

THE COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICY SERVICES (COPS) IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2009

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 1, 2009

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, thank you, Chairman CONYERS for holding today's very important Markup on H.R. 1139, the Community Oriented Policy Services (COPS) Improvement Act of 2009. The COPS program was designed to help bring about fundamental changes in policing by drawing officers closer to the citizens they protect. And, in scores of communities across the nation, the COPS program did just that.

The idea of community policing is to get away from the traditional "call and response" model, in which officers run from one emergency call to the next. It involves sending officers into the streets and into the neighborhoods to build relationships with residents, identify the sources of crime problems, and solve them before they get worse. The success of the COPS approach to policing is dependent upon the relationships built between the police and the members of the communities they serve.

Since 1995, COPS has awarded more than \$10 billion to advance community policing, including grants awarded to more than 13,300 state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies to fund the hiring and redeployment of nearly 117,700 officers. In addition to funding law enforcement positions, the Office of Community Policing Services has been the catalyst for innovations in community policing and broad implementation of effective law enforcement strategy. Presently, departments that employ community policing serve 87 percent of American communities.

On March 16, 2009, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder announced that the Department of Justice will be accepting applications for \$1 billion in Recovery Act Funds for the COPS program. Approximately 5,500 law enforcement officer jobs will be created or saved in law enforcement agencies across the country through funding provided by the Department of Justice.

Recently, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, H.R. 1, included \$4 billion in Department of Justice grant funding to enhance state, local, and tribal law enforcement efforts, including the hiring of new police officers, to combat violence against women, and to fight against internet crimes against children.

Similar to Edward Byrne Justice Act Grant (JAG) awards, Recovery Act funds that are authorized for COPS can also be used to hire new officers or rehire recently laid off officers, fill unfunded vacancies and help prevent scheduled layoffs within law enforcement agencies.

COPS funds are allocated directly to the local level governments and law enforcement agencies and provide a three-year period of funding.

Specifically, H.R. 1139, the "COPS Improvements Act of 2009," reinvigorates the COPS program's ability to accomplish its critical mission by establishing three grant programs: (1) the Troops-to-Cops Program, (2) the Community Prosecutors Program, and (3)

the Technology Grants Program. The Troops-to-Cops Program would fund the hiring of former members of the Armed Forces to serve as law enforcement officers in community-oriented policing, particularly in communities adversely affected by recent military base closings.

The Community Prosecutors Program would authorize the Attorney General to make grants for additional community prosecuting programs that would, for example, assign prosecutors to pursue cases from specific geographic areas and to deal with localized violent crime, among other crimes.

The Technology Grants Program would authorize the Attorney General to make grants to develop and use new technologies to assist State and local law enforcement agencies reorient some of their efforts from reacting to crime to preventing crime.

The investment in COPS through the Recovery Act although crucial is a one-time investment limited to the purpose of hiring officers. The reauthorization of COPS is necessary for the program to continue past the investment of the Recovery Act. Reauthorization is also necessary so that the COPS program can include the innovative aspects of the program as explained above.

The Houston area has made great strides in reducing crime. I am confident that with programs like COPS Houston can better combat crime.

CRIME STATISTICS

According to Houston Police Department statistics:

VIOLENT CRIMES

Violent crimes in Houston increased less than 1 percent in 2008 compared with 2007. Homicides dropped by 16 percent.

The number of homicides dropped from 353 in 2007 to 295 last year.

Sexual assaults increased more than 8 percent from 2007.

Aggravated assaults increased at 9.1 percent.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Of the 1,092 additional aggravated assault cases in 2008, more than half were reports of domestic violence.

NONVIOLENT CRIMES

Nonviolent crimes declined more than 10 percent in 2008.

Property crimes dropped by more than 10 percent.

Auto thefts decreased last year, dropping more than 21 percent to 15,214, down from 19,465 in 2007.

While Houston has made great strides in combating crime, more must be done to ensure the safety of Houstonians in their communities and their respective neighborhoods. I believe that the COPS program will be of benefit to the people of the 18th Congressional District as well as other communities in Texas and in communities around the United States.

AMENDMENT

The COPS program was designed to help bring about fundamental changes in policing by drawing officers closer to the citizens they protect. And, in scores of communities across the nation, the COPS program did just that.

The idea of community policing is to get away from the traditional "call and response" model, in which officers run from one emergency call to the next. It involves sending officers into the streets and into the neighbor-

hoods to build relationships with residents, identify the sources of crime problems, and solve them before they get worse. The success of the COPS approach to policing is dependent upon the relationships built between the police and the members of the communities they serve.

Because the success of the COPS approach to policing is dependent upon the relationships built between the police and the members of the community it served, I am offering an amendment.

H.R. 1139 requires that the Attorney General shall provide for a scientific study of the effectiveness of the programs, projects, and activities funded under this Act in reducing crime. The study is to be completed within four years of enactment of this bill.

My amendment specifically requires that:

"Such study shall include identified best practices for community policing that have demonstrated results in building and strengthening the relationships between police departments and the communities such departments serve."

The requirement that the study identify "best practices" in community policing is important because the enumeration of these best practices will serve as an unequivocal benchmark by which the successes of the COPS program can be measured.

These "best practices" would establish bright line rules to analyze community policing and the derogation of which will require retooling and adjustment of the community policing measures involved. Moreover, the Attorney General is in the best position to complete this study and certainly is in the best position to determine what constitutes "good" community policing. My amendment would support and strengthen the development of good community policing methods. I urge my colleagues to support my amendment in its entirety.

TRIBUTE TO THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS SOCIETY

HON. KEN CALVERT

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 1, 2009

Mr. CALVERT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor and pay tribute to a group of individuals whose dedication and contributions to the military community of Riverside, California are exceptional. Riverside has been fortunate to have dynamic and dedicated military community leaders who willingly and unselfishly give their time and talent and make their communities a better place to live and work. The Distinguished Flying Cross Society (DFCS) is such a group and I wholeheartedly support their efforts to build a National Distinguished Flying Cross Memorial at the March Field Air Museum (MFAM). This monument will "perpetuate the memory of those persons who have been and those who will receive the Distinguished Flying Cross."

I am honored to represent Air Force Village West (AFVW), a "Continuing Care Retirement community" (CCRC) that is home to and also provides medical care for over 680 retired military officers, their wives and widows. All the Services are represented among the residents: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, Public Health Service and NOAA.