

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 7, 2005

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Chairman
Senate Commerce, Justice and
Science Appropriations Subcommittee
The Capitol, Room S146A
Washington, D.C. 20510-0001

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member
Senate Commerce, Justice and
Science Appropriations Subcommittee
123 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-0001

Dear Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member:

We are writing to request your support in restoring proposed cuts to the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program. We also ask that you support continued funding for this program within the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), rather than within the U.S. Department of Justice's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF). The HIDTA program supports and facilitates coordination among federal, state and local law enforcement to combat the most pressing drug threat in the region. In many of the HIDTA regions, that threat is methamphetamine.

According to all HIDTA Directors, the proposed cuts to HIDTA would severely jeopardize the integrity of the HIDTA program. Taking \$128 million away from the program would shut down most of the task forces, intelligence centers and other activities funded by HIDTA. Most of the 28 individual HIDTAs would most likely have to be eliminated or severely scaled-back. This will cause a significant gap in drug enforcement coverage, particularly in rural areas, that state and local law enforcement will be incapable of filling. Drug manufacturing, trafficking, addiction and crime that will result from this gap will have a ripple effect throughout the country in our public health and correction systems, negatively affecting public safety, quality of life, children and families.

We ask that you restore funding to the HIDTA program to at least FY 2005 levels, as expressed by the Sense of the Senate that was accepted as part of the Senate's FY 2006 Budget Resolution. Additionally, we ask for your support for maintaining funding for the HIDTA program at ONDCP, rather than at OCDETF, as proposed in the President's FY 2006 budget request. As you know, the Senate also expressed its intention in the FY 2006 Budget Resolution that HIDTA remain within ONDCP because that is where Congress last authorized the program to reside. To date, no explanation has been provided for the proposal to move HIDTA to the Department of Justice. Therefore, until the appropriate authorizing Committees in the House and Senate investigate this proposal further, we believe that it is inappropriate to move the successful HIDTA program from ONDCP to the Department of Justice.

The Senate's commitment to restore funding to HIDTA and to maintain the integrity of this program is clear. We cannot allow this country to suffer a dramatic loss in drug enforcement capabilities at this critical time in our fight against methamphetamine. For the security of this nation and the protection of our communities and our families, we urge you to honor the Senate's wishes in the FY 2006 Budget Resolution and fund the HIDTA program at the FY 2005 level of \$228 million. We cannot afford to let methamphetamine and other illicit drugs to again take hold of our communities.

Thank you for your consideration and assistance.

Sincerely,

Max Baucus

Chuck Grassley

Ken Salazar

Herb Kohl

Tom Harkin

E. Benjamin Johnson

Joe Biden

Sam Brownback

Craig Thomas

Jim Talent

Ch. Sten

Patrick Leahy

Russell O. Feingold

Nut Cornal

Mark Pryor

Frank Lautenberg

Chris Dill

Samuel R. DeLoach

Walter Dill Scott
Paul Dubois

Frank W. Rowland
Samuel D.

Emory Bogert

Phonk R. Lautenberg

Dick Durbin

J. Edgar Hoover

Amy

John

Jim Johnson

Cyril HAGER

Michael B. Long

Carl Levin

Mary McCormack

Chris Hill

Tom F. Kelly

Wesley Merritt

Bill Nelson

Don Widen

Byron L. Long

Barbara Byrd

Rebbie Starnew

Charles Scherer

Bob Handy

Norm Coleman

Harry Reid

Jim Jeffords

Mary L. Gardner

John Cornyn

Bill Blount

Blanche L. Lincoln

Bill Vitt

Jay Byrnes

Hillary Rodham Clinton

John Thune

Allen Saxe

Olympia Snowe