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Mayors and Police Chiefs Stand Together in Fight Against Proposed Cuts in COPS and Local Law Enforcement Block Grant Money

Philadelphia, PA - U.S. Conference of Mayors President James A. Garner of Hempstead, New York, along with Gary, Indiana Mayor Scott King, chairman of the Conference's Mayors and Police Chiefs Task Force, and U.S. Conference of Mayors Executive Director Tom Cochran, joined police chief Joseph Samuels, Jr., President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), Chief Joseph Polisar, First Vice President of the IACP, and other police chiefs in a press conference at the IACP Annual Meeting in Philadelphia urging Congress not to cut the Community Oriented Policing (COPS) money and Local Law Enforcement Block Grant (LLEBG) money.

The U.S. House of Representatives is proposing to cut the COPS program by more than 50% and eliminate all hiring programs. The Senate is proposing to cut LLEBG by more than 60%. These 2004 funding issues will be decided within a matter of days.

Mayor Garner said, "I have come here today with a simple message – and it's one that I know the nation's police chiefs share. The fight against crime continues in our nation's cities, and Washington must support programs like COPS and LLEBG that continue to contribute to crime reductions as well as terrorism prevention in cities across America."

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. But 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.

"We are delighted to join with the U.S. Conference of Mayors in an endeavor to achieve goals vital to all of us – appropriate funding and support for programs vital to law enforcement," said Chief Joseph Samuels, Jr., President of the IACP. "Together, I believe we have a much better chance to achieve what we need."

While violent crime is down, more people are arrested today - 1.6 million - on drug violations than at the height of the crime epidemic in 1994. Mayors and police chiefs know there is still more work to be done on both homeland security and crime prevention.

Mayor Scott King, chairman of the Conference's Mayors and Police Chiefs Task Force said, "The Administration's \$87 billion spending plan to rebuild Iraq includes \$950 million for public safety

development in that country and that is exactly the amount we are fighting to keep in COPS and block grant money.

We don't want to take anything away from our troops, but we should not sacrifice public safety in the United States to pay for public safety in Iraq."

Cities have spent billions of dollars since September 11 protecting the people in this country and local costs increased during the war and high alerts. This additional spending has come at a time of extremely tight local budgets resulting from the national and regional economies.

Tom Cochran, Executive Director of the U.S. Conference of Mayors said, "We have lobbied hard for federal assistance for our first responders. We are also working to make sure that funding is provided to prevent attacks – not just to respond. This simply cannot be done without fully supporting our local police in the ongoing fight against crime."

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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.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police is the world's oldest and largest organization of police executives. Founded in 1893, it has more than 19,000 members in more than 100 countries.