

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Representatives Lee Terry (R-NE) and Mark Kennedy (R-MN) today sent a letter urging appropriators to restore critical funding for the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne-JAG) program in the Fiscal Year 2007 Department of Justice spending bill.

Terry and Kennedy have once again joined forces with Members of Congress dedicated to fighting for Byrne-JAG grants, including Congressmen Steve King (R-IA), Bart Stupak (D-MI), Mark Souder (R-IN), Rick Larsen (D-WA), Jim Ramstad (R-MN), and Lincoln Davis (D-TN). Last year, this team successfully restored \$68 million in Byrne-JAG funding to help maintain state and local police drug enforcement task forces and effective partnerships with federal drug investigators.

"I will do everything in my power to fully fund Byrne grants for our law enforcement officers," Terry said. "The flow of Mexican meth into Nebraska would be far worse without this federal aid for anti-meth task forces." "The Byrne Grant program is critical to our local law enforcement's ability to keep dangerous drugs and violent crime out of our communities, and it is absolutely vital that this program be funded at the highest possible level this year," said Kennedy.

Byrne-JAG grants fund critical state and local task forces to identify and destroy drug crime syndicates. State and local police departments rely primarily on Byrne-JAG funding to combat methamphetamine and other illegal drugs. Police officers have dismantled more than 50,000 clandestine meth labs since 2001, with the majority of incidents coming from Midwestern and West Coast states. According to Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning, 60 percent of people in the state's jails have problems with meth. Nationwide, meth cases quadrupled over the past decade. Nebraska funds 9 of 11 critical anti-drug task forces through federal Byrne-JAG grants. The Senate voted last year to provide \$900 million for Byrne-JAG to fight the meth epidemic, but the final conference report contained

only \$410 million - a far cry from the \$1.1 billion authorized just last year, or the \$634 million appropriated in FY05.

In addition to the letter, Congressman Terry testified this week before Department of Justice Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Frank Wolf (R-VA) about the need for full funding of Byrne-JAG grants. Chairman Wolf had visited Nebraska the week before and saw firsthand some of the devastation caused by meth in rural areas. In February, Kennedy testified in front of the Budget Committee on the importance of funding the program.

In March, Terry and Kennedy circulated a letter, signed by more than 160 other Members of Congress, to the Budget Committee stressing the need for continued funding and support of the Byrne-JAG Program. Congressman Terry also spoke to Appropriations Committee Chairman Jerry Lewis (R-CA) this week to advocate that \$900 million be specifically dedicated to Byrne-JAG grants when each of the 10 House Appropriations Subcommittees receive their spending authority - commonly called a 302(b) allocation - from the Appropriations Committee next month.

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