have it out for approval by the board early next year. We’re hoping to have everything implemented on or around second quarter.”

Before that happens, OIAA officials say they have to come up with requirements for online-based ride-share companies that would be fair and equitable to other transportation services operating at the airport.

“Uber and Lyft are not part of our ground transportation policy,” Adamus said. “For them to be brought in, we have to be sure that the structure we implement is fair and equitable for everyone operating (at the airport). There are specific guidelines for taxi operations, a limo company, a bus service, for those modes of ground transportation.”

Al Wapner, president of the OIAA, said, speaking in a phone interview as an individual board member, that he believed the travelling public should have a choice at the airport. Though officials, he said, would make sure there would be a level playing field for all transportation services operating at the airport.

“I would only support ride sharing (at ONT) if it’s subject to the same requirements as the taxi services here,” Wapner said. “I’m a firm believer in competition, but competition on a level playing field.”

Wapner said airport commissioners should look into applying the same requirements for ride-share drivers that taxi companies that service the airport are subject to.

“I would apply the same fees, the same inspection requirements, the same background checks for drivers,” Wapner said. “I know it’s an added expenditure, but if they want to compete with the taxis, they should have to do the same things they do. I’m not sure my commission is going to agree with me, but that’s my personal opinion.”

Petros Keshishian, part-owner of Network Paratransit Systems LLC, of San Bernardino, which has a contract for taxi service at ONT as Yellow and Bell Cab, voiced concerns over ride-share services coming to the local airport citing the lack of fingerprinting and what he said was inadequate insurance.
“You can’t compete with anybody if there is no level playing field,” Keshishian said. “If they’re going to go through fingerprinting, which is background checks, have adequate insurance, go through drug testing. ... Than obviously we have no issue with people competing with us as long as they are doing what the public safety is calling for.”

The only other taxi service with a contract for service at ONT is the Montclair-based Rykal LLC, which does business there as Pomona Yellow Cab.

“We don’t mind the competition,” Rykal owner Greg Klibanov said. “We just want to be on the same playing field and we’re a little bit concerned about public safety. If they do put them through background checks and random drug and alcohol testing, then we’ll support it as well.”

Eva Behrend, spokeswoman for Uber, said the company is eager to be able to have their drivers operate at the airport.

“Uber is eager to help simplify and modernize the airport travel experience,” Behrend said in a statement. “We look forward to working with the airport so that thousands of travelers who pass through the Ontario airport every year will have the option to push a button and get a safe, reliable and affordable ride when they land.”

Lyft spokeswoman Mary Carlone Pruitt said through a statement, Ontario residents and visitors want access to more modern transportation options like the ride-share service it provides.

“We look forward to working together with the airport, and are optimistic that we’ll be able to come to an agreement that allows for Lyft’s safe, affordable rides at ONT in the future,” Pruitt said.
BARSTOW - Susan Pfaff recalls a sunset outside of Peggy Sue's Diner after dinner one day last summer that was so "breathtaking" she snapped a photo of it.

"We all stopped and put our arms around each other because it was so breathtaking," she told the Desert Dispatch.

Expedia.com also believes sunsets in Barstow "will make you stop in your tracks and enjoy the show."

Expedia ranked the top 20 areas in the nation for watching a sunset. Barstow was listed at No. 17.

"Head out on the highway and ride into the sunset in the desert town of Barstow," Expedia said. "One of the best sunset spots in America is from the seat of your car, cruising along the Barstow Freeway with the windows down and the wind flying through your hair.

"The desolate desert landscape will whiz past your vision as the sun above slowly descends behind the Soda Mountains, leaving fluorescent trails in the sky that look like they're in a scene from Monet's masterpieces. You'll be pressed to find a more peaceful experience than just you, the sun, and the open road."
Vincent Pryce agrees with Expedia.

"I was stationed in Barstow in August of 2006. Prior to that I've been all over the world and across the U.S., even in the Middle East. I've seen many sunrises and sunsets but I can truly say that the ones I've seen in Barstow not only captures my eyes but also my heart," Pryce told the Desert Dispatch.

