

September 19, 2008

The Honorable David R. Obey
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Room H-218, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Alan B. Mollohan
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Room H-310, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Room H-310, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Obey, Ranking Member Lewis, Chairman Mollohan, and Ranking Member Frelinghuysen:

On behalf of dozens of law enforcement and criminal justice organizations, representing hundreds of thousands of members throughout the United States, we respectfully urge you to restore funding for the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) program this year. Over the next month, Congress will pass an FY 2009 Continuing Resolution funding government for the first few months of fiscal year 2009. In addition, or as part of that bill, Congress may also pass a second FY08 emergency supplemental or economic stimulus bill. Both of these vehicles provide the opportunity for restoring funding to the Byrne JAG program which was so severely cut last year.

As you are aware, the Byrne JAG program was cut by two-thirds in the FY 2008 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, from \$520 million in FY 2007 to \$170 million in FY 2008. Many in Congress sought to restore these funds in the FY08 emergency war supplemental spending bill which passed and signed by the President in late June. While \$490 million for Byrne JAG was included in the Senate version of that bill, it was ultimately stripped from the final bill despite overwhelming bipartisan support from a majority of members of both chambers of Congress. As an indication of support for the program, 218 House Members and 56 Senators had signed a letter urging restoration of the funds in the war supplemental bill.

We applaud the strong funding for Byrne JAG included in the House and Senate FY09 House and Senate committee-passed bills. The House Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) bill includes \$550 million for Byrne JAG; the Senate bill includes \$580 million. However, even if the final FY09 bill retains that level of funding, the bill is not likely to pass until spring of 2009, which means grant dollars will not start flowing until well into the autumn of 2009.

The loss of the Byrne JAG funding is crippling to many programs in the field. Already, narcotics and gang task forces and other programs are shutting down or significantly reducing operations. If the funding is not restored – and if the FY09 funding is not available until this

time next year – many vital and successful initiatives will be forced to cease and our neighborhoods will suffer.

Byrne JAG funds a broad range of law enforcement, prosecutorial, community corrections, treatment, prevention, and educational initiatives in communities across the country. Byrne JAG is used by state and local governments to fund multijurisdictional drug and gang task forces, cold case units, identity theft investigations, prisoner re-entry programs, substance abuse treatment and prevention programs, school violence prevention, hate crime programs, services for threatened jurors, victims' rights, and witness protection programs.

Therefore, we urge you to restore the FY08 funding this year, and to include the committee-passed funding for Byrne JAG in the FY09 Continuing Resolution which will pass this month.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

National Sheriffs' Association (NSA)
National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition (NNOAC)
National Criminal Justice Association (NCJA)
Major County Sheriffs' Association (MCSA)
International Community Corrections Association (ICCA)
National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP)
Louisiana Sheriffs' Association (LSA)
The IJIS Institute
American Probation and Parole Association (APPA)
National League of Cities (NLC)
National Association of Counties (NACo)
National Troopers Coalition (NTC)
National District Attorneys Association
American Correctional Association (ACA)
National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD)
National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC)
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)
National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC)
National TASC, Inc (Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities)
City of Southfield (MI) Police Department
Oakland County Prosecutor, State of Michigan