

# **TESTIMONY**

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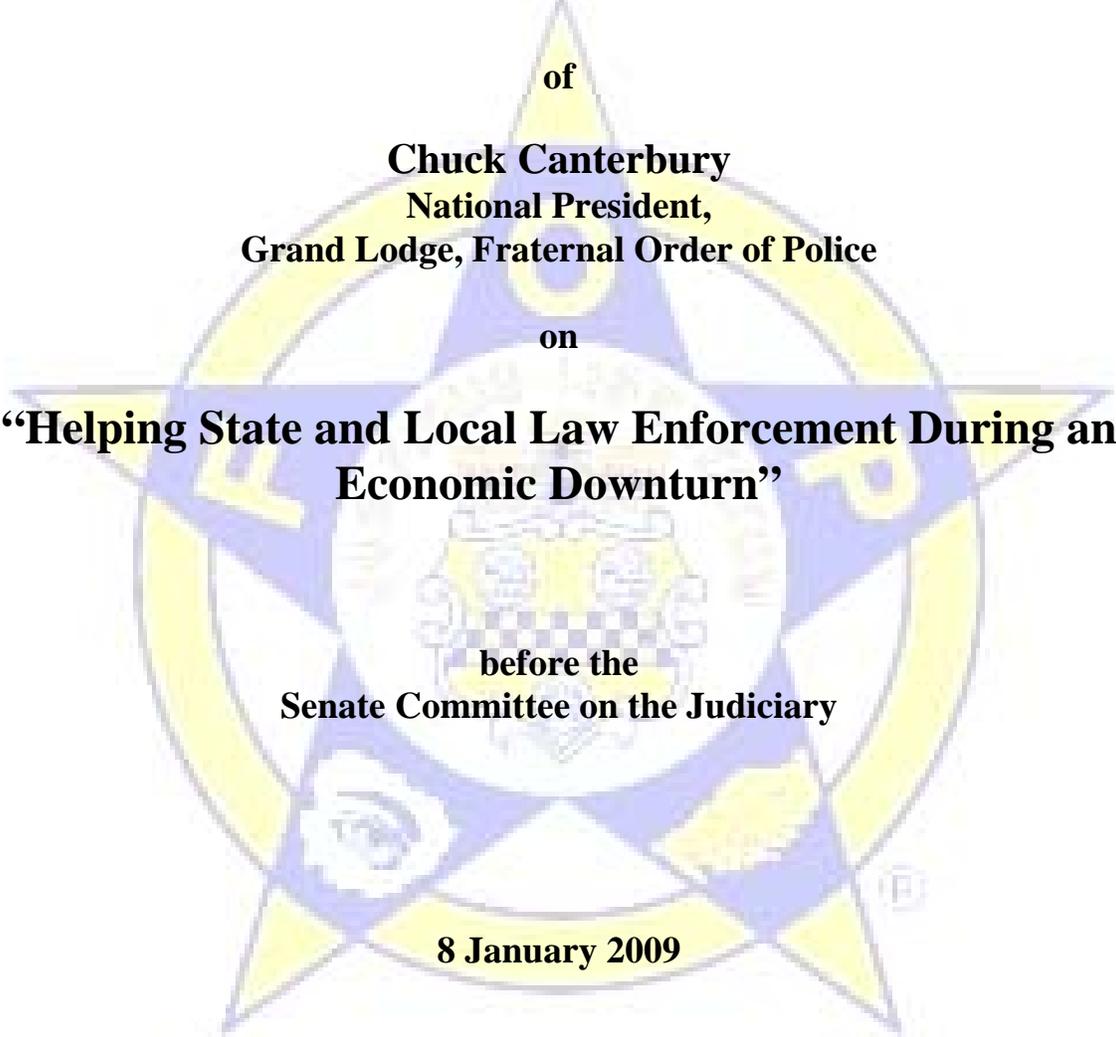
**Chuck Canterbury  
National President,  
Grand Lodge, Fraternal Order of Police**

on

**“Helping State and Local Law Enforcement During an  
Economic Downturn”**

before the  
**Senate Committee on the Judiciary**

**8 January 2009**



Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Specter, and distinguished Members of the Committee on the Judiciary. My name is Chuck Canterbury, National President of the Fraternal Order of Police. I am the elected spokesperson of more than 327,000 rank-and-file police officers—the largest law enforcement labor organization in the United States.

