

State Notes

TOPICS OF LEGISLATIVE INTEREST

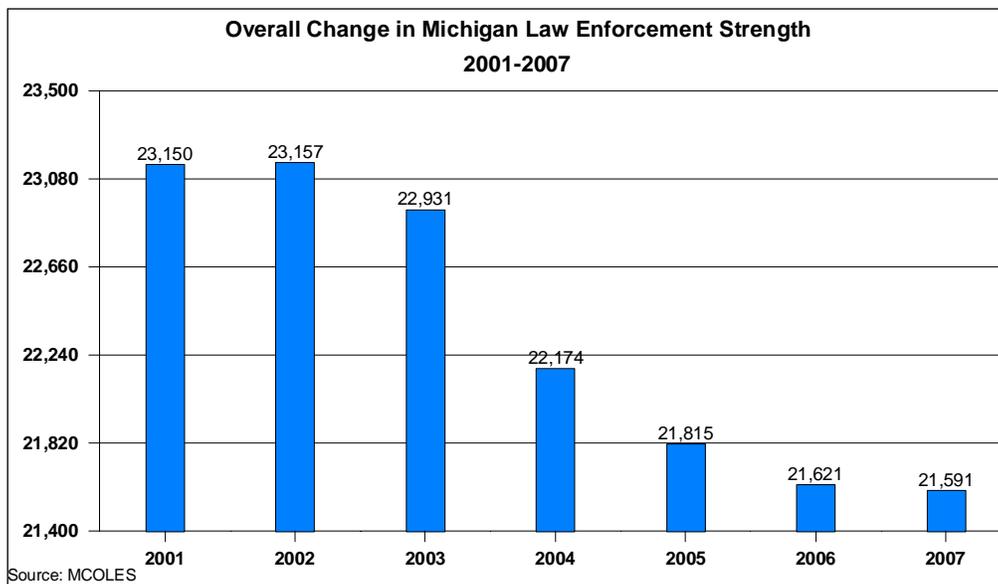
January/February 2008



Decline in Statewide Law Enforcement Strength By Bruce R. Baker, Fiscal Analyst

As a result of a State economy that has seen employment decline for seven consecutive years and the consequent spending priorities set by local and State government, the number of licensed law enforcement officers has declined by 1,566 positions in the State since 2001. This information (Figure 1) comes from the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES), which has tracked the employment of licensed law enforcement officers among Michigan's 609 law enforcement agencies.

Figure 1



The overall loss of approximately 7.0% of police officer positions in the last seven years generally reflects a dramatic decrease in numbers within law enforcement agencies of the largest and smallest sizes, and less dramatic losses in certain types of agencies such as those representing county sheriffs, townships, and villages.

Changes in Agency Strength by Size

Large law enforcement agencies, defined here as those that employ over 100 officers, have experienced an overall reduction in officer strength of 15.0% since 2001. These agencies include police departments in Ann Arbor, Battle Creek, Clinton Township, Dearborn, Detroit, Farmington Hills, Flint, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Lansing, Livonia, Southfield, Sterling Heights, Troy, Warren, and Westland, as well as the Michigan State Police. Among them, only Clinton Township, Dearborn, Farmington Hills, Sterling Heights, Troy, and Westland have managed either to maintain their strength, or, in the case of Farmington Hills and Sterling Heights, to increase their officer strength slightly.



The greatest loss of officers, in terms of numbers, has come from the State's two largest agencies. The City of Detroit's with a loss of 923 police officers since 2001 (Figure 2) represents a decrease of 23.0% in personnel of the city's police department. The other largest agency, the Michigan State Police, has lost 362 licensed police officers going back to 2001 (Figure 3), representing a decrease of 17.0%. In terms of patrol officers, or those Michigan State Troopers assigned to general police duties at posts around the State, the numbers have fallen from a historic high of 1,344 in 2000 to 1,036 in 2007 (Figure 4), a 23.0% loss. As of February 2008, the number of troopers assigned to post has fallen to 1,022.

