

Testimony of

# **The Honorable Randy Cunningham**

July 23, 2002

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for the opportunity to speak before this committee today on a bill that is very important to me, S. 2480. As you are aware, I am the sponsor of H.R. 218 in the House - an identical bill to S.2480. I have introduced this measure every Congress since 1992, and am confident that this will be the year it passes.

Why have I fought for this bill for so long? Three simple reasons: It will make our communities safer, it will provide better protection for our law enforcement personnel, and it will cost the taxpayer nothing. Additionally, it is the number one legislative priority of numerous national law enforcement organizations including the Fraternal Order of Police and the Law Enforcement Alliance of America, and I believe in helping them carry out their already difficult job. This point was made especially clear to me when I joined you, Mr. Chairman, on the dais with President Bush at the National Peace Officer Memorial.

Passage of this legislation will make our communities safer by putting tens of thousands of law enforcement officers on the street, armed and capable of disrupting criminal efforts, at places and times that they currently are not there. This not only adds to the number of armed, trained, and qualified law enforcement personnel on the streets, it diminishes the opportunity for criminals to commit crime without law enforcement intervention. I believe that this threat alone provides a deterrent that will reduce the crime rate. If even one criminal decides not to commit a crime, or is foiled in an attempt because this bill becomes law, then we as legislators have done something that the American public expects of us -we have made our country a safer place. Our families and communities will not only feel safer; they will actually be safer. Not smoke and mirrors, but tangible results.

Additionally, this legislation will make our law enforcement officers themselves safer. I have heard the testimony of law enforcement officers from across the country that convinces me that our law enforcement officers face a much higher off-duty threat than do average citizens. This is because many of the felons they arrest would like nothing more than to get revenge on the officer that put them away, or confiscated their drugs or ill-gotten assets. And they know the time to get to that officer is when he is off duty, and usually not allowed to carry his weapon. Let's take that opportunity away from the criminals in our society by giving law enforcement officers the tools to protect themselves.

Finally, enactment of this measure will cost nothing to the taxpayer. It is rare these days to be able to have a positive, measurable effect on our communities without spending our tax dollars. When we do find a way, I believe it is incumbent on us to do so. Any community would relish the thought of being able to put more officers on the street. In fact that is often the main plank of any crime reduction effort. Here is a way to do just that while preserving precious resources for other legislation.

When all is said and done, passage of this bill will reduce crime, reduce the threat to off duty officers and their families, and act as a deterrent to terrorist elements - all at no cost. This is a win for everyone, and in that spirit I challenge you to a race. Let's see who can get this measure passed first - this body, or me and my distinguished colleagues in the other body. Fight's on.