



NNOAC *Insight*

The Official Position of the National Narcotic Officers' Associations Coalition

EDWARD BYRNE MEMORIAL JUSTICE ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM: FUTURE OF STATE AND LOCAL DRUG ENFORCEMENT AT STAKE

The FY 2006 President's Budget Request proposes to terminate the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program. Because the elimination of this program would reduce multi-jurisdictional cooperation in narcotics investigations and would severely interrupt state and local drug enforcement, the NNOAC strongly opposes this proposal. The NNOAC encourages Congress to fully fund the Byrne JAG program in FY 2006 and to restore part of the focus specifically to drug enforcement activities.

In the White House's summary of proposed cuts for FY 2006, the administration justifies its elimination of Byrne by arguing that the program has not adequately demonstrated results, and because the nation's crime rate is at a 30-year low. The NNOAC believes that Byrne has not only contributed to this crime reduction, but that the reported decreases in drug use nationwide are also a result of Byrne-enabled enforcement efforts.

The administration also cites increases in assistance to state and local law enforcement through new Homeland Security grant programs as a reason to decrease assistance through other accounts. It is true that overall assistance has increased since September 11, 2001, but assistance for narcotics enforcement efforts has decreased substantially. Funding received through Homeland Security grants is used by local agencies for purposes entirely different from drug enforcement.

But not only have illegal drugs been demonstrated to fund terrorist organizations, we believe that illegal drug manufacturers, traffickers, and dealers perpetrate "chemical attacks" on the streets of America every day by creating and feeding addictions to dangerous narcotics. CDC estimates that every year almost 20,000 Americans die due to drug abuse and its related consequences. ONDCP estimates that the cost of illegal drugs to our society is over \$150 billion per year. To a degree we have learned to live with these high costs – in life and in treasure. But as narcotic officers, we cannot accept this as the norm.

The Byrne program is a partnership among Federal, State, and local governments to create safe communities and improve criminal justice systems.

National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition
P.O. Box 2456, West Covina, California 91793-2456
Phone (626) 960-3328 Fax (626) 960-3328
Visit our website at: www.natlnarc.org

Since the Byrne program was founded, it has successfully funded drug education and enforcement programs through discretionary funds awarded to public and private agencies and formula funds disbursed to states. The majority of the funds in each state are passed on to local and regional units of government for the creation and maintenance of multi-jurisdictional task forces.

Task forces such as those funded by Byrne have been extremely effective in apprehending drug suspects and taking supply off the streets. The key is local control of the task forces and information sharing among and across local, state, and federal jurisdictions. If Byrne were eliminated, many task forces would also be eliminated. State and local law enforcement would be stripped of one of its most effective tools in fighting illegal drugs.

Even though we have made a real dent in community crime and drug abuse rates over the past several years, we must not sit back and relax. The problem is not solved. Now that we have some ideas about what works, we should redouble our efforts to make sure Byrne and other justice assistance programs are fully funded. And while we understand the need to dedicate resources to local law enforcement in a homeland security context, it would be a grave mistake to do so at the expense of drug enforcement. We must not relent on the drug traffickers who slowly destroy our communities from within as we turn our attention to the protection of our nation from international terrorists.

Congress must choose in 2005: should the federal government turn its back on state and local narcotic officers who are partly responsible for the improvements in crime and drug use rates? Or should it recognize what has worked, embrace the Byrne program, and ensure that we don't turn a blind eye to the problem of illegal drugs in American communities. We think the choice is clear.