

Statement of

# **The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.**

United States Senator  
Delaware  
February 27, 2008

"At the inaugural hearing of this Subcommittee, a panel of law enforcement experts testified that federal funding for State and local law enforcement makes our streets safer, drives down crime rates, and secures our communities against terrorism. At that hearing, I outlined three developments that had me greatly concerned.

"First, I was concerned that the Administration would continue to cut funding for essential state and local law enforcement programs like the COPS and Byrne/JAG programs. Second, I was concerned that the FBI would not replace agents "redeployed" from investigating crime to fighting terrorism, creating an enormous "gap" that state and local cops would have to fill. And third, I was concerned that an economic downturn would squeeze localities and force them to cut their law enforcement and prevention budgets.

"Unfortunately, all three of these concerns have borne out. Since he took office, the President has cut annual funding for the COPS and Byrne Justice Assistance Grant programs by \$1.7 billion. The President's 2009 budget proposes to eliminate these programs entirely. The FBI agents reassigned away from fighting crime have not been replaced. One investigative report last year stated that the number of criminal cases investigated by the FBI has dropped by 34 percent. I'm not being critical of committing agents to counterterrorism. But in our effort to protect Americans from terrorism, we cannot leave them vulnerable to violent crime. We have to do both, and that takes a commitment of resources that has frankly been lacking in recent years.

"And the economy has slowed down. The Washington Post reported this week that next year 20 states expect their budgets to be in the red. As state governments are forced to tighten their belts and cut back on critical law enforcement funding, federal assistance will become even more important.

"I learned a long time ago from cops like those we'll hear from today that fighting crime takes constant attention and a steady commitment. Many of you have heard me say before that fighting crime is like cutting the grass. If you keep it mowed, it looks great. If you leave it for a week, it gets shaggy. If you leave it for a month, it's out of control and you've got a problem on your hands. We've neglected state and local law enforcement for too long and we've got a problem on our hands.

"A recent poll published by the non-partisan Third Way indicates that 94 percent of Americans view crime as a "very serious" or "fairly serious" problem. Moreover, 69 percent of Americans feel that violent crime is a bigger threat to them than the possibility of a terrorist attack. The concerns of these Americans are serious and real. Last year, 1.4 million Americans were victims

of violent crime, more than 445,000 were robbed, and more than 17,000 were murdered. These numbers are simply too high. We need to renew our commitment and return to what works.

"We know the COPS program works. Last spring the Brookings Institution published a study showing that the COPS program contributed to the drop in crime during the 1990s and is one of the most cost-effective options for fighting crime. Specifically, the study found that for every \$1.4 billion invested in the COPS program, society realizes a benefit of \$6 billion to \$12 billion.

"And we know the programs funded by Byrne Justice Assistance Grants work. The police officers and sheriffs walking the beat tell me that these programs are vital to their ability to protect America from crime and terrorism. Productive, law-abiding citizens who participated in Boys & Girls Clubs and other prevention programs that Byrne/JAG funds tell me that they could not have done it without these programs. And, citizens who have overcome the debilitating disease of drug addiction and lead healthy, meaningful lives tell me that drug courts and treatment programs funded by Byrne/JAG literally saved their lives.

"We know what the solution is. We know how to make America's communities safer. We just need to make the commitment to restore funding to these tried and true programs. I intend to see that we do just that."

###