

## Yolo DA fears 'crippling' cuts

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By Jonathan Edwards | Enterprise staff writer | April 07, 2010 09:08

WOODLAND - Brutal cuts would inflict 'critical damage' to the District Attorney's Office and 'cripple the criminal justice system,' District Attorney Jeff Reisig told Yolo County supervisors Tuesday morning.

Slashing \$2 million out of his \$12.3 million department would mean not prosecuting 4,000 misdemeanors next year, including theft, vandalism and battery.

Supervisor Jim Provenza of Davis seemed dumbfounded that a criminal could spray-paint his house or 'slug' him while walking down the street and walk away without penalty.

'There's no deterrent effect,' Reisig said. 'If you don't deal with the misdemeanors, it's just going to escalate into more violent conduct.'

The DA went through his department's budget blow by blow with the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday. The meeting was the third in a series of six workshops, in which supervisors will try to close a projected \$21 million to \$24 million shortfall.

They also covered the departments of the Public Defender, Child Support Services and Conflict Indigent Defense. Supervisors get together again Friday to tackle Human Resources, General Services, Information Technology and Planning and Public Works.

They will meet at 9 a.m. at the County Administration Building, 625 Court St., Woodland.

To close his gap by two-thirds, Reisig would have to reduce his budget by 17 percent and his workforce by 9 percent, from 97 to 88 employees.

'We cut to the bone last year,' he said. 'Now we're at the spot: 'Where do we chop?'

Reisig lowered his deficit to \$766,000 by making what he called 'moderate' and 'high-risk' cuts. They include docking salaries and benefits by 10 percent, tightening up his supply budget and hacking six jobs.

'That's all in good conscience, as the DA, that I can do,' he said.

Beyond that, he's drawing his line in the sand. He pinpointed where cuts could be made to get him \$139,000 in the black. However, he said the reductions would inflict 'critical damage to the core public safety mission' of his office.

Laying off four lawyers who handle some 4,000 misdemeanor cases each year would save more than half a million dollars.

The department got hit hard last year when four lawyers chose to retire early to cash in on

sweetened retirement benefits. Combined, the lawyers had more than 100 years of experience, he said.

Ann Hurd, former chief deputy district attorney and Reisig's No. 2, was one of them.

Without Hurd to take over the reins when he's not around, Reisig said he's stretched thin.

'I'm on 24/7,' he said. 'My phone's always on; my e-mail's always on. ... I'm telling you, it's not working.'

The DA draws \$4.6 million of his budget from the county's general fund. The rest comes from a mix of state and federal fees and grants.

Reisig told supervisors he's worried about the stability of the grant funding.

'We're grant-heavy,' he said. 'It's a house of cards, and someday it will fall, and then we will come before you and ask, 'OK now what? Who's going to prosecute those cases?''

Reisig pushed hard to continuing funding his gang investigation unit and a countywide drug enforcement team. The city of Winters and UC Davis have pulled their funding from the drug team, Reisig said. Now the county's Probation Department is thinking of doing the same.

Fewer members in the drug task force means a larger cost to the remaining players. If the DA yanks its funding, it makes it that much harder to keep the program viable.

'We are the front line for protecting our children from drugs and gangs,' Reisig told the board. He said Woodland is a 'hub' and 'home base' for gangs because it's on Interstate 5, a 'major' drug route from Mexico to Canada.

'If we don't stand tall on this issue, we're surrendering; we're giving up our kids,' Reisig said. 'We cannot surrender. We're abandoning our communities if we do.'