

Federal programs to fight drugs moving forward in Congress: Will combat cross-border trafficking The Press-Republican (Plattsburgh, New York) July 31, 2010 Saturday

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July 31--PLATTSBURGH -- Two federal programs aimed at stopping drugs from coming across the U.S./Canadian border are moving forward in Congress.

Funding for the **High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Program (HIDTA)** has been restored, and the Northern Border Counternarcotics Act was unanimously approved by the House.

FULL FUNDING

The administration had proposed cutting **HIDTA** funding 12 percent from \$239 million to \$210 million.

But the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for Financial Services and General Government released its budget bill this week, which restored the funding in full for 2011.

"Fully funding the **HIDTA** program will benefit families and law enforcement across New York," Sen. Charles Schumer (D-Brooklyn) said in a statement.

"Upstate is one of the greatest places to raise a family, not just in the country, but on Earth. To keep the quality of life so high, we've got to use every resource we have to combat those who would do our families harm, and we need to push back hard against the recent rise in drug smuggling across the Canadian border."

MORE DRUGS

From 2007 to 2009, cocaine seizures at the northern border have risen from less than 1 kilogram to 18 kilograms; heroin seizures have gone from less than 1 kilogram to 28 kilograms; marijuana seizures have risen from 2,791 kilograms to 3,423 kilograms; and ecstasy seizures are up from 240 kilograms to 303 kilograms, according to a release from Schumer.

Franklin County District Attorney Derek Champagne said the **HIDTA** funding helps local law-enforcement agencies stop not only drugs, but smuggling of aliens, weapons and other threats.

"Any decreased funding will directly affect our ability upstate to secure our border not only from drug smugglers, but from terrorists."

PLAN WITH TRIBE

The Northern Border Counternarcotics Strategy Act is designed to enhance American response to illegal trafficking of drugs by requiring the director of National Drug Control Policy to submit to Congress a Northern Border Counternarcotics Strategy.

That would include a clear plan to curb the cross-border drug trade and coordinate a better working relationship between Indian tribal law-enforcement agencies and the U.S. government.

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"It is vital to both the economic development of our region and the safety of our community that we take steps to stop the drug trade across our northern border," Congressman Bill Owens (D-Plattsburgh) said in a news release.

"Northern New York has benefitted for decades from a robust business relationship across international lines, but any illegal activity that takes place over our border threatens that relationship."

'CLEAR MESSAGE'

Clinton County District Attorney Andrew Wylie said the program is a great benefit to the North Country.

"This bill is exactly what our communities need right now," Wylie said.

"This legislation will send a clear message to those who think they can break international laws and endanger our region that we will not stand for it."

Owens authored the legislation for the program, which was passed by a vote of 413 to 0.

A companion bill in the Senate was introduced by Schumer and has been referred to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary.

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