

**Transcript of Remarks by Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D-ND)
at Press Conference on the Effects of the President's Budget on Rural America
February 9, 2007**

This budget does real damage in rural America. Not only does it not contain assistance for disaster aid, but it also ends many of the tax incentives for energy production, things like the biodiesel credit. The biodiesel industry is one of the great opportunities in rural America. That credit, that can provide the incentive for the production of alternative fuels, is eliminated.

And it doesn't stop there. Law enforcement is critically important in rural parts of the country. We are facing a crisis in methamphetamines in rural parts of the country. Twelve to 14-year-olds, who live in the rural parts of the country, are a 100 percent more likely to use meth than those who live in more urban parts of our nation. Law enforcement has told me that meth is the scourge of our time. I have had law enforcement officers tell me that the thing they fear most is encountering and confronting somebody who is on meth, because they are so totally out of their minds.

The President's budget cuts the COPS program 94 percent. The COPS program has put over 200 police officers on the street in my state of North Dakota. And the President says cut it 94 percent. Now that is a misplaced priority. The President's budget says we'll cut \$521 million from the COPS program, but at the same time we'll provide \$55 billion to provide tax cuts to those who earn over a \$1 million a year. That is the cost of the President's tax cuts for those earning over a million dollars a year in 2008 alone – \$55 billion.

So the President in his budget is saying it's 100 times as important to provide every penny of tax cuts to those earning over a million dollars a year than it is to fund the COPS program. I don't think that's the priority of the American people. I know it is not the priority of people in my state.

But I tell you what we do need. We need those police on the street. We need them in the small towns; we need them in the cities; we need those sheriffs' departments out there in the rural areas, and they need help fighting meth. The President says no, we're going to shut them down. That makes no sense.