

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE BUDGET

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss an issue that is important to many people throughout the State of Arkansas and indeed throughout this country. I rise to express my disappointment with the budget as it pertains to law enforcement programs and, in particular, community policing.

I believe the budget shortchanges smaller communities and grossly underfunds programs that have put more police officers on the street, reduced crime in rural areas, curbed drug abuse, and put at-risk youth back on the right track.

Mr. President, this budget cuts funding to the Community Oriented Policing Services—known by its acronym COPS—by 85 percent. That is 85 percent. This program was funded at \$1.1 billion in fiscal year 2002. President Bush proposes only \$164 million for the COPS program in fiscal year 2004. The administration's budget request for COPS represents a 100 percent cut to the COPS universal hiring program, and a 100 percent cut to the "COPS in school" program. In fact, the only program that is funded under this budget is the COPS technology program, and even that has been cut by 66 percent.

From its inception, COPS has awarded just over \$8 billion to local and State law enforcement agencies across the country. With grant money, departments have hired over 110,000 community police officers, in addition to purchasing technological upgrades and equipment.

The COPS Program was established to focus on crime prevention and community engagement. This breaks with traditional notions of law enforcement by moving from reactive responses to proactive problem solving, focusing on the causes of crime and disorder. Community-oriented policing requires much more interaction on the neighborhood and community level than previous policing efforts.

In Arkansas, we have been able to hire over 1,300 additional officers with the \$83 million we have received. We have also used that money to combat methamphetamine use and to implement the COPS Program in schools.

A February 3 article in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, my State's largest newspaper, stated the reason given by this administration for cutting funding is that COPS has "not produced conclusive results in lowering crime."

I speak today not only as a Senator, but also as the former chief law enforcement officer of Arkansas, and I wholeheartedly disagree with this ad-

ministration's assessment of these very important programs.

I have worked closely with law enforcement officers of my State to make Arkansas a safer place and a better place to raise a family. They are strong leaders in their communities and demonstrate the character and the courage that define us as a nation. Together, we are able to keep over 1,000 criminals off the street due to their work on the front lines.

Oftentimes, these police officers work in smaller rural communities. They operate under tighter budgets with smaller staffs than most of their urban counterparts. Nonetheless, they put their lives on the line every single day. They make real differences in people's lives, and they do it with professionalism and an attitude of public service. They do it because it is the right thing to do. They do not do it because it is easy or because it is pleasant, and, Lord knows, they do not do it for the money. They are not asking for much in return.

I wish to take this time to thank all law enforcement officials for the work they do. I especially thank Sheriff Marty Montgomery of Faulkner County, Sheriff Ron Ball of Hot Spring County, and Sheriff Chuck Lange of the Arkansas Sheriffs' Association. They are in Washington today as part of their national association's meeting. I thank them not only for their commitment to public service and to keeping our communities safer—combined they have 87 years of law enforcement experience—but I also thank them for sharing with me their insights into the COPS Program and helping to demonstrate just how important the program is to them and other local law enforcement.

You see, Mr. President, to them, this funding could mean the difference between life and death. This past Saturday at 7:30 p.m., Faulkner County sheriff's deputy, Brad Brocker, was called to investigate a suspicious person call in a high drug-use area. When Deputy Brocker arrived on the scene, he was met with three bullets to the heart in the upper chest. Luckily, he was wearing his bulletproof vest, but he risked his life to make his community and, yes, even his Nation, safer and better. But there is more to the story.

The Kevlar vest he was wearing was paid for by Federal grant money, and Deputy Brocker was originally hired as a deputy under the COPS Program. Putting this Federal money back into our communities works. In fact, Faulkner County, with its 90,000 citizens and spanning 700 square miles, has used COPS funding to hire 12 officers in the past few years. Twelve may not sound like a lot, but it constitutes half of the Faulkner County sheriff's police force. It has made a difference.

In the last 7 years, the arrest rates for burglary, robbery, and methamphetamine production have all gone up. Any one of my colleagues who lives in a rural State can surely tell you

about their problems with the use and the production of methamphetamine. It has become an epidemic throughout rural America.

Last year alone, the Faulkner County Sheriff's Office seized 44 labs and shut them down for good. Sheriff Montgomery is proud of that accomplishment, as he should be, but he warns that by cutting law enforcement programs, such as COPS, the steps they have taken forward will be lost, and they cannot sustain the manpower and law enforcement presence in their county.

I believe we have a duty to support legislation, programs, and budgets to address the challenges facing law enforcement agencies in rural areas in Arkansas and all across the country, in communities such as Malvern, a small city in southwest Arkansas. Richard Taft is the police chief of the Malvern Police Department. Mr. Taft has 32 years of experience in law enforcement and 10 years as Malvern's police chief. When Chief Taft took over in 1993, the Malvern police force consisted of 14 people responsible for protecting a city of over 10,000 citizens. As Chief Taft put it to me one day: I didn't have enough officers to protect my officers, much less the citizens of Malvern.

In 1993, according to Chief Taft, crime was rampant. Robberies, drive-by shootings, and burglaries occurred on a weekly basis. Since instituting the COPS Program and utilizing its grant funding, crime is down. The Malvern police force today is 22 people strong. With the additional manpower, Malvern has assembled a special crime team with the ability to respond to critical incidents, including chemical spills and missing persons. They did not have that ability before. COPS funding has allowed the Malvern Police Department to free up some of their money for other necessities, such as computers and radios.

Chief Taft says:

Without the COPS Program, I wouldn't have a police force.

Yet this administration says there is no conclusive evidence that the COPS Program works? I disagree with that. More importantly, there are scores of law enforcement officials who would also stand up to dispute that claim.

In 1993, Little Rock, AR, had the highest violent crime rate per capita in the country. By working with the Federal Government, using the COPS Program, and their own additional hires, the Little Rock Police Department bolstered their force and violent crime has dropped by 60 percent.

Chuck Lange, the head of the Arkansas Sheriffs' Association, knows the significant impact the COPS Program has had statewide—and I am sure sheriffs in other States can tell you the same thing—by putting more police officers on the street. He knows that more officers have helped shorten response time. That is especially important in sprawling rural communities. He knows that time is not a luxury afforded to crime victims. I know it as