

Testimony by Michael Durant
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House Appropriations Committee
Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Members and Outside Witnesses Hearing on Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13) Budget
Thursday, March 22nd, 2012, 9am
Room H-309, The Capitol

Good morning, Chairman Wolf, Ranking Member Fattah, and other members of the Subcommittee, including fellow Californians Congressman Schiff and Congressman Honda. My name is Mike Durant, a Senior Deputy Sheriff with the Santa Barbara County, California Sheriff's Department. I also serve as Vice President of the Peace Officers Research Association of California, otherwise known as PORAC. PORAC represents over 70,000 public safety officers in California, making our organization the largest state-based law enforcement organization in the country. I am here today to testify about the importance to public safety, in California and around the country, of the Department of Justice's COPS and Byrne Justice Assistance ("Byrne/JAG") grant programs.

I want to do that by providing some real-life examples of how the COPS and Byrne/JAG programs have helped to keep officers on the street to deter crime and apprehend criminals in California. On the other hand, I am *not* here to lecture you about possible cuts to the COPS and Byrne/JAG programs or to claim that other programs prospectively in the CJS bill are less worthy of your attention and support. Instead, PORAC recognizes that you are operating in a very difficult fiscal environment. We simply wish to provide you with as much information as possible about our experiences with the real-world merits of these programs as you make your funding decisions for FY13.

Let me start with an example from Los Angeles County. There, Byrne/JAG funds are focused on the following elements of LA County's Anti-Drug Abuse Enforcement Team Program:

- **The Clearinghouse Electronic Surveillance System (CHESS)** – This system is a full-time wiretap unit within the Major Narcotics Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office. This unit focuses on high-level drug dealers and traffickers.
- **Los Angeles Regional Criminal Information Clearinghouse (CLEAR)** – This clearinghouse is an intelligence-gathering entity, linked with state and national networks that support all law enforcement agencies in Los Angeles County and beyond in coordinating investigations and targeting drug-trafficking organizations.
- **Los Angeles Regional Gang Information Network (LARGIN)** – This network is a multi-jurisdictional project that integrates federal, state and local law enforcement agencies and prosecutors for the purpose of enhancing interagency coordination, intelligence and facilitating investigations relative to gangs.

As you can see, those anti-drug programs are all based in Los Angeles, but they have a regional, national, and even international effect. Moreover, without federal support, it is hard to see how we could maintain those efforts, given California's state and local fiscal crunch.

On a smaller scale, we have received \$300,000 in Byrne/JAG funding for a one-time statewide pilot program designed to purchase lasers for the removal of noticeable gang affiliated tattoos. Removing gang tattoos will allow former gang members, who already have taken a big step, a better opportunity to enter the workforce, so they can become contributing members of society. Two projects receive funding under this program; one that serves the northern part of California, and the other serves the southern portion of the state. This is a real-world example of long-term crime reduction at work.

As for COPS grants, I would like to mention an example from Colton, California, near San Bernardino. In 2010, COPS hiring grants saved three officer positions for the Colton Police Department, which already had had to lay off nine officers that year. In an area experiencing significant population growth and a higher-than-average crime rate, that kind of support helped the Colton Police Department make the best of a very challenging situation. Similarly, the Fontana, California Police Department saved five officer positions through the COPS hiring program. Simply put, the COPS program is a life-saver in fiscally-strapped California, and I know from talking to my fellow law enforcement brethren that sentiment applies elsewhere in the country as well.

Thank you very much for your time and attention, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.