



December 5, 2003

Dear Senator/Representative:

Oppose Drastic Cuts in Local Law Enforcement Block Grant/COPS Funding

On behalf of the nation's mayors, we are writing to strongly oppose the drastic cuts in key law enforcement programs contained in the Consolidated Appropriations Act. We particularly oppose the 44 percent cut in the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant (LLEBG) and 24 percent cut in the COPS program.

Mayors and police chiefs have worked successfully to reduce crime rates, fight illegal drugs, and improve the overall conditions of our communities. These anti-crime efforts are paying off with violent crime at a 20-year low nationwide. But too many families are still being ravaged by illegal drugs, too many citizens and law enforcement officers are put in danger due to drug and gun related crimes, and property and violent crimes are still a major issue in too many communities.

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 partnership programs which have proven effective in reducing crime.

Mayors and police chiefs know that there is no equivalent for more officers on the streets engaging with the community to both provide local intelligence and continue the ongoing fight against crime, and the COPS hiring programs are critical to this effort. Our members are currently seeking assistance for thousands of officers and overtime hours that will go unmet if adequate funding for these programs is not provided. Simply stated, the COPS program works, and must be strengthened.

The LLEBG provides highly flexible formula assistance directly to our local police departments, and is an important tool in our efforts to both prevent and fight crime. Also, the LLEBG allows for the coverage of overtime – a major expense for cities as we respond to continual threat alerts from the federal government in the war against terrorism.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors
December 5, 2003
Page 2

We ask that you reject these proposed cuts and help restore funding for federal/local partnership programs which have proven so effective in the ongoing fight against crime in our nation.

Please contact Ed Somers with the Conference staff at (202) 861-6706 if you have any questions.


Sincerely,



James A. Garner
Mayor of Hempstead
President



J. Christian Bollwage
Mayor of Elizabeth
Chair, Criminal and Social
Justice Committee



Scott L. King
Mayor of Gary
Chair, Mayors and
Police Chiefs Task Force



Tom Cochran
Executive Director