

## RESTORE JUSTICE ASSISTANCE FUNDING IN FY 2008

February 2, 2007

The Honorable John Spratt  
Chairman  
The Honorable Paul Ryan  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Budget  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kent Conrad  
Chairman  
The Honorable Judd Gregg  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Budget  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Spratt, Chairman Conrad, Ranking Member Ryan and Ranking Member Gregg,

On behalf of the hundreds of thousands of public servants our organizations represent we are writing to urge you to restore justice assistance funding in the FY 2008 budget for the Department of Justice. This funding is critical to continue effective programs that are essential in the fight against drug and gang related crime in addition to programs that assist in the prevention of drug use, treat non-violent offenders, and improve the effectiveness of prosecution, courts, and corrections practices. **We support funding for the Byrne Justice Assistance Grants (JAG) program in the FY 2008 Budget Resolution at the authorized level of \$1.1 billion, which is the amount called for in the Department of Justice Appropriations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 2006-2009 (P.L. 109-162).**

Since FY 2002, funding for justice assistance programs in the Department of Justice has fallen dramatically from \$2.2 billion to \$800 million – a cut of more than 63%. While reductions in crime and drug use rates over the past 10 years have been significant, they have leveled off over the past several years and have begun to creep higher. The majority of the reductions occurred when state and local law enforcement assistance accounts were funded at high levels. Although impossible to draw a causal link between robust funding for justice assistance programs and reduced crime rates, the correlation is very significant. State and local law enforcement have always been the lynchpins of community safety, but the improved information sharing, cooperation, equipment, and training enabled by DoJ assistance programs has had a force multiplier effect and has led to more orderly communities and more effective law enforcement.

Crime is not just a state and local matter. Federal contributions promote intergovernmental coordination which leads to improved criminal justice practices and reduced crime and recidivism. Reducing federal involvement by cutting or eliminating assistance to state and local law enforcement for drug interdiction, prevention, and treatment, community corrections, rehabilitation, re-entry and juvenile justice programs would reverse the trend toward enhanced cooperation that has resulted in dramatic crime rate reductions.

The programs funded by the Byrne JAG program have demonstrated clear and outstanding results. One of the most popular uses of Byrne JAG funds – multi-jurisdictional drug task forces – help reduce the impact of drug and firearm traffickers, gangs, pharmaceutical diversion, and organized crime on America’s communities. According to national survey data compiled by the Iowa Governor’s Office of Drug Control Policy, task forces funded in part by Byrne JAG in FY 2004 were responsible for:

- 17,991 kilograms of cocaine seized
- 5,452 kilograms of methamphetamine seized
- 1,177 kilograms of heroin seized
- 855,309 pounds of processed marijuana seized (not including plants)
- 8,982 methamphetamine lab responses.

In addition, crime and drug prevention and treatment initiatives funded in part by Byrne JAG were responsible for:

- 134,966 juveniles served by crime prevention projects
- 49,866 offenders receiving corrections-based treatment services
- 56,186 offenders receiving community-based treatment services.

These results are real, they are quantifiable, they are defensible, and they indicate the power of using federal dollars to leverage massive state and local investment in public safety. The Performance Assessment Rating Tool (PART) that is used by OMB to evaluate effectiveness of federal programs including Byrne JAG focuses in large part on administration of the program at the federal level and depends on the extent to which the agency measures program results. As you can see from the data above, it does not effectively take into account the outcomes of programs reported by the multitude of Byrne JAG beneficiary programs.

The President’s budget request in each of the past two years has included no funding for Byrne JAG. Despite the lack of administration support, Congress has continued to recognize the effectiveness and necessity the program by providing funding for the program each year. In FY 2007, the House recommended \$444 million for the Byrne JAG formula program and the Senate recommended \$456 million. Had Congress finalized the SSJC / CJS appropriations bill before adjourning, this would have meant a substantial and much needed increase in funding for Byrne JAG over the FY 2006 level of \$316 million. While we are unsure whether the President’s FY 2008 Budget Request will include a recommendation for Byrne JAG, the amount of funding is almost certain to fall well short of the authorized amount of \$1.1 billion.

The Byrne Justice Assistance Grant formula program allows states, counties, and municipalities to allocate funds each year to state and local programs that address pressing problems in their areas. But Byrne-JAG is only a small fraction of the massive resources state and local governments drive into direct justice expenditures. In 2002, the

latest year for which aggregate Census Bureau statistics are available, the following amounts were spent by state and local governments on justice programs:

- State Direct Justice Expenditures: \$60,295,081,000
- Local Direct Justice Expenditures: \$87,151,684,000
- Total State and Local Justice Expenditures: \$147,446,745,000

Byrne JAG funding clearly does not supplant funding by state and local governments for justice and law enforcement programs. Rather, the minimal funding it provides leverages state and local investment in justice programs to enhance cooperation, implement best practices, and improve training of peace officers as well as prosecutors. In addition, the program properly recognizes the critical role that the federal government has in addressing America's crime problem. A national, integrated threat demands a national, integrated response with state and locals leading the way, but with the federal government providing meaningful support.

The Byrne JAG program supports a systematic approach to dealing with criminal justice and illegal drug problems. By enabling state and local leaders to leverage resources in key areas, Byrne JAG facilitates collaboration among law enforcement, corrections, treatment, and prevention programs. Signatories to this letter, many of whom have spent decades in state and local criminal justice administration, know that supporting a systematic approach to these public policy problems is more effective than funding disjointed programs that address individual aspects of the problems. If Byrne-JAG is eliminated or further diminished, the progress made over the past ten years toward collaboration and systematic improvements in criminal justice practices will certainly be thwarted to the detriment of public safety.

We strongly support funding at the authorized level of \$1.1 billion in the FY 2008 Budget Resolution for the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance, for the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant program. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues in the coming months on this important issue.


Sincerely,



Ronald E. Brooks  
President, National Narcotic Officers'  
Associations' Coalition



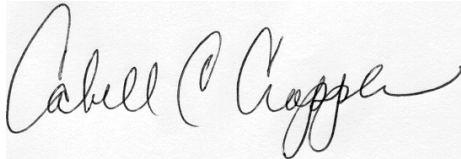
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Attorneys' Association



Joseph C. Carter  
President, International  
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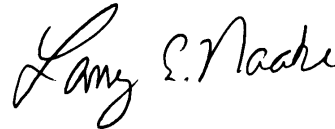
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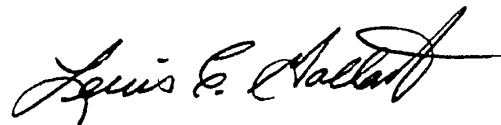
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Coalition

Cc: Chairman Alan Mollohan, Ranking Member Rodney Frelinghuysen, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science;

Cc: Chairman Barbara Mikulski, Ranking Member Richard Shelby, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science

Cc: Chairman David Obey, Ranking Member Jerry Lewis, House Committee on Appropriations;

Cc: Chairman Robert Byrd, Ranking Member Thad Cochran, Senate Committee on Appropriations;

Cc: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House

Cc: The Honorable Harry Reid, Senate Majority Leader

Cc: The Honorable John Boehner, House Minority Leader

Cc: The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Senate Minority Leader