

Testimony of
Mr. William J. Johnson

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Mr. Chairman, Senator Grassley, members of the Senate Subcommittee, My name is William J. Johnson and I am the Executive Director of the National Association of Police Organizations. NAPO is a coalition of police unions and associations from across the United States that serves here in Washington D.C. to advance the interests of America=s law enforcement through legislative and legal advocacy.

On behalf of 220,000 rank-and-file police officers from across the United States, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to testify today on our Nation's homeland defense and the needs of law enforcement. NAPO is surprised and truly concerned about the Administration's proposed 2003 fiscal budget and its intended future for the Community Oriented Policing Service program (COPS), administered by the Department of Justice.

Today, I will discuss three paramount concerns NAPO has on the Administration's proposed budget. These are the future of the COPS program. The beneficial grant funds overseen by the Office of Justice Assistance and the status of state and local law enforcement in the war on terrorism in light of the Administration's proposed movement of supervision from the Department of Justice to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Created by the 1994 Crime bill, the COPS Office has funded the hiring of over 110,000 police officers in 11,300 communities. In addition, it has contributed countless resources, including enhanced crime-fighting technology and the development of innovative partnerships with communities to fight crime.

Both the public and Congress recognize the benefits of putting more cops on the street. As it has been often and rightly said, once you've finished cutting the grass, you don't throw away the lawn mower.

These benefits have been further demonstrated in the 2001 study by the University of Nebraska, authored by Dr. Jihong Zhao, which correlated the steady decline of violent crime over the last few years with the success of this program. This study was presented to the Senate Subcommittee on Crime hearing held on December 5, 2001.

Despite the tremendous impact this program has had throughout the country, the Administration's proposed FY 2003 budget would effectively gut the COPS program and end the instrumental practice of adding new officers to the streets.

As NAPO represents the police forces of some of our nation's largest cities, we researched what effect the termination of the COPS program would have on the needs of some of NAPO's local law enforcement agencies.

Per current information from the COPS office, since 1994 the City of Los Angeles has been awarded funding for the new hiring or redeployment of 3,731 officers to protect its streets. In funding, this has been just over 298 million dollars allocated to meet the requested technology and hiring needs of Los Angeles' local law enforcement. Over the same period, the City of Miami has benefited from the addition of 1,184 new or redirected officers and the allocation of over 84 million dollars for hiring and technological needs. The City of Chicago has gained 1,593 Officers and over 104 million dollars and the City of New York has benefited from the addition of 7,356 officers to the streets and over 529 million dollars in needed improvements funding. These cities have also seen a directly related and substantial reduction in crime since the mid 1990's.

These figures represent what has already been allocated and we can only hope that these fundings are protected from proposed changes. More importantly these figures demonstrate that the future needs of these cities will no longer be addressed if the COPS program is dissolved.

In a time when our country is necessarily focused on homeland defense, we believe the COPS program must be an intrinsic part of any defense plan because it has a proven effect on crime reduction. This is why COPS is of such importance now. It will help protect our communities by increasing, and more often maintaining, the needed police presence on our streets while public safety services are stretched and re-defined to confront the ever changing threat of terrorism.

A second concern NAPO has over the Administrations proposed FY 2003 budget are the changes called for to the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant Program and the Byrne State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Grants, which are run by the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Assistance. These two block grants have had a historically positive effect in strengthening law enforcement's ability to reduce crime and fund programs that make a difference in the community.

The Local Law Enforcement Block Grant Program has supported police by facilitating the hiring and training of new officers, paying overtime and procuring needed equipment and technology. LLEBG Funds also go to enhancing school safety, supporting drug courts, securing violent crime convictions, enhancing community policing and defraying the costs of officer insurances.

LLEBG funding commenced in 1996 and awarded over 450 million dollars in FY2001. Since its inception the grant has provided two and one half billion dollars in needed support to local law enforcement, money we could not have done without.

Much like the LLEGB, the Byrne Grant has awarded monies to assist educational and training programs for criminal justice personnel and has provided for technical assistance to state and local law enforcement. The Byrne Grant awarded over 524 million dollars in FY2001 and has provided over five and one half billion dollars since 1990.

The Administration has proposed consolidating these two grant programs, along with other smaller programs, into a new Justice Assistance Grant Program. While LLEGB and Byrne received a combined funding of over one billion dollars in FY 2001, this new condensed grant program would be funded at a smaller 800 million dollar level while being asked to cover more outlets. The outcome will be less available funds to assist law enforcement in a time when public safety budgets are being overrun by new national security concerns.

A third concern NAO's has over the Administration's proposed FY 2003 budget is the movement of monies and supervision from the Department of Justice and Office of Justice Programs to the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Please do not misunderstand this as an overly negative criticism. FEMA can provide a valuable service to communities beaten down by disaster and can assist in their quick rehabilitation.

NAO's concern consists in the fact that in this new war on terrorism, the Administration wishes to move police interests from a body that has fostered 30 years of working relations to a body that has never dealt with the needs of police before. As President Lincoln said, during wartime you don't change your horse in mid stream. Further, we would say, you don't cut the grass once and then give away your lawn mower to a neighbor who doesn't know what it's for or how to use it.

While the needs of police officers as first responders are similar in some ways to fire and Emergency Service, they are vastly different in other ways. An agency who has developed 30 years of knowledge on what police need and how best to allocate it to them should not be sidelined by an agency with whom law enforcement has had no prior experience. We would be very disappointed if law enforcement lost such a great tool in its fight against crime.

Senators, our concerns are three fold when we look at the Administration's proposed budget: The future of the COPS program; the future of beneficial grant funding; and the need to keep the Department of Justice as the agency of record for the needs of law enforcement. Our country has entered a time of challenge but it is not a time of insurmountable crises. Now is when the tools that have proven to be effective have to be brought out and even enhanced so the job can be done and done right the first time. I want to thank Chairman Biden and the Subcommittee members for this opportunity to voice the concerns of America's police and I respectfully request that my remarks be included in the record.