



Contact:

Victoria A. Leonard
202.727.8204 (desk)
202.403.7866 (cell)
vleonardchambers@dccouncil.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 10, 2009

Thomas Appreciates Appellate Court Decision Striking Down Checkpoints
A Broader Approach Is Needed, States Thomas

Washington, DC - Ward 5 Councilmember Harry "Tommy" Thomas, Jr. announced today that he is pleased that the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit has determined that the "Neighborhood Safety Zones," or police checkpoints, deployed in the Trinidad neighborhood last summer violate the U.S. Constitution.

"The Appellate Court decision reflects the sentiments of a number of residents in the Trinidad community," said Councilmember Thomas. At a June 13, 2008 community meeting, Trinidad residents completed a survey about the Neighborhood Safety Zones. Survey results indicated that the Trinidad residents most impacted by the checkpoints generally had negative opinions about them, with more than three-quarters viewing the checkpoints as ineffective at deterring criminal activity. More than seven in ten opposed the strategy of closing streets and alleys to funnel vehicular traffic to the checkpoints. The vast majority also opposed turning away at checkpoints drivers who could not or would not state their purpose for entering the community.

"I support a broader approach to fighting crime, as outlined in the 10-point action plan I drafted last year in response to the violence that gripped Ward 5," said Councilmember Thomas. "Early intervention with youth is vital to solving the cycle of crime violence in Ward 5 and throughout the city."

At the Council's most recent legislative session, Councilmember Thomas introduced the "Youth and Young Adults Promise Act of 2009" to address youth gang and crime challenges. The bill requires the Executive to collect and analyze data on juvenile delinquency and criminal gang activity, and implement an action plan to intervene and assist at-risk youth and young adults. The bill also calls for the Executive to develop a Center for Youth-Oriented Policing that would be tasked with providing a comprehensive approach to curtailing juvenile delinquency and criminal gang activity, focusing on positive, early police intervention.

"Research indicates that we must take a holistic approach built upon positive intervention to combat gang and other criminal problems associated with our young people," said Councilmember Thomas. "Fighting crime is important, but is most effective when part of a complete approach that includes addressing the root causes of crime."

###



Harry "Tommy" Thomas, Jr. represents Ward 5 on the Council of the District of Columbia. Thomas chairs the Council's Committee on Libraries, Parks, and Recreation. He sits on four additional committees: Workforce Development and the Environment, Aging and Community Affairs, Housing and Workforce Development, and Public Services and Consumer Affairs.