



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 6, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Boehner
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
H-218 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader Boehner, Chairman Obey, and Ranking Member Lewis:

As you begin to craft an emergency supplemental appropriations package, we respectfully request that you include emergency funding of at least \$429.6 million for the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program, so that total Fiscal Year 2008 spending equals the \$600 million in the Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill that passed the House in July 2007.

As a result of budget restrictions, the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant program suffered severe cuts in the FY 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act. Funding for the Byrne-JAG program was cut by two-thirds, from \$520 million in Fiscal Year 2007 to \$170.4 million in Fiscal Year 2008. The House Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill originally provided \$600 million for the Byrne-JAG program – a level that we support.

The Byrne-JAG program allows state and local governments to support a broad range of activities to prevent and control crime and to improve the criminal justice system. Funding is distributed on a formula basis and may be used to address the most pressing criminal justice problems in a given area. The Byrne-JAG program helps state and local law enforcement agencies fund cold case units, school violence programs, hate crime programs, crime victim and witness programs, prosecution and court programs, the purchase of equipment, and the training of law enforcement officers.

In addition, the program provides the only source of support for state, regional, and local agencies for drug enforcement and treatment programs. Most states that receive Byrne-JAG program funding decide to support multi-jurisdictional drug task forces, which foster institutional collaboration, information sharing and state, local, and federal partnerships in the fight against

illegal drug traffickers. We have heard from law enforcement authorities in our districts that the loss of Byrne-JAG funding for drug enforcement task forces would be a disaster and could force these critical task forces to close. Once task forces like these shut their doors, it is very difficult to open them again and drug traffickers will have an easier time spreading illegal drugs in American communities.


The reduction in Byrne-JAG funding is a direct cut to state and local law enforcement in every state and can significantly affect the ability of law enforcement agencies to continue to provide these important services to victims, witnesses, schools, and the local community. At least seventy-five cents of every Byrne-JAG dollar goes directly to local sheriffs and police departments.

We, the undersigned Members of Congress, request that you take action and include urgently needed emergency funding for the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant program in this year's emergency supplemental appropriations package.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

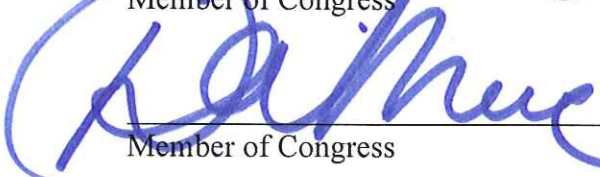
Sincerely,

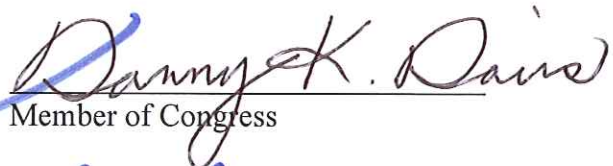

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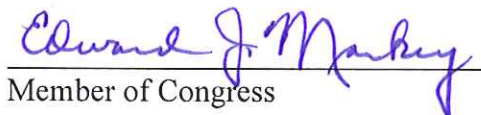

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Candice Miller

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Cc: The Honorable Alan Mollohan, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies