

**THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS
RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF FULL FUNDING FOR THE BYRNE JUSTICE ASSISTANCE
GRANT (JAG) PROGRAM**

Resolution Summary

In November 2004, Congress consolidated two long-standing local law enforcement grant programs: the Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Grant Program and the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant Program (LLEBG). The new program, the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant program (JAG), is administered at the federal level through the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) within the Justice Department.

The Byrne JAG program is a partnership among federal, state, and local governments to fight crime and create safer communities. BJA awards grants to states and local governments to improve the criminal justice system, and places an emphasis on breaking the cycle of substance abuse and crime, combating violence, holding offenders accountable, enhancing law enforcement initiatives, and supporting advancements in adjudication.

Many states and localities use their JAG funds to support multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency drug task forces, which foster institutional collaboration and interoperability, and create local-state-federal partnerships in the fight against illegal drug traffickers. JAG funding is also often used for similar gang and violent crime task forces, as well as information sharing and technology, prosecution efforts, drug courts, juvenile delinquency programs, and drug treatment programs.

This program has allowed state and local law enforcement task forces to make significant strides in combating illegal drugs and gangs. According to Iowa Senator Tom Harkin, each year Byrne JAG dollars fund over 4,000 police officers and prosecutors working on over 750 drug enforcement task forces in all 50 states across hundreds of urban and rural countries and cities. On an annual basis, Byrne JAG funding leads to over 220,000 arrests, 54,000 weapons seized, the seizure of 5.5 million grams of methamphetamine, and the breakup of almost 9,000 methamphetamine labs.

However, in 2007, in an omnibus appropriations bill, Congress slashed funding for the Byrne JAG program for Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 by 67 percent, from \$520 million in FY 2007 to just \$170.4 million. These cuts came as a surprise, as earlier in the year, both House and Senate committees had passed appropriations bills that funded the program at significantly higher levels (\$660 million in the Senate and \$600 million in the House). This funding level is an all-time low for a program that has received approximately \$500 million per year consistently since 1997. In addition, this massive cut came on top of years of decline in funding for the program. These funding cuts have had significant effects on state and local crime fighting efforts.

Unless reversed, the severe cuts to FY 2008 funding for this program will undoubtedly cause an elimination of many state and local crime fighting task forces, reversing gains these communities have made over recent years. The Council of State Governments urges Congress to support successful and critical state and local anti-crime and anti-drug programs by restoring funding for the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant programs for fiscal year 2008 to the FY 2007 level of \$520 million, at a minimum. In addition, The Council of State Governments urges to Congress to fully fund this program in future years at its authorized level of \$1.095 billion.

Additional Resource Information

Bureau of Justice Assistance. "Justice Assistance Grant Program."

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/grant/jag.html>

International Association of Chiefs of Police. "The Impact of the Proposed FY 2009 Budget on State, Tribal, and Local Law Enforcement."

<http://www.theiacp.org/documents/pdfs/Publications/TGD58843%2Epdf>

National Criminal Justice Association. "Cuts to the Byrne/Justice Assistance Grant Program."

<http://www.ncja.org/Content/NavigationMenu/GovernmentAffairs/Appropriations/SpreadthewordaboutcutstoJAG/default.htm>.

Senator Tom Harkin Press Release: "Harkin, Colleagues, Seek to Restore Funding for Crime Prevention".

March 31, 2008: <http://harkin.senate.gov/pr/p.cfm?i=295460>

Management Directives

Management Directive #1: Support state and local efforts calling for restoration of federal Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) funding for Fiscal Year 2008 and for increased funding in future years.

Management Directive #2: CSG staff will post approved resolution on CSG's Web site and make available through its regular communication venues at the state and local level to ensure its distribution to the state government and policy community.

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- WHEREAS,** many communities across the country are again facing a significant and prolonged increase in violent crime; and
- WHEREAS,** the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program represents a successful partnership among federal, state, and local communities to fight crime and create safer communities by providing direct assistance to state and local law enforcement for a wide range of anti-crime programs; and
- WHEREAS,** this partnership encourages cooperation among law enforcement across local, state, and regional lines, targeting issues that are interstate in nature, such as gang crime, identity theft investigations, multijurisdictional drug enforcement efforts, sex offender databases, and other regional information-sharing and coordination efforts; and
- WHEREAS,** Byrne JAG funding has been used to develop local crime-fighting initiatives that tackle emerging crime prevention and control issues; and
- WHEREAS,** the Byrne JAG program is the only federal program that systematically and broadly targets criminal activity by distributing funds to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the territories through the use of a formula based on population and crime rates; and
- WHEREAS,** in 2007 Congress slashed funding for the program for Fiscal Year 2008 by 67 percent, from \$520 million in Fiscal Year 2007 to just \$170.4 million; and
- WHEREAS,** many of the successful programs currently funded by the Byrne JAG program will be eliminated if the funding is not restored;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that The Council of State Governments strongly urges Congress to restore funding to the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant program to the Fiscal Year 2007 level of \$520 million, at a minimum; and

BE IT THEREFORE FURTHER RESOLVED, that The Council of State Governments supports full funding in future years for this critical anti-crime program at its authorized level of \$1.095 billion.

Adopted this 31st Day of May, 2008 at the
CSG 75th Anniversary Celebration
in Lexington, Kentucky

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is for Governor M. Jodi Rell, and the signature on the right is for Representative Kim Koppelman. Both signatures are written in a cursive, flowing style.

Governor M. Jodi Rell

Representative Kim Koppelman

2008 CSG President

2008 CSG Chair