



Tom Barrett
Mayor, City of Milwaukee

January 24, 2008

U.S. Senator Herb Kohl
330 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510-4904

Dear Senator Kohl:

We write to express our grave concern over recent cuts passed by the President and Congress that reduce local law enforcement assistance programs to local communities.

Milwaukee stands to lose nearly two-thirds of 2007 funding levels, and these drastic cuts will deliver a serious blow to our ongoing and coordinated efforts to fight violent crime and drug-related crime. The loss of funding also creates a ripple effect that results in already limited resources being drained from other divisions of law enforcement, including sexual assault, domestic violence and juvenile specialty units.

In Milwaukee alone, the Byrne/JAG grant funds \$319,760 for five district attorneys and police overtime in support of the operations of the Metro Drug Unit. An additional \$450,000 is allocated for community and drug prosecutors essential to community policing initiatives. In all, the City received \$1.1 million last year in federal dollars for law enforcement activities.

Each of these critical investments now stands in serious jeopardy, and the decision to cut these grants continues an alarming trend that began four years ago when funding for the Edward Byrne Memorial Grant and the Law Enforcement Block Grant was slashed and combined. These cuts have already reduced the crime-fighting ability of many communities across the country that struggle with violence and drugs, and the prospect of even more decreases at the federal level is cause for great concern about whether local law enforcement has the resources needed to make our neighborhoods safer and stronger.

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These painful cuts also come on the heels of recent news that the Community Capacity Development Office – the unit of the U.S. Department of Justice that oversees the Weed & Seed Initiative in Milwaukee’s Historic Clarke Square Neighborhood – will be slashed by 35%. This deep cut will reduce or eliminate critical crime prevention and intervention activities, and threatens a five year strategic crime reduction plan developed by law enforcement and neighborhood residents over the course of more than two years.

Local law enforcement is the first line of defense for the communities they protect and serve, and federal public safety grants are essential to ensuring our local agencies have the necessary tools to fight crime, reduce violence and improve safety. With state and local governments struggling with deficits and limited resources, the need for a strong federal ally in the fight against crime has never been greater.

We urge you to restore these funds and reinvigorate the strong federal partnership with state and local governments that in the past was so successful in reducing crime and building safe neighborhoods across the country.

Sincerely,



Tom Barrett
Mayor, City of Milwaukee



Edward A. Flynn
Chief of Police, Milwaukee Police Department



John Chisholm
Milwaukee County District Attorney

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cc: U.S. Senator Russ Feingold
U.S. Congresswoman Gwen Moore
Governor Jim Doyle
Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen
Office of Justice Assistance