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to share with you the views of the members of the FOP on the importance of the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program (Byrne-JAG) and urge this Committee and the Senate to restore funding for this program in the economic recovery bill that the Congress will address this month. The Byrne-JAG program is important to State and local law enforcement at all times, but these funds are vital during periods of economic recession.

The Byrne-JAG program provides funding for a diverse range of law enforcement, prosecutorial and other criminal justice initiatives in communities across the country. The program is used by State and local governments to support multijurisdictional drug and gang task forces, cold case units, identify theft investigations, school violence prevention programs, services for threatened jurors, witness protection programs, victim's rights and hate crime programs.

The support provided by the Byrne-JAG program is absolutely critical in the fight against violent crime, drug and gang activity in thousands of jurisdictions. Without the funding for task forces to combat crime, many local and State law enforcement agencies would be left severely and dangerously shorthanded in fighting the growth of gangs and violent crime in our cities. Sadly, the real victims of these drastic cuts are not officers or departments—they are the law-abiding citizens who are left to the mercy of gangs and drug-ridden neighborhoods.

The Byrne-JAG program was cut by two-thirds in the FY2008 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, from \$520 million in FY2007 to \$170 million in FY2008. Here I must pause and thank all of you in the Senate who sought to restore these funds several times in the FY08 emergency supplemental spending bill. You, in particular, Mr. Chairman, should be commended for your long-standing efforts to provide meaningful support for State and local law enforcement. You and your colleague Vice President-elect Biden have been true champions of the cop on the beat and we are very grateful for your leadership on this and so many other issues important to law enforcement. Despite your efforts and those of your Senate colleagues, restoring \$490 million to the Byrne-JAG program was ultimately stripped from the Economic Recovery Act.

The Byrne-JAG program doled out nearly \$900 million in 2003; five years later the 2008 amount was just about \$170 million. Simply stated, these cuts have made it extraordinarily difficult for the rank and file men and women of law enforcement to keep our nation safe. These cuts over the years have created real world negative consequences for many State and local law enforcement agencies. As just one example, the chairman of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), Walter M. Phillips Jr., warned in a press release that due to the cuts in Federal support, law enforcement in Pennsylvania would be hampered in its efforts to combat crime. The loss of funds to vital law enforcement programs, such as task forces, will continue all over the nation if the funding for Byrne-JAG program is not restored.

Experts will tell you that crime tends to rise in times of economic recession. As an officer, I can tell you the experts have this one right. In the first week of January, several State governments have

reported that crime rose in 2008, with many expecting this to continue or get worse in 2009 as our economic woes persist. In order to appropriately address this rise in crime, Congress must work to not only restore funding for the Byrne- JAG program to higher levels that it had in previous years, but also move quickly in passing it so that the law enforcement agencies that need the funding may receive it.

This is why I have taken this opportunity at this hearing to urge you to restore and to fully fund the Byrne-JAG program as a part of the economic recovery package that Congress will be working on in the next several weeks. To our members in the FOP, the economic recovery package will not be complete unless it addresses the fact that crime rises during economic recessions and therefore State and local law enforcement agencies need Byrne-JAG funds as soon as possible. If an economic package is to be passed by the House and the Senate, funding for the Byrne-JAG program must be included for it to be a real recovery effort. We as a nation must address all of the consequences of the economic recession we face, and this includes support for State and local law enforcement agencies to keep our streets safe, as well as economic stimulus programs.

I understand the difficult decisions that lawmakers face in addressing fiscal shortfalls, but we in the law enforcement community must make them as well. My first concern in this regard is what the cost will be for those law abiding citizens who wish to live in safe communities free of gang violence and drug dealers if the Byrne-JAG program is not funded fully and soon. This is not the time to further cut law enforcement funding; rather, just the opposite is true. The men and women that have sworn to serve and protect our communities need and deserve a Byrne-JAG program that is fully funded so that they can meet the challenges that they will face in the years ahead.

Thank you.