

Statement of
The Honorable Orrin Hatch

United States Senator
Utah
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Statement of Senator Orrin G. Hatch
Chairman

Before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary

"Combating Gang Violence in America: Examining Effective Federal, State and Local Law
Enforcement Strategies"

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Good morning. I want to thank everyone for gathering to examine the issue of gang violence in America. We have some incredibly distinguished panelists with us today and we look forward to hearing from them.

Gang violence is not a new a problem to this country. We have and we will continue to meet this challenge head on. The face of the problem has shifted and become severely more troubling in recent years. It is abundantly clear that this problem is no longer limited to our largest cities. Gangs now plague even our smallest communities.

The problem of gang violence is of great concern to the citizens of my State. According to the Salt Lake Area Gang Project, a multi-jurisdictional task force created in 1989 to fight gang crime in the Salt Lake area, there are at least 250 identified gangs in our region with over 3,500 members. Juvenile gang members in Utah account for over one-third of gang membership. In Salt Lake City, the Metro Gang Multi-Jurisdiction Task Force has for years demonstrated its critical role in fighting gang violence in Salt Lake City. We must act in a bipartisan fashion to ensure that adequate resources are available to all of our communities to expand and fund these critical task force operations to fight gang violence.

I want to take a moment here and commend my dear friend Senator Feinstein for her long-time commitment to this issue. She has been a leader in California and in the Senate in the war against gangs and gang violence. She and I have worked together for many years on this important issue. I look forward to working with you as we examine possible legislation to address the issues raised by the witnesses at today's hearing.