

2019 POLICY BRIEF

SUSTAIN JUSTICE ASSISTANCE FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES: SUPPORT THE BYRNE JAG AND SCAAP PROGRAMS

QUICK FACTS

- Collectively, the nation's 3,069 counties spend over \$70 billion each year on public safety and court-related activities
- U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) grant programs are a needed catalyst for, and an essential part of, local efforts to safely lower jail populations, fight recidivism and combat drug trafficking while providing treatment and alternatives to incarceration
- Despite their success, DOJ grant programs have been cut significantly in the last several years; further reductions to these programs would be counterproductive to nationwide efforts to improve criminal justice systems

ACTION NEEDED:

Urge your members of Congress, especially those who serve on the U.S. House and Senate Appropriations Committees, to provide sustained funding for U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) programs that support county courts, local law enforcement and other justice-related local functions in the annual appropriations process.

BACKGROUND:

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) funds programs that provide critical support to county courts and corrections, juvenile justice and law enforcement agencies. Among these programs are the Byrne/Justice Assistance Grant Program (Byrne JAG), which helps counties across the nation utilize emerging and evidence-based approaches to the public safety challenges facing their jurisdictions, and the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP), which reimburses counties for costs associated with the incarceration of undocumented immigrants.

Counties work together with all levels of government to improve public safety and these federal programs are essential to nationwide efforts to safely lower jail populations, fight recidivism and combat drug trafficking while providing treatment and alternatives to incarceration. These programs have also been the catalyst for many initiatives that have brought about cost savings to taxpayers.

In FY 2016, a total of 306 counties received \$28 million in Byrne JAG funds; during that same period, a total of 726 counties received \$66 million in SCAAP appropriations.

Despite their success, both Byrne JAG and SCAAP have been cut significantly in the last several years. In FY 2005, Byrne JAG was funded at \$625 million. The program is currently funded at \$423.5 million through the FY 2019 omnibus spending package. SCAAP, was funded at \$545 million in FY 2002 but received only \$243.5 million in funding for FY 2019. These reductions are counterproductive to nationwide efforts to improve the criminal justice system, and it is important that current funding for the programs is not further reduced in future appropriations bills.

KEY TALKING POINTS

- Our nation's 3,069 counties spend over \$70 billion of their total local government expenditures each year on public safety and court-related activities, and are directly responsible for juvenile delinquency prevention, crime prevention, law enforcement, victim services, prosecution, indigent defense, drug and other problem-solving courts, corrections, drug and substance abuse treatment and post-correctional support services

- The federal contribution to state and local criminal justice services is very small (only 3.3 percent of the amount spent by state and local governments according to a 2008 report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics), but it is a much-needed spark that allows state and local governments to test new initiatives and coordinate across the justice system to find solutions that work
- U.S. Department of Justice grant programs have been the catalyst for many initiatives that have brought about cost savings to taxpayers while reducing prison and jail overcrowding, combatting the cycle of recidivism and reducing the rate of incarceration
- Despite their effectiveness, programs like Byrne JAG and SCAAP have been cut significantly in the last several years. Further cuts to these programs will limit our nation's ability to fight crime, manage better outcomes for youth, efficiently administer our diverse criminal justice systems and achieve the highest level of public safety

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