"The Mojave Desert is an excellent area to capture exquisite earthly tones and a desolate terrain. The desert sun also makes for an excellent source of natural light to capture an earthly Tatooine, which I am particularly fond of capturing," Jo Ardy said.

The Expedia list can be found at:

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Mike Lamb can be reached at 760-957-0613 or
-----------------------------------------------. You can also follow him on Twitter

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San Manuel Tribe gives $1 million grant to nonprofit Children’s Fund

By Staff report

Monday, December 12, 2016

The San Manuel Band of Mission Indians awarded a $1 million grant to Children’s Fund to increase services at its Children’s Assessment Center in San Bernardino, the nonprofit announced Monday.

According to Children’s Fund, the grant is the largest the nonprofit has received in its 30-year history.

The Children’s Assessment Center treats children up to age 18 and developmentally delayed young adults in San Bernardino County who are suspected victims of abuse, according to a news release.

The grant from San Manuel will fund a new pediatric fellow each year, for three years, and other medical personnel.

“There are only about 300 child abuse doctors in the entire country,” Dr. Amy Young, medical director at the center, said in the release. “Therefore, the best way to secure more medical staff at the CAC is to offer Forensic Pediatric Fellowships, essentially growing and retaining local expertise.”

By securing and training three new pediatric fellows, the center will move toward long-term stability and the capacity to treat over 3,000 children each year, according to Sabrina Nakhjavanpour, treasurer of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, who recently toured the center.

“In addition, the grant provides funds to train existing staff as well as research and develop programs to improve systems for child abuse victims,” Nakhjavanpour said in the release. “We are pleased to support this worthwhile effort.”

The grant will be awarded over three years.

In 2015, there were 5,110 substantiated cases of child abuse in San Bernardino County, and 1,723 of those children were treated at the center, according to Children’s Fund.

URL: http://www.sbsun.com/social-affairs/20161212/san-manuel-tribe-gives-1-million-grant-to-nonprofit-childrens-fund

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This is who Stater Bros. has elected as their new chairman of the board

Philip J. Smith has been with the San Bernardino supermarket chain since 1987

By Fielding Buck, The Press-Enterprise

Monday, December 12, 2016

A former chief financial officer of Stater Bros. is expanding his role in the company following the death of the supermarket chain’s longtime leader.

Philip J. Smith has been elected as chairman of the board, Stater Bros. Holding Co. announced Monday.

He has been with the San Bernardino supermarket chain since 1987, almost as long as his mentor, the late Jack H. Brown, who came on board in 1981.

Starting as controller, Smith advanced to become executive vice president of finance, chief financial officer and chief accounting officer, titles he held until Brown appointed him as vice chairman of the board in 2012. David Harris succeeded him as CFO.

“I was more or less semi-retired,” Smith said in a phone interview. “I was basically on a consulting arrangement with Jack and vice chairman of the board. So I’m basically back in the office full time now for a while.”

Brown, who died Nov. 13 at age 78, became Stater Bros. chairman of the board in 1986. He served as Stater Bros. chief executive officer from 1981 to 2015, when he appointed Pete Van Helden to succeed him.

Smith said his role as chairman would be to act as go-between for the company and the board and to work with Van Helden on major company decisions.

“He’s still the operations guy,” he said.

Stater Bros. had 89 stores when he joined the company, Smith said. Now it has 169 stores in six counties, all served out of one distribution center in San Bernardino. Four of the upcoming stores are in new locations, and one is a replacement, he said.

Brown’s loss has impacted Stater Bros. staff, or “family,” as Brown called it.

“He was very dear to me too,” Smith said. “He was like a big brother to me. I had known Jack for 40 years and I spent a long time with him. ...”

“It’s still very emotional. The ceremonies we had helped, but he people valued Jack much. They still do.”
Here's why Riverside County's top officials may decline pay hikes

By JEFF HORSEMAN
2016-12-12 18:08:01

In a nod to Riverside County’s ongoing financial challenges, a proposal before the county Board of Supervisors would have supervisors defer any pay raise they’re due to receive until 2019.

The proposal from Supervisor Marion Ashley is on the board’s agenda for Tuesday, Dec. 13. It follows remarks by Ashley at the board’s meeting last week in which he suggested the five elected supervisors defer their recent pay hikes.

