



Department of Justice

STATEMENT OF

**THE HONORABLE DOMINGO S. HERRAIZ
DIRECTOR
BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM AND HOMELAND SECURITY
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ENTITLED

**“H.R. 3546, A BILL TO AUTHORIZE THE EDWARD BYRNE
MEMORIAL JUSTICE ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM AT FISCAL
YEAR 2006 LEVELS THROUGH 2012”**

PRESENTED

MAY 20, 2008

Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Gohmert, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, the Department of Justice appreciates the opportunity to testify today regarding the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne/JAG) Program. My name is Domingo Herraiz and I am the Director of the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). BJA, a component of the Justice Department's Office of Justice Programs (OJP), supports law enforcement, courts, corrections, treatment, victim services, technology, and prevention initiatives that strengthen the nation's criminal justice system. BJA also provides leadership, services, and funding to America's communities by:

- Emphasizing local control;
- Building relationships in the field;
- Providing training and technical assistance in support of efforts to prevent crime, drug abuse, and violence at the national, state, and local levels;
- Developing collaborations and partnerships;
- Promoting capacity building through planning;
- Streamlining the administration of grants;
- Encouraging innovation; and
- Communicating the value of justice efforts to decision makers at every level.

Overall, BJA works in partnership with the entire criminal justice community to identify the most pressing challenges confronting the justice system and provides information sharing tools and assistance, training and coordination, as well as innovative strategies and approaches for dealing with these issues.

BJA is committed to providing our state, local and tribal criminal justice partners with the knowledge, tools, and assistance they need to successfully perform their jobs and make America's communities safer for our citizens. We also recognize, however, the need for spending restraint and that we must make tough choices. We must adopt an approach that allows us flexibility in meeting our nation's law enforcement needs and the ability to adapt to our ever-changing environment. To meet these challenges, the Department has focused on targeting resources to the areas with the greatest need and where they can do the most good. The President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 budget request for more than \$1 billion, would allow the Department to tackle our nation's most pressing needs and support top priority initiatives.

One of the most significant changes proposed in the President's budget is the reorganization and consolidation of more than 70 existing grant programs into four distinct, multi-purpose grant programs. The four proposed grant programs are 1) the Violent Crime Reduction Partnership Initiative; 2) the Byrne Public Safety and Protection Program; 3) the Child Safety and Juvenile Justice Program; and 4) Violence Against Women Grants. These four new discretionary grant programs would award funding through a highly competitive grant process. My testimony today is focused on the Violent Crime Reduction Partnership and the Byrne Public Safety and Protection Program.

Violent Crime Reduction Partnership

Between 1993 and 2005, the violent crime victimization rate declined nearly 60 percent. During this same period, property crime victimization rates declined by over 50 percent. While recent FBI Uniform Crime Reports data shows some recent fluctuation in crime rates, the violent crime rate during this Administration is still well below recent historical levels. Preliminary FBI data also point to a decline in violent crime for the first half of 2007. Despite these positive trends, many challenges still exist. Some regions and communities continue to experience increases in violent crime. As Attorney General Mukasey recently said, “[T]he nature of crime varies not only from one city to another, but even from one block to the next. So it is at that block level that much of our work has to happen.”

The Department is following through on the Attorney General’s commitment to assist state, local and tribal governments. We are working with our partners to identify problems and develop meaningful strategies to reduce and deter crime. A product of this effort is the Violent Crime Reduction Partnership Initiative sought by the President’s budget, which is based on the Department’s experience administering the Byrne/JAG grant program. The President’s Violent Crime Reduction Partnership Initiative seeks \$200 million to build on this most successful part of the Byrne/JAG program. Funding would be used to help communities address high rates of violent crime by forming and developing effective multi-jurisdictional law enforcement partnerships between local, state, tribal and federal law enforcement agencies. These partnerships are designed to

disrupt criminal gang, firearm and drug activities, particularly those with a multi-jurisdictional dimension.

Last year, with discretionary funds provided by Congress, we demonstrated this approach with a competitive solicitation seeking applications to fund task force activities with focused strategies, including intelligence led policing, to address the specific crime problem represented by a given community or region. In the end, BJA awarded over \$75 million to 106 sites in 37 states through this program last fall. With the resources sought by the President's larger request of \$200 million, we can expand this success and better assist communities that continue to struggle with violent crime.

Byrne Public Safety and Protection Program

This year, the President's budget proposal includes \$200 million for a simplified and streamlined grant program that would combine the funding streams of several programs into the new Byrne Public Safety and Protection Program.

In keeping with the Department's mission "to ensure public safety against threats foreign and domestic," this initiative consolidates OJP's most successful state and local law enforcement assistance programs into a single, flexible, competitive discretionary grant program. This approach would help state, local and tribal governments develop programs appropriate to the particular needs of their jurisdictions. Through the competitive grant process, OJP would continue to assist communities in addressing a

number of high-priority concerns. In addition to state, local and tribal governments, non-government entities will also be eligible for funding under this program.

Mr. Chairman, the FY 2009 budget proposal would enable the Department to continue to work with our state, local and tribal partners to more effectively target federal assistance to areas with the greatest need. It looks a little different from the way we have done things in the past, but our goal is to give communities the opportunity to decide for themselves how to fight the specific public safety problems they are facing and support their most important law enforcement needs. We recognize that change from past practice can be uncomfortable, but it is also motivating. It causes us to think in new ways, and engenders creativity and innovation, which, as you know, are the keys to successful crime-fighting.

Law enforcement officers are our country's front line in the fight against crime, and they perform difficult and dangerous jobs with skill and dedication. For this reason, BJA is committed to continuing our efforts to strengthen our criminal justice system and provide the necessary tools for our state, local and tribal law enforcement partners.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to address any questions you or other Members of the Subcommittee may have.