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Governor of Minnesota
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March 14, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Boehner
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader Boehner:

The nation's governors urge you to support state and local crime fighting programs by restoring essential funding for Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grants (Byrne/JAG) for fiscal year (FY) 2008. The Senate had funded the Byrne/JAG program at \$660 million and the House at \$600 million in each chamber's Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Acts for FY 2008. However, in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, an inadequate \$170.4 million was appropriated for FY 2008, slashing Byrne/JAG funding by 67 percent from the FY 2007 level of \$520 million. At a minimum, we strongly encourage Congress to restore program funding to the FY 2007 level of \$520 million for FY 2008 and to maintain or increase this funding level in FY 2009.

The strength of the Byrne/JAG program is the flexibility it provides state and local law enforcement agencies to respond to all facets of criminal justice issues in communities; at least 75 percent of Byrne/JAG funding goes directly to local sheriffs and police departments. This innovation has produced many significant and lasting criminal justice initiatives. States have successfully applied the funding from Byrne/JAG as seed money for creative strategies to tackle emerging crime prevention and control issues and concerns. In fact, many current crime-fighting programs were developed and tested in states with these funds.

In addition, the Byrne/JAG program provides the only source of support for local, state, and regional, drug enforcement. Many states use Byrne/JAG funds to support multi-jurisdictional drug task forces, which foster institutional collaboration, interoperability, and local/state/federal partnerships in the fight against illegal drug traffickers. Unless reversed, the severe cuts to FY 2008 funding will undoubtedly cause an elimination of many crime fighting task forces.

As more and more states face difficult fiscal realities, we greatly appreciate and support your efforts and commitment to ensure that state and local criminal justice programs have adequate resources to address public safety challenges, and we urge you to restore the Byrne/JAG program to at least \$520 million for this fiscal year.

Sincerely,

Governor James H. Douglas
Chair

Health and Human Services Committee

Governor Jon S. Corzine
Vice Chair

Health and Human Services Committee