

TESTIMONY

of

**Steve Young
National President
Fraternal Order of Police**

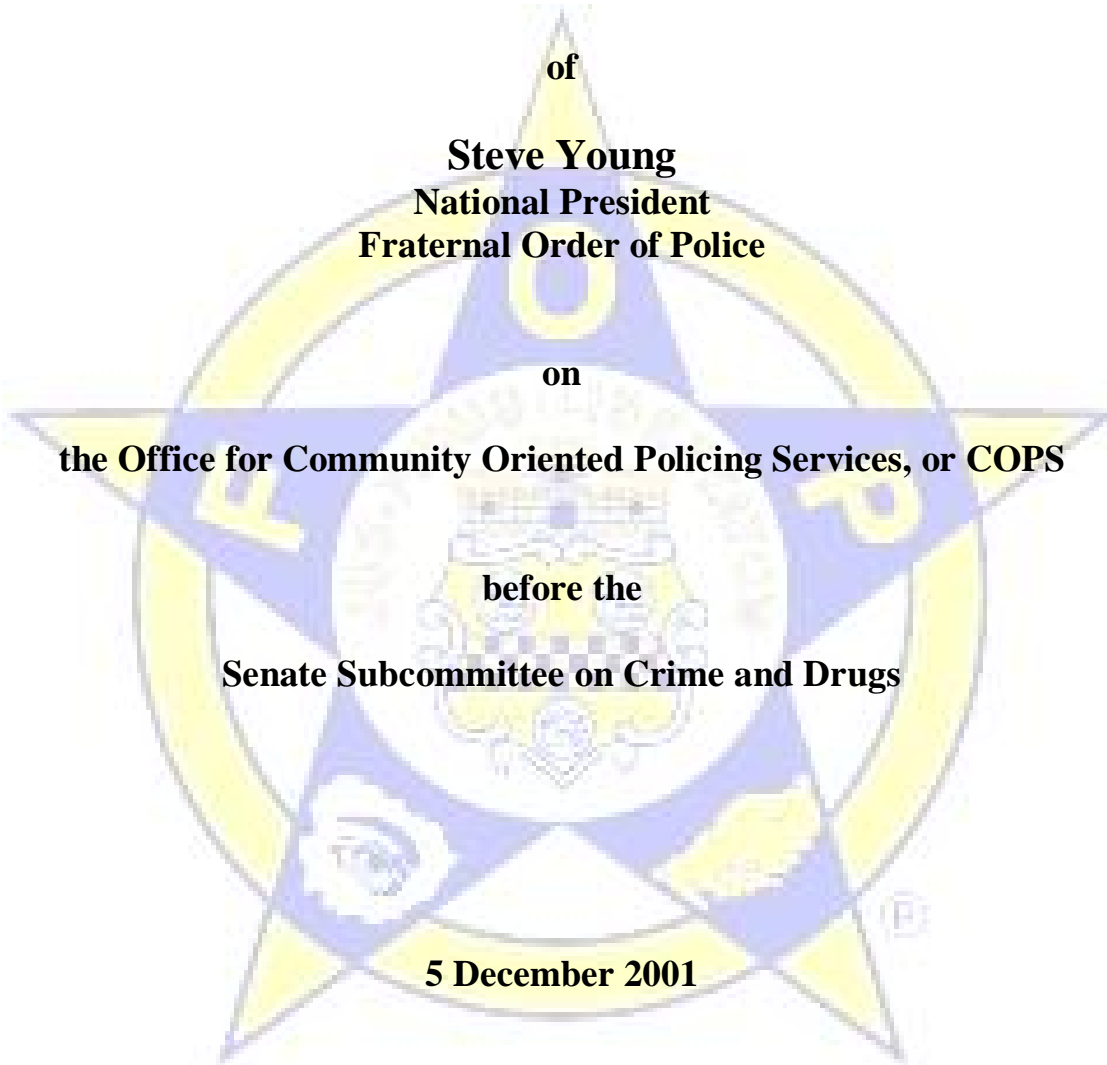
on

the Office for Community Oriented Policing Services, or COPS

before the

Senate Subcommittee on Crime and Drugs

5 December 2001



Good morning, Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Senate Subcommittee on Crime and Drugs. My name is Steve Young, and I am the National President of the Fraternal Order of Police, the largest law enforcement labor organization in the nation, representing more than 299,000 members.

