

Testimony of  
**Anothony Bossi**

March 24, 2008

Judiciary Committee Hearing on "The Rise of Drug Related Violent Crime in Rural America: Finding Solutions on a Growing Problem"

Honorable Senator Leahy and Senator Specter Judiciary Committee Members

Thank you for coming to Rutland

The threat of drugs and violence has to be addressed on three fronts. Education/prevention, enforcement and treatment. All three are equally important.

Rutland City Police have a proactive Community Policing approach to Law Enforcement. Our School Resource Officers, our Community Policing partnership with Rutland United Neighborhoods (RUN), Rutland Community Justice Center, Rutland City Public Schools and Rutland Boys & Girls Club help with education and prevention, and the Rutland Drug Court helps with the treatment.

Over the last 5 years the Rutland city Police Department has made over 375 drug related arrests. Local Law Enforcement block Grants, Byrne Justice Assistance Grants and COPS Grants have allowed us to:

Provide an effective means of identifying people and places frequently involved in drug transactions.

Share intelligence information with appropriate agencies and entities to facilitate appropriate follow-up investigations to further drug enforcement efforts at the statewide and federal levels.

Engage in both pro-active and reactive enforcement activities to deter criminal activity.

Disrupt local drug supply by identifying and arresting violators.

Law enforcement agencies depend on Byrne Justice Assistance Grants and COPS Grants to help them in cooperative efforts against drugs and violence. These grants are also dependent on prevention and treatment programs, and offender rehabilitation and re-entry programs.

Rural states like Vermont need funding for law enforcement on three parts.

- 1) To fund salaries and benefits of officers assigned to statewide task forces.
- 2) To support local law enforcement efforts.
- 3) To support overtime funding for drug investigations.

Rutland City Police partners with (RUN) Rutland United Neighborhoods and (CJC) Rutland Community Justice Center. The Justice Center is a partnership with the Rutland City Police, Rutland County State's Attorney, Rutland City Schools, District and Family Court, Department of Children and Families, Department of Corrections and the Rutland United Neighborhood's 4 Neighborhoods. The grant funding issued to Rutland Community Justice Center for offender re-entry programs pre and post adjudication services dispute resolution, is critical to these programs. RUN also has a pre-charge program in place to address first time offenders and quality of life issues. This prevents the courts and corrections from being involved in these matters.

Three Rutland City Police Officers are assigned to the Rutland City Schools covering grades K-12. This program was started with COPS Grant Funds and continues to be funded by Rutland City Police and Rutland City Schools. These officers are involved in the design and delivery of various prevention based and educational programs for faculty, students, parents and interested community members.

Rutland City Police are partners with the Rutland Boys and Girls club, in a Bureau of Justice Assistance Grant for youth partnership for crime prevention. The BJA Grant will allow the Rutland Boys and Girls club to have a peer based leadership program and provide training for the programs at the Vermont Police Academy. The after school programs at the Rutland Boys and Girls Club make it less likely for young people to begin illegal drug use or be involved in youth crime and violence.

The Rutland Drug Court is designed to help in lowering substance abuse among non-violent offenders to help increase the offender's success in remaining drug free. The Rutland city Police have been involved with the Rutland Drug court since the planning grant. This is another successful use of grant funds.

Currently the drug that poses the greatest threat to Rutland City is crack cocaine. The availability of powder cocaine, heroin, diverted pharmaceuticals and marijuana is also high in our area. These drugs primarily come to Vermont from New York and Massachusetts. We anticipate seeing "meth" moving into our area since we have seen this development in other rural areas across the nation.

The availability of drugs in Vermont has not changed the much over the past years. What has changed is the violence that has increased over the last few years.

Vermont is still one of the safest states in the country, in part because of the cooperation that you see between Federal, State, and local departments.

Federal support is very important to a small rural state like Vermont in keeping the violent crime down. The Federal support helps to prevent, control and reduce violent crime, drug abuse and gang activity.

The police can not do it on their own. The education/prevention, enforcement, treatment must be funded equally, they are all important. Funding from the Federal Government is important to help keeping the violent crime down. The Federal funding helps to reduce violence. Through the use of Community Policing, prevention education, treatment and neighborhood restoration.

Thank you,

Anthony L. Bossi  
Chief of Police  
Rutland City Vermont