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Contact: Rhonda Spears (202) 861-6766
rspears@usmayors.org

Mayors Urge Congress Not to Cut COPS and Local Law Enforcement Block Grant Money

Washington, DC – Mayors across this country are extremely disappointed that Congress is on the verge of cutting key local law enforcement programs, including the Community Oriented Policing (COPS) money and Local Law Enforcement Block Grant (LLEBG) money under the Consolidated Appropriations Bill.

The Conference of Mayors has been working to maintain level funding for these key programs, but under this bill, the COPS program would be cut by 24 percent from \$639 million to \$487 million. One of the major cuts in the COPS program is in the area of hiring. Many cities use this COPS grant to put additional police officers on the streets.

Additionally, LLEBG would be cut by 44 percent from \$400 million to \$225 million. Of the \$225 million, only \$132 million would be available to local governments. These 2004 funding issues are scheduled for House and Senate floor action next week.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors President Hempstead, NY Mayor James A. Garner said, “Mayors and police chiefs know that the fight against crime continues in cities across the nation. With cities facing the added responsibility of providing homeland security at the local level, as well as, state and local budget shortfalls, the nation’s mayors urge Congress not to cut funding for law enforcement programs which have proven effective in reducing crime.”

Mayors and police chiefs have worked successfully to reduce crime rates, fight illegal drugs, and improve the overall conditions of their communities. Their anti-crime efforts are paying off with violent crime at a 20-year low nationwide. However, too many families are still being ravaged by illegal drugs, gun related crimes and property and violent crimes. At the same time, cities face the new challenge of ensuring homeland security in the domestic war against terrorism.

The Conference of Mayors also expressed concern that a number of other law enforcement programs would see significant cuts including the Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant by 68 percent and the elimination of funding for state drug treatment, among others.

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The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,139 such cities in the country today, each represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the Mayor.