I am here this morning to speak about our organization's strong support for the Office for Community Oriented Policing Services, or COPS.

The COPS program and the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant (LLEBG) program are the two most effective Federal anti-crime programs today. Both programs allow Federal resources to be focused and directed to the local level. But this year we are faced with the grim reality that the authorization for the COPS program is close to expiring and the Block Grant funding was cut by more than twenty-three percent (23%), which amounts to \$121.8 million.

In our view, the COPS program is, and should remain, the backbone of direct Federal aid to local and State law enforcement agencies. The block grant program provides funding to the local unit of government with a great deal of latitude in use of the money—whether it is lighting for a recreational park to reduce criminal activity at night, or to purchase additional squad cars.

This type of flexibility is important. However, the strength of the COPS program is that it provides targeted funding which goes directly to the local law enforcement agency to increase the number of law enforcement officers available to patrol our streets or serve in our schools as School Resource Officers.

Congress, with the strong support of a united law enforcement community, made great strides in addressing crime in America by enacting the COPS program as part of the 1994 Crime Act. Together, Congress and the law enforcement community pledged to reduce crime by following the advice of law enforcement: More officers equal less crime.

This simple formula has proved enormously successful. Ahead of schedule and under budget, the COPS office has made good on the Congressional pledge, enabling communities to hire or redeploy more than 100,000 law enforcement officers in more than 11,000 State and local agencies across the nation. My own Department of Marion, Ohio, has received more than \$825,000 from the program, allowing us to hire eleven new officers and redeploy officers into our School Resource program. The State of Ohio received an aggregate \$226.9 million from the COPS office—adding 3,638 officers to the street.

Simply put, there is no other Federal program that offers this type of direct assistance to law enforcement agencies. It has a tremendously positive impact on public safety in communities like Marion.

This, Mr. Chairman, is a great testimonial to the success of this program.

Crime rates have fallen to their lowest levels in decades. A reduction in crime means there are Americans who likely would have been crime victims if the 1994 Crime Act had not been passed and the COPS program never implemented. It is important to emphasize this point—lives and

property were saved because of this program and the efforts of the dedicated men and women in law enforcement.

The COPS program also represents something as equally valuable as more officers on our streets; the COPS program was the centerpiece of a plan to launch a new national law enforcement strategy—"community-oriented policing." This practice, which had already proven successful in many communities, is now found in virtually all jurisdictions. Departments were able to implement "community-oriented policing" because the COPS program enabled them to call upon Federal resources to get the officers needed to make the strategy work in their communities. Without these resources, law enforcement agencies will be unable to continue this successful strategy.

I cannot imagine that anyone here would want to give back the ground that we have won in the fight against crime. What we must keep in focus is that the community policing strategy has worked to reduce crime in our country. The F.O.P., along with the rest of the law enforcement community, clearly recognizes the value of this program.

For this reason, we will be working with Members of the Senate and the House to not only continue our support of COPS, but to reauthorize the program.

We strongly support your bill, Mr. Chairman, S. 924, the "PROTECTION Act," which would reauthorize the COPS program through 2007 to hire and retain police officers, pay overtime and reimburse officers pursuing college and advance degrees to enhance their job skills as well as providing Federal money for new technology.

The F.O.P. believes this legislation builds on a solid foundation of success. We have here a government program that works. It is inexplicable to me that we would end such a successful program!

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Ranking Member Grassley, for inviting me to participate in this hearing today. I would be pleased to answer any questions.