On July 1, the supervisors – with the exception of Kevin Jeffries who has refused pay bumps since taking office in 2012 – automatically received a 1.36 percent raise, increasing their annual salaries to $153,289.

Their pay was bumped up after the state raised the pay of superior court judges. By law, supervisors’ base salaries are set at 80 percent of what a judge makes.

The raises, which happened without any public announcement, come as the county tries to convince unionized employees to go along with a five-year budget plan that calls for a tight lid on salary costs. Officials have said the county must hold the line on spending to rebuild reserves and to prevent new, ongoing costs from outpacing revenue growth.

A union official criticized the board for taking a raise while asking rank-and-file employees to do without. This year's raise came a year after supervisors received a 2.4 percent pay hike.

Last week, Ashley told his colleagues that they should do without a raise if they’re asking union workers to do the same. His idea on Tuesday’s agenda would have the board defer any pay hike given between July 1 of this year and Dec. 31, 2018.

On Monday, Ashley said his proposal would freeze supervisors’ salaries until Jan. 1, 2019, after which they would go back to 80 percent of a superior court judge’s pay.

“There will be two or three new supervisors on board at that time,” said Ashley, who, along with Supervisor John Tavaglione, doesn’t plan to seek re-election. Their terms run through the end of 2018.

“The new board can and should make the decision whether to continue the deferment based on the county’s financial state at that time.”

RELATED

Riverside County supervisors get another automatic raise

Riverside County supervisors should not accept raises
Here's how supervisors plan to close $60.9 million budget gap

Contact the writer: 951-368-9547 or jhorseman@scng.com
As rents soar, so do Southern California evictions

By Jeff Collins, jcollins@scng.com

Monday, December 12, 2016

One out of every 33 Inland Empire renter households was evicted from its home in 2014, the ninth-highest eviction rate among big metro areas for which data was available, online real estate broker Redfin reported Monday.

Orange County ranked 17th among the 32 large metros, with one out of every 63 renters getting evicted that year. In Los Angeles County, the eviction rate ranked 20th with one out of every 80 renters losing their home.

Those numbers were part of a recent analysis concluding that evictions are rising in the United States due in part to home prices and rents rising faster than incomes.

“Without an expansion in policies to address the affordable housing shortage and the increase in cost-burdened renters, evictions will become an even more prevalent feature of the U.S. housing market,” the report said.

The brokerage analyzed more than 6 million eviction records provided by data aggregator American Information Research Services Inc., the company said.

The study was limited to 19 states because there’s no national database on evictions, Redfin reported, although the Census Bureau is expected to start one next year.

Based on data from the 19 states analyzed, Redfin estimated that 2.7 million renters faced eviction last year.

Neighborhoods with the highest rent-to-income ratios have much higher eviction rates than neighborhoods that spend less of their income on rent, the report said.

A review of eviction data in more than 70 metro areas found that communities with the biggest increase in household income spent on rent had the biggest increases in evictions from 2013 to 2014. Evictions declined slightly in communities with smaller increases.

“Growing housing costs precipitate higher rates of evictions,” the study said.

In Southern California, the number of “cost-burdened” renters – that is, those spending 30 percent or more of their income on rent – has been rising, Redfin figures show.

The Inland Empire had just over 137,300 cost-burdened renters in 2014, up 15.8 percent from 2011, Redfin reported.

In Orange County, 232,500 renters were cost burdened, up 10.8 percent from three years earlier, while the number increased 7.1 percent in Los Angeles County to 990,000.

The study also found:

• More than 20 million U.S. renters – nearly half of the nationwide total – were cost burdened in 2015, up from 14.8 million in 2001.
• U.S. rents have risen 66 percent since 2000, while household incomes were up 35 percent.

• Evictions are more common in areas with higher percentages of immigrants.

Solutions, include building more rental housing, expanding rent subsidies and providing more legal assistance to renters facing eviction, the study said.

“Evictions have devastating consequences on families and communities,” the report said. “Communities with high eviction rates have an unstable social structure and are plagued with crime.”