

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Representatives Lee Terry (R-NE) and Mark Kennedy (R-MN) today sent a strong message to U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez, urging him to provide robust funding to the Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grants (Byrne-JAG) program in the administration's FY08 budget proposal. Eight y-three Members of Congress signed the bipartisan letter.

The text of the letter is below:

Dear Attorney General Gonzalez,

We write this letter knowing that your Department is currently developing its budget submission for Fiscal Year 2008. With that in mind, we take this opportunity to remind you of the strong bipartisan support for the Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne-JAG) formula program.

Not only do we urge you to drop the short-sighted efforts of past years to eliminate this program, we ask that you seek a robust funding level that reflects the serious drug and gang problem in communities across the country.

As you know, the Byrne-JAG program provides vital federal support for drug and gang task forces nationwide. These task forces have an irreplaceable value because they bring federal, state, and local law enforcement together to pool information, experience, and resources to keep our communities safe.

And for many communities, especially rural communities, Byrne-JAG task forces are the only law enforcement assets available to fight against drug and gang crime.

The result of the serious cuts to the Byrne-JAG program in recent years has been that many states, cities, and counties across the county have had to reduce or

eliminate their task forces.

For years, crime rates across the country saw meaningful decreases. However, more recently we have seen a flood of cheap and pure meth pouring across the border with from international superlabs, as well as a spike in violent crime in certain parts of the country.

The response from the federal government should be clear: an increased commitment to support law enforcement and provide the resources necessary to keep our communities safe.

In the budget requests for fiscal year 2006 and 2007, President Bush proposed eliminating funding for the Byrne-JAG program. We have strongly opposed this proposal, and have been gratified to see that it has been rejected by Congress each time.

As you work to develop your Justice Department budget request for Fiscal Year 2008, we urge you to strengthen programs, like Byrne-JAG, that have a proven track record of success. We pledge to work with you to make sure these programs have the support they need.

We ask a lot of our local law enforcement officers, who are on the front lines in keeping us safe from drug and gang crime. We owe them the support they need to do their jobs.

Sincerely,

Lee Terry

Mark Kennedy

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

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