Figure 2

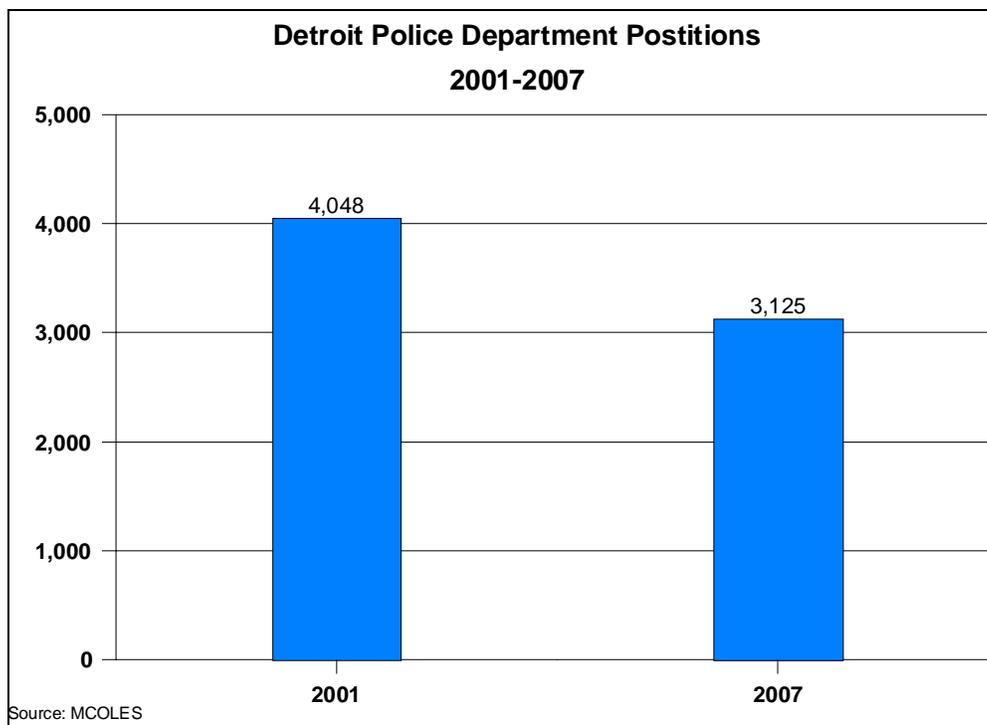




Figure 3

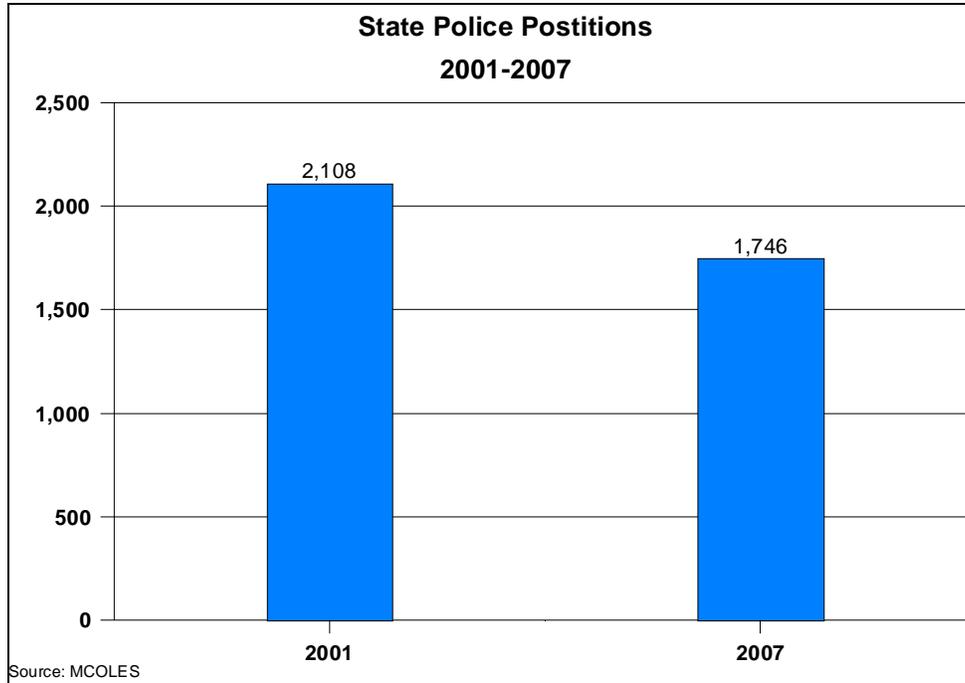
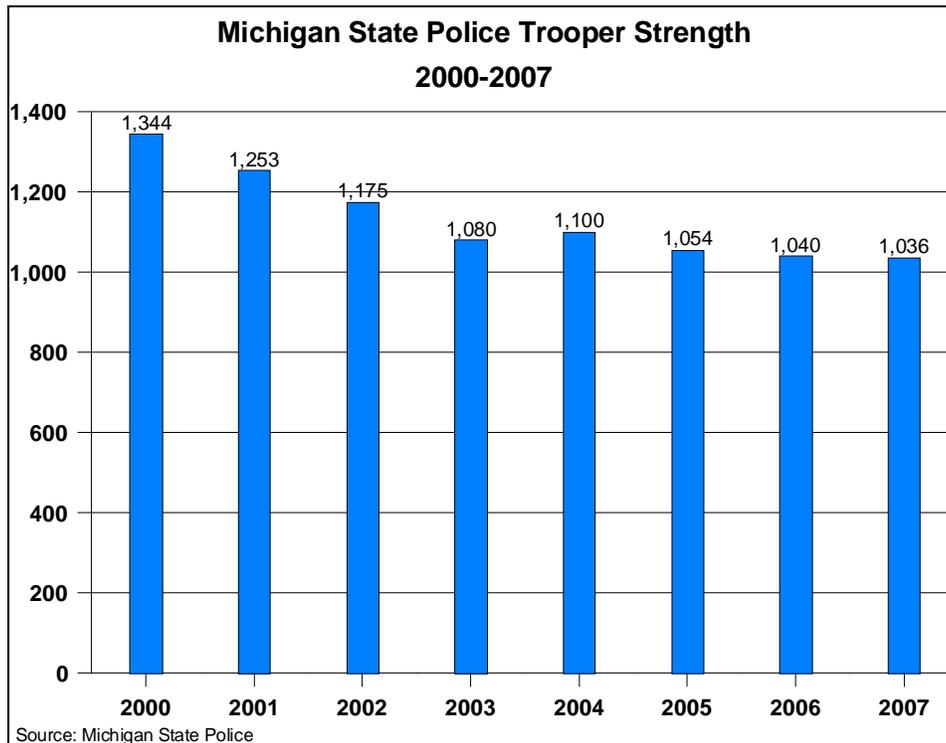


