



July 27, 2015

The Honorable Chuck Grassley  
Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee  
United States Senate  
135 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Ranking member, Senate Judiciary Committee  
United States Senate  
437 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Grassley and Leahy:

We write to express our commitment to work with Congress on measures to prevent crime and violence, but we are concerned that the amendment sponsored by Senator Vitter will reduce already limited resources to protect the public. Our efforts to stop violence in American cities must be strengthened, not weakened.

The bill seeks to encourage so-called “sanctuary cities” to fully enforce federal immigration law by penalizing Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) program funding. In so doing, Congress would be taking away the very funding law enforcement agencies use to prevent and suppress crime and keep our citizens safe.

Byrne JAG is the cornerstone federal crime-fighting program, supporting the federal government’s crucial role in spurring innovation, as well as testing and replicating evidence-based practices nationwide. Byrne JAG supports state and local law enforcement agencies in nearly every jurisdiction in this country, including operations, crime prevention strategies and best practices in policing. States and localities use Byrne JAG to test emerging and evidence-based approaches to the public safety challenges in their jurisdictions. We know first-hand the enormous impact Byrne JAG-funded programs have in improving the functioning of the criminal justice system across our nation.

It should be noted that states already are subject to substantial Byrne JAG penalties under the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA), the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), the NICS Improvements Amendments Act of 2007, and the Deaths in Custody Act. Because the program is broad in scope, Byrne JAG is a tempting target for new penalties for noncompliance with other, unrelated federal mandates. However, when Byrne JAG funds are withheld in penalty, worthy crime-fighting programs are withdrawn from the field.



Penalizing the Byrne JAG program will only impede the ability of law enforcement to prevent and fight crime. Therefore, we respectfully urge you to consider alternatives that express the disapproval of Congress, without the threat of further reductions in funding for state and local law enforcement and criminal justice.

Sincerely,

Fraternal Order of Police  
Major County Sheriffs' Association  
Major Cities Chiefs Association  
US Conference of Mayors  
National District Attorneys Association  
National Sheriffs Association  
National Conference of State Legislatures  
National Criminal Justice Association  
National League of Cities