

## **METH UPDATE**

### **Send Me The Bill**

Proposition 36 allows 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> time, non-violent, simple drug possession offenders an opportunity to choose treatment over incarceration. When the public passed proposition 36 it was with the informed insight that it is cheaper to fund recovery than to pay for the consequences of addiction. The actual savings from the treatment/incarceration conversion are estimated to reach 1.5 billion by June of 2006, and this is only one way that savings are generated.

Studies routinely show an average 7 to1 cost savings ratio, which means that for every dollar spent on recovery seven dollars worth of cost savings are generated from a reduction in economic impacts in other areas. The Meth Strike Force understands the benefits of reminding the public of those costs. The following data comes from a report titled "The Economic Costs of Drug Abuse in the United States." The data was compiled by the "Office of National Drug Control Policy" which is a component of the Executive Office of the President. The report was compiled for the years 1992-1998, and the following figures are from the median year of 1995. The figures are a breakdown of the negative economic impacts to society from the use of illegal drugs.

- Health care costs = 11.3 billion dollars
- Lost productivity costs = 88 billion dollars
- Department of justice and other costs = 27.1 billion dollars
- Total costs = 126.4 billion dollars

This report only focused on illegal drugs, which means that it did not include data related to the negative economic impacts of tobacco, alcohol or the misuse of prescription drugs.

The Centers for Disease Control listed alcohol related deaths at ten times that of all illegal drugs combined for the year 1995. This does not indicate that illegal drugs are safer; it is a reflection of the per capita differences in consumption rates. However, this data is a reminder to all that chasing a person from the use of an illegal drug to the use of a legal drug changes nothing. It would merely be a shift in the substance that was generating negative economic impacts; all of which justifies what addicts everywhere have discovered through an abundance of painful field research: complete abstinence works. Recovery programs connect addicts with this simple truth, and the hope remains that the public will continue to be supportive of the need to fund recovery.