

Testimony of

Peter DesLauriers

December 5, 2008

TESTIMONY

of

Peter DesLauriers

Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing

Community Based Solutions

To Drug Related Crime in Rural America

Senator Leahy,

Thank you for making the trip this morning to show your interest in the future of our community.

Also, thank you and welcome to the Staff Members of the Senator and the Senate Judiciary Committee, Community Leaders and Fellow Citizens.

As we face a slew of national problems with hope and resolve, it is important that we do not ignore our community issues, for as President Elect Barack Obama tries to reconcile Wall St.

with Main Street, it is nice that you remember the Elm Streets, the Barlow Streets and the Messenger Streets, for these are the streets on which our children play, we live our lives and lay our heads, These streets make up our community. And on these streets, as you have heard, we

face big city problems with a small town budget.

This community has already responded to the problem on several fronts:

Through citizen efforts, we have:

- ? Neighborhood Watch Program
- ? Online Internet Community, Grapevine.com
- ? Citizens Emergency Response Team
- ? Red Flag Book for Parents
- ? Task Force on Crime
- ? Numerous Community forums on the issue.
- ? Worked on Prescription Drug Issue

St. Albans understands that we are in a battle. We are fighting for our community and the values that most Americans live by and believe in. We are not asking the Federal Government to rescue us; we simply want you to help us rescue ourselves. True victories are only attained and maintained by those with a true stake in the battle. Senator Leahy, we need your help, but the citizens of St. Albans, will be the soldiers in this battle.

So, if the attitude is "YES WE CAN", then the question must be "How?"

Enforcement: We need more Police Officers to make St. Albans an uncomfortable place to work the drug business. We could use funds as we try to organize and equip an Auxiliary Community Surveillance Squad. This would be a group of trained citizens who move around the community and record or report illegal behaviors. This activity serves two purposes. It makes St.

Albans a hard place to do illegal activity since no one knows who is watching and when, and it empowers the citizenship to positively effect their surroundings. This feeling of 'making a difference' will create longevity to our endeavors. While increased enforcement is not the only answer, it is one of the necessary ingredients to the full solution.

We also need real consequences for drug related crimes. What would the speed of the average car on Interstate 89 if every speeding ticket written was thrown out of court? When students see us enable a poor behavior, they think that we are approving it. That can be a dangerous lesson for them.

Crime knows no boundaries. When St. Albans City drives the criminals out of our community, and make no mistake, we will, and they land in St. Albans Town, or Swanton, who has won?

We need help to entice local communities to join forces, and drive these thugs out of the State.

Physics 101 tells us that an object moves easier if it's already in motion. I suspect the same is true of drug dealers.

We have several groups working on the Prescription Drug issue, but it might be beyond local control. We need help in this area. Pharmaceutical companies and the medical profession must be held responsible for the chemicals they are putting on our streets. In Vt. Bartenders are liable if they over serve a customer. Should Doctors be held to a similar standard with addictive pharmaceuticals?

Education:

On the National level, we need to remove the pressures of No Child Left Behind. While I do not fault the goal of NCLB, I fear that the goals of education have switched from one of trying to create good, intelligent citizens to one of trying to create good test takers. If we as a school score high on our NCAP test, but do not adequately address the drug issue, we as an institution have not served our community well.

On the local level, we understand that Drug education is not a ribbon day, or a guest speaker day.

Drug education must be a recognized part of the everyday curriculum for all of our children. We would like funds to develop alternative educational programs in our schools to better meet the needs of every child be they challenged or gifted. Bored and discouraged students often turn to drugs. Successful students, with hope and a vision, are tough customers for drug dealers. We must serve all types of intelligences.

We also need to provide jobs in the area for our young people. Currently, when I talk about local jobs with my students, someone always mentions a cousin, friend or neighbor who doesn't work, yet drives a hot car, has plenty of money and always just hangs out on the street. While that sounds like the perfect career, I happen to know that his cousin is a doper. We need good honest local opportunities for our young people. Good jobs offer hope, and draw good people to our community. It also allows people to work in the community where they live rather than be citizens in absentia by living here and working in Chittenden County. This builds local pride, which is a key factor in community ownership and involvement.

Together, we can solve these issues, but we must see the forest for the trees. This is a great nation and it is made up of great communities, and if we lose those, we have lost it all. I understand national issues are pressing, I do want our borders to be safe from terrorist, but I also want my grandchildren to be able to walk in Taylor Park without watching a drug deal in the bandstand. I do want a solution for Global Warming, but I also want my students to be able to go to the school rest room without being offered drugs. And I do want strong armed forces, which will protect us from foreign fanatics, but I also want to be able to sleep at night without wondering if I should put a gun in my nightstand to protect my family from the growing concern of home invasion.

Senator Leahy, You have long been a friend of St. Albans. We owe much to you. And once again we turn to you as Vermont's elected gift to the Nation, to help us rescue our community. Thank you for caring and serving our community, our state and our nation with compassion, integrity and pride.

Peter DesLauriers

St. Albans, VT