

March 3, 2008

ATTORNEYS GENERAL CALL ON CONGRESS TO RESTORE FUNDING FOR CRIME AND DRUG ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Calling the funding essential to the operation of state crime and drug enforcement efforts, the 56 Attorneys General from all jurisdictions of the United States today issued a letter calling on Congressional leaders to restore funding to the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program.

Byrne-JAG is currently the major source of funding for local and state law enforcement multi-jurisdictional drug enforcement, including methamphetamine initiatives, and is a critical source of funding for law enforcement collaboration. In 2005, North Dakota received \$1.4 million to fund task forces; that was reduced to \$584,653 in 2007. Unless funding is restored, for 2009 ND will receive only \$151,000.

Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem said, “Byrne funds are critical in our fight against drugs and violent crimes. Since 2003, North Dakota’s funds have been cut by 90%. If the severe cuts to Byrne funding are not restored, many of the multi-jurisdictional task forces will cease to exist, destroying years of cooperation and progress in crime fighting and drug enforcement.”

Federal drug enforcement agencies are undermanned and under-equipped to extend operations into rural states. Byrne funds enable small law enforcement agencies to pool limited resources and specialized equipment, so they can effectively police rural areas and conduct drug investigations and arrests. Attorneys General assert in their letter that these cuts would devastate state law enforcement efforts by shutting down multi-jurisdictional drug and gang task forces, requiring layoffs of police and prosecutors.

In FY 2007, the Byrne-JAG program was funded at \$520 million. For FY 2008, the Senate had originally funded the Byrne-JAG program at \$660 million and the House at \$600 million in their respective appropriations bills. However, in the omnibus FY 2008 appropriations bill signed into law in December of 2007, the Byrne-JAG program funding was cut to \$170 million for the coming year – a 67 percent decrease from 2007 levels.

“The fight against crime needs to be a partnership among the federal, state and local governments. While the state of North Dakota has steadily increased its resources to support our narcotics task forces, the commitment from the federal government has steadily shrunk. It will be nearly impossible for the task forces to absorb another huge hit to this funding,” said Stenehjem.

###

[Letter to Congressional Leaders](#)