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GLOBE EDITORIAL

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Reinforcements? Yes!

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THE ROMNEY administration is making good-faith offers, including wider use of the State Police, to reinforce public safety efforts in Boston. Instead of worrying about vague jurisdictional issues, as Mayor Thomas Menino is doing, or belittling the offer, as the Boston Police Patrolmen's union has done, city leaders should be jumping at this opportunity.

Romney and his top aides recently visited a Dorchester settlement house operated by the Rev. Eugene Rivers and came away convinced that the state needed to do more to address the shootings and street violence that are plaguing parts of Boston. Peter Flaherty, the governor's deputy chief of staff, says that one strategy is to tap discretionary funds in the state's Public Safety office for use by local groups working to reduce the violence. On Thursday, the governor called Menino with the offer of more help from the State Police. What should have been an immediate cause for mobilization was instead a confusing response on the part of the mayor and a self-serving one on the part of the police.

The goal this summer should be to reduce violence by targeting the city's hot spots with overwhelming police presence and working one-on-one with the young people who are prone to violence. Yet Al Goslin, the highest-ranking police superintendent in Boston, fears lawsuits ahead if officers lose overtime opportunities due to a helping hand from State Police. It's a sad day when the protection of the paychecks is elevated above the safety of the public. Menino seems overly concerned about the precise routes of State Police patrols. His one legitimate concern focuses on Romney's recent call to train state troopers for immigration enforcement. The need this summer is to get guns off the street and broker peace deals with feuding gangs. Federal officials should attend to immigration matters.

Flaherty says that the governor is prepared to provide funds quickly for local anti-crime organizations. On Monday, Menino is scheduled to review violence-reduction proposals from the Black Ministerial Alliance and other community groups. But Rivers, who runs the Baker House in Dorchester, appears ahead of the pack. On Thursday night, he hosted dozens of men, many with prior criminal convictions, who are looking for both work and an opportunity to steer young people in a positive direction. Rivers hopes to screen, hire, and train 30 or 40 men to supplement the city's thin street worker program. It's a bold proposal and worthy of strong support, provided that potential liability issues can be resolved.

As a potential presidential candidate, Governor Romney has been far afield of late. City officials would be foolish to ignore his overtures now that he is focused on the home front. ■

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