

**Statement for the Record
Senator Tom Harkin**

**DPC Oversight Hearing on Reduced Federal Funding for
Law Enforcement and the Rise in Violent Crime**

Monday July 10, 2006

I would like to thank Leader Reid and Chairman Dorgan for personally taking a lead role in addressing the very serious issue of law enforcement and the rise in violent crime that is plaguing our country. No question, there is cause for concern about the administration's inattention to this issue. So I am grateful to you for conducting this public hearing. And I'm proud that a leading Iowan is taking part in these proceedings.

As you know, Sheriff Ted Kamatchus is the sheriff of Marshall County, Iowa, and is also serving this year as the President of the National Sheriffs' Association. Sheriff Kamatchus has a national reputation as a leading voice for law enforcement and for the role that local law enforcement plays in protecting our nation and fighting the many ills that Americans face daily. I have personally known the sheriff for many years and am grateful to him for his leadership, both locally and nationally, on these issues. He has been a great partner to work with and I look forward to continuing to work with him in the coming years.

This is a critical week in the Senate for law enforcement, as we finalize the FY07 Commerce, Justice, and Science appropriations bill at the committee level. We have seen the House numbers, which are a step forward from the dreadful Bush budget that zeroed-out many law enforcement programs. But I do not believe that the House's numbers are adequate to meet the challenges that we face.

As noted in this program's overview, "over the last five years, the Bush Administration and Republican-controlled Congress have repeatedly cut federal funding for local law enforcement programs." What disturbs me most about this trend is that it is coming at the exact time that the need for a strong law enforcement community is on the rise.

For the first time in several years, in 2005 the nation's violent crime rate increased by a stunning 2.5 percent. That coincides with a 54 percent funding reduction since 2003 in the federal Byrne-Justice Assistance Grant program that supports local drug and crime control efforts, including drug enforcement task forces. Even worse, on a regional basis, the FBI has reported a 5.7 percent jump in violent crime in the Midwest, at least three times as much as any other area of the country. And on the heels of these numbers, what did the Administration do to the Byrne-JAG program? It zeroed it out.

We in the Senate see the convergence of the meth epidemic, international narcotics trafficking, and the rise in violent crime. We also see the devastation to families that such problems can cause. And again, what do we have to work with from the Administration to address these problems? A budget that leaves no money for state and local law enforcement officials, like Sheriff Kamatchus, who fight these battles against crime and drugs every day. We cannot abandon them the way the Administration would have us do.

My understanding from Iowa law enforcement leaders is that if the House numbers stand, they would have to lay off officers. And I know that I am not alone in hearing this concern. This has, in fact, been happening for many years now. In the past two years, alone, Iowa has had to absorb a 42 percent cut to its federal law enforcement funding – a cut of almost \$2 million. That money has almost exclusively been paying for drug task force officers who are going to have to be laid off in the middle of a meth epidemic. And it isn't just the Byrne-JAG program, but it's also the Community Oriented Policing Services program, as well as juvenile justice funding and corrections dollars that have taken this hit.

The Senate budget resolution calls for \$900 million in funding for Byrne-JAG. I hope that we can reach these levels, which are \$900 million more than what the Administration asked for. These levels will ensure that local law enforcement has the financial resources it needs to make our communities safer and to push back the scourge of meth. I again want to express my appreciation to the Democratic Policy Committee for organizing this important hearing.