

Public Policy Roundtable
“Methamphetamines: The Number One Public Safety Issue in California”
Dr. Alex Norman, Independent organization/transformation consultant
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Dr. Alex Norman, professor Emeritus of Social Welfare at UCLA’s School of Public Policy and Public Research, presented an overview of the methamphetamine landscape in California today from a public safety perspective. Not only has methamphetamine been identified as the leading drug-related law enforcement problem in California, Dr. Norman pointed out—it is also the top public safety budgetary priority. The multi-faceted dangers that result from methamphetamine production, distribution, and addiction, argued Dr. Norman, affect the broad community, beyond the scope of any one agency. The national geography of methamphetamine use, continued Dr. Norman, also indicates that the problem cannot be addressed by one state alone. When a methamphetamine or “meth” lab is shut down in California, another reopens in Nevada, or in any of the other states that ranked meth as their number one drug-related problem (AZ, ID, NM, UT, WA, WY). Additionally, he continued, California is predicted to remain the nation’s lead producer/distributor of meth due to its proximity to Mexico and Canada. Within this context, argued Dr. Norman, California needs to prioritize meth prevention and education over suppression. Dr. Norman concluded with recommendations for a legislative framework that addresses; 1) prevention and education; 2) Western-regional enforcement and containment; 3) treatment and rehabilitation best practices; and 4) standardized over-the-counter drug monitoring and restriction.