

LETTERS

DANGEROUS MEASUREMENTS OF POLICE PERFORMANCE

Bill Evans and the Cresap management consulting firm are busy selling wrong-headed measures of police performance to ingenuous overseers of police departments. In doing so, they are driving police departments away from, rather than toward, more effective performance. And they are using the pages of *GOVERNING* to do it! ["The False Choice Between Preventing and Solving Crime," Commentary, February, page 11.]

I have no objection to evaluating police departments *partly* in terms of crime rates, clearance rates and response times to high-priority calls for service. Cresap's crucial error lies in proposing these indicators as the only, or the best, measures of police department performance.

What two decades of police research have shown is that rapid response and

retrospective investigation are sharply limited in their ability to control crime and that these methods can only succeed when there is a strong, trusting relationship between the police and the community. We know that police departments that focus obsessively on response times tend to behave in ways that destroy rather than build relationships with the community.

More importantly, we also know that crimes can be prevented and controlled by methods other than rapid response and retrospective investigation. If communities can be mobilized to assume some responsibilities for self-defense, crimes can be prevented by citizens as well as by the police, and the police response becomes more effective.

If problems underlying calls for service can be analyzed to reveal new opportunities for their solution, crimes can be prevented as well as reacted to.

If the police take minor "disorder offenses" such as aggressive panhandling and repeated vandalism seriously, and if they respond to emergency service calls with decent concern for the citizens, then they can reduce fear and build the relationship that makes their crime-fighting effectiveness greater. Yet it is these valuable activities that are ignored by Cresap's measures.

The Cresap approach to evaluating police departments is not simply theoretically wrong and outmoded; it is dangerous and destructive to the future of policing. It drives police departments toward less effective rather than more effective performance, and wastes rather than saves public resources.

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COMMENTARY
BY ANTHONY DOWNS

THE REAL BARRIER TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING: LOCAL ZONING CODES

A year ago, Jack Kemp's Advisory Commission on Regulatory Barriers to Affordable Housing, of which I was a member, issued its report, entitled *Not In My Backyard*. Since then, I have been astonished and dismayed to watch as both liberals and conservatives have grossly misinterpreted the report's findings.

Conservatives are claiming the report shows that housing affordability problems are caused mainly by excessive government regulation and that large federal housing subsidies therefore are not needed. That is false.

The most widespread housing affordability problems are caused primarily by poverty. In most cases, that cause can only be removed by providing federal financial assistance to many more poor households. But the commission did not deal with that subject because it was charged only with examining regulatory barriers, not overall housing affordability.



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Liberals are attacking the report because it did not cover all aspects of housing affordability and because it is being used by conservatives to belittle regulations liberals favor. Many liberals claim the commission failed to recognize the positive benefits of zoning and other regulations, and seemed to urge their abolition. They also argue that the report advocates eliminating the Endangered Species Act and emasculating wetlands regulations.

These interpretations are also false. The report did criticize those environmental measures for not taking any account whatsoever of their impacts upon housing costs. But those regulations are relatively minor causes of high housing costs.

Much more important are local zoning regulations that block construction of moderate-cost and multifamily housing in most suburban communities,

and other local ordinances and time-consuming permission processes that raise housing costs far more than is necessary to achieve legitimate regulatory goals. These barriers push prices of new housing units far out of reach of millions of households.

Both conservatives and liberals should focus on the report's key message: Reducing local government regulatory barriers can definitely