

FY 2006 Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Conference Report

Mr. BAUCUS: Mr. President, I rise to express my strong opposition to the Conference Report on the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations bill. I am outraged that this bill will make further cuts to critical programs that help local law enforcement fight methamphetamine nationwide. These cuts will have a particularly damaging impact on my state of Montana because we are a rural state with limited resources.

The Byrne Grant Program and similar programs support the majority of pro-active drug enforcement in the 56 counties of my state. This is because we are spread so thin across a vast area with a small population and an international border. An adequately funded Byrne program -- particularly when combined with the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area or HIDTA program -- is essential to us. These programs are critical to helping us maintain our seven multi-jurisdictional regional drug task forces, which have been a huge boon to successful efforts in Montana to fight meth. For example, the Eastern Montana Drug Task Force based in Miles City, the Tri-Agency Drug Task Force in Havre near the Canadian border, and the Big Muddy Drug Task Force in Wolf Point rely entirely on Byrne funding. These task forces also happen to cover some of the most open and rural areas in my state, where meth enforcement is particularly challenging.

The Fiscal Year 2006 CJS conference report guts the federal government's commitment to state and local law enforcement. It funds the Byrne Grant program at just \$416 million for FY 2006. This represents a nearly 35% cut over FY 2005 funding. This is on top of the 26% cut in funding and reallocation of local law enforcement resources that occurred in FY 2005. The bill cuts the Community Oriented Policing Services, or COPS, program by one-third, and provides no funding for communities to hire additional police officers.

According to the President of the Montana Association of Chiefs of Police, COPS funding is necessary to maintain an adequate number of police in the field to protect our communities. He has told me that without COPS funding, the number of crimes, especially violent crimes, will begin to rise again. And currently, there is no other alternative to the COPS program. He tells me that the COPS program is one of those programs that works, one of those programs that is directly responsible for protecting our communities, for getting the officers out on the street to protect us all.

Where are our priorities here? The Senate did everything it could for local law enforcement. We sent over a CJS bill to the House that contained nearly \$900 million for the Byrne program. Yet somehow, we end up with a conference report that funds this program at close to the paltry \$348 million provided by the House in its version of the CJS bill.

The Montana Narcotics Officers Association told me that if the House version of the CJS bill passed, that this would gut Montana's meth enforcement abilities, particularly in rural areas. They told me that this would result in the elimination of -- or dramatic reduction in services provided by -- Montana's regional drug task forces. They didn't have to tell me

twice the impact this could have on my state's ability to stop the spread of meth, or that meth trafficking, production and drug related crime would increase statewide.

The 26% cut in Byrne funding in FY 2005 resulted in a nearly 50% cut in Byrne funding for the state of Montana, because the local law enforcement block grant program and Byrne Grant program were merged and funding allocations and formulas were changed. I am very concerned that the additional cuts in the CJS conference report will have some or all of the devastating impacts that the Montana Narcotics Officers Association warned me about, particularly on those task forces that rely entirely on Byrne funding.

Finally, I am very disappointed that the conference report does not include the Senate-passed COMBAT Meth bill. The Senate unanimously approved this legislation as an amendment to the CJS bill. The COMBAT Meth bill would have put certain meth ingredients behind the pharmacy counter nationwide, and restricted the amount of such ingredients that consumers can buy. I have been told time and again by law enforcement that this type of legislation is absolutely essential in the fight against meth, that this is one of the single greatest things we can do to stem the tide of meth production. But, unfortunately, the House did not agree that we needed to act quickly.

Mr. President, I pledge to do everything I can to find a way to restore the cuts to local enforcement made by this conference report. I will fight even harder to preserve these programs next year. We cannot let ourselves take a step backwards in the fight against meth, which is what will happen if we starve local law enforcement of essential resources. Increased manufacturing, trafficking, drug addiction and crime will have a ripple effect throughout the nation in our public health and correction systems and the courts, negatively affecting public safety and quality of life.

Thank you, Mr. President.