Figure 4





A recent survey of law enforcement personnel by MCOLES reveals that the very smallest of agencies, with perhaps fewer funding options, have been hit hard with officer losses. According to the survey, the 88 agencies that employ fewer than four officers have seen an overall 45.0% reduction in strength since 2001. Among those, 18 are reported to have disbanded operations and other units have increasingly relied upon part-time employment of officers to provide service.

Changes in Agency Strength by Type

While the Michigan State Police and the City of Detroit suffered the biggest losses of law enforcement officers in terms of numbers, many city police agencies also have seen a considerable decline in officers since 2001. Overall, city police agencies in the State have seen a decline of 11.0% during this time period. Many city law enforcement agencies, some of which are listed in Table 1, have been especially hard hit.

Table 1

City Law Enforcement Agencies - Percent of Licensed Officers Lost 2001-2007	
Bay City	16%
Detroit	23%
Grand Rapids.....	13%
Inkster	19%
Lincoln Park.....	18%
Livonia	11%
Pontiac.....	39%
River Rouge.....	30%
Romulus.....	15%
Saginaw	20%
Wyoming.....	13%

Source: Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards

Among county sheriff departments, overall numbers of licensed law enforcement officers have remained approximately stable since 2001, though this statement may be somewhat misleading due to the growing trend in certain counties to license county jail workers as law enforcement officers and the fact that some counties have increased numbers to support other local agencies that have experienced a decline in officers during this period.

While some county sheriff departments experienced gains in officers, 25 of the State's 83 counties, or 30.0%, lost officers since 2001, with Saginaw County experiencing the greatest loss with an 18.0% decline. Other sheriff departments sustaining losses since 2001 include those in Arenac, Bay, Cass, Chippewa, Eaton, Gladwin, Gogebic, Grand Traverse, Gratiot, Ingham, Jackson, Kalkaska, Lapeer, Lenawee, Manistee, Marquette, Mason, Mecosta, Newaygo, Ontonagon, Sanilac, Schoolcraft, St. Clair, and St. Joseph Counties.

In addition to the county sheriff departments, those agencies representing townships and villages also have maintained overall strength since 2001, though 33 of 109 township agencies and 35 of 126 village agencies experienced law enforcement position losses.

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Conclusion

It cannot be predicted at this time when or if the revenue of various levels of government will be directed to a greater degree than it is currently for the purpose of hiring additional licensed law enforcement personnel. At the State level, however, the Governor has recently proposed a new trooper school for the Michigan State Police in her budget recommendations for fiscal year 2008-09. The school is planned to graduate a minimum of 80 troopers in early 2009, to be added to the pool of troopers assigned to posts around the State.