

For Immediate Release
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**STATEMENT FROM THE NATIONAL HIDTA DIRECTORS
ASSOCIATION ON CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR
THE NATIONAL HIDTA PROGRAM**

April 27, 2005, Alexandria, Va—Today, the leaders of all 28 High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) regional programs announced their gratitude to the 90 House and 56 Senate Members who have signed letters of support for the HIDTA Program this month. The letters, addressed to the leading House and Senate Appropriations Committee members, expressed the signers' support for restoring proposed cuts to the HIDTA Program, and continued funding of the HIDTA Program within the U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).

In early 2005, ONDCP Director John Walters proposed reducing the HIDTA Program's budget by over 50 percent, and transferring the program to the U.S. Department of Justice's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Program. Since that time, both Republican and Democratic Members of Congress have made strong public statements against the proposals.

House Members Show Widespread Support for HIDTA Program

On April 12th, 90 House Members co-signed a letter to House Appropriations Committee leaders, asking them to oppose Director Walters' FY06 HIDTA proposals. The letter reads, "... if enacted, the proposals would effectively terminate the current HIDTA Program. We believe that such a result would severely undermine federal, state, and local drug enforcement cooperation and coordination, threatening to undo the substantial progress we have made in reducing drug use since 2001. We hope that you will restore full funding to the HIDTA Program and keep it at its authorized location in ONDCP."

In March 2005, the House Committee on Government Reform's Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources held a hearing on Director Walters' proposed cuts to various state and local drug law enforcement funding mechanisms including the HIDTA

Program. During the hearing, Congressman Mark Souder (R-Ind.) stated that Walters' proposals were "premature and too sweeping." He also took issue with DOJ and ONDCP representatives' insistence that the decision to fund the HIDTA Program with only \$100M was "pre-decisional." In his statement, Souder said, "... it doesn't take very many Republicans to do a wake-up call here to an arrogant approach that says 'Everything is pre-decisional, we're not even going to talk to all of these people out in the country, we're not going to present any evidence to Congress.' You have not given any compelling evidence that says why it (HIDTA) should be moved over (to Justice)."

Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) recently stated, "I am a strong supporter of the HIDTA program, and worked to have the Washington/Baltimore corridor designated a HIDTA in 1993. I sincerely regret that the President proposed to cut more than \$120 million from the HIDTA program and move the program from the Office of National Drug Control Policy to the Department of Justice. These changes will in fact eliminate an effective program that efficiently coordinates our law enforcement efforts to address serious problems with drug consumption and drug related crime in our region and throughout the country. I will fight to restore this funding and keep HIDTA at ONDCP in the appropriations process this year."

Majority of Senators Sends a Powerful Message on the HIDTA Program

On April 18th, 56 Senators co-signed a letter to Senate Appropriations Committee leaders, requesting their support in restoring the proposed cuts to the HIDTA Program's FY06 budget, and for continued funding for the HIDTA Program within ONDCP rather than the Department of Justice. The letter states that the budget cut would, "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." The letter also expresses the Senators' support for keeping the HIDTA Program at ONDCP by stating, "until the appropriate authorizing Committees in the House and Senate investigate the proposal (to move the HIDTA Program from ONDCP to the Department of Justice) further, we believe that it is inappropriate to move the successful HIDTA Program."

In March 2005, Senators Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) presented S.Con.Res.18, expressing the sense of the Senate on the HIDTA Program. The amendment to the Senate's FY06 Budget Resolution provides for a spending level of \$227M for the HIDTA Program, and assumes that unless new legislation is enacted, the HIDTA Program will remain

with the ONDCP, “where Congress last authorized it to reside.” Senators Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.), Mike DeWine (R-Ohio), Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Patty Murray (D-Wash.), Gordon Smith (R-Ore.), and Jim Talent (R-Mo.) co-sponsored the amendment, which passed by voice vote with no opposition.

On the Senate floor, Baucus stated, “Montana law enforcement tell me that moving the HIDTA Program to OCDETF will do nothing to improve law enforcement capabilities, and will undermine the unique partnerships and innovation that the HIDTA Program has helped to create nationwide and that have been so successful in curbing the spread of methamphetamine in Montana.” In presenting the amendment, Senator Grassley said, “Congress provided ONDCP with the responsibility for the management—and effectiveness—of the HIDTA program. For a relatively modest investment, federal, state, and local law enforcement have tremendously benefited from the increased information sharing and improved coordination that HIDTAs create. The task forces created through the HIDTA Program can serve as models for initiatives against terrorism, money laundering, and other modern threats to civil society.”

For more information on the HIDTA Program and the position of the National HIDTA Directors Association on Director Walters’ HIDTA-related FY06 proposals, visit www.hidtadirectors.org, or call (703) 400-0708.

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