



Department of Justice

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ADDRESS

BY

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ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

Before the

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

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3:00 p.m.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is a pleasure to address the Congressional-City Conference of the National League of Cities.

I understand that a major portion of your conference is devoted to meetings with Congressional delegations to discuss Administration proposals aimed at improving the quality of life for our increasingly urbanized society.

I can think of no problem which is of a higher priority than the ever increasing street crime in our nation's cities. It is for this reason that I wish to discuss with you the Administration's Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, commonly known as the LEAA.

LEAA is the federal government's major grant-in-aid matching fund program to states and cities for crime control and criminal justice projects.

I think the total budget expenditure is enough to show you how important we consider this program.

In Fiscal Year '69, the total budget was \$63 million. In Fiscal Year '70, it is \$268 million. In Fiscal Year '71, we have requested \$480 million. This means that, in Fiscal 1971, the states and cities will receive double

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the amount of federal funds they received this year; and the total federal expenditure will be about one-twelfth of the total national expenditure of \$6 billion for law enforcement and the administration of criminal justice.

I am sure that the federal government's commitment will probably reach a billion dollars in the future -- but if, and only if, the money we are distributing now is used effectively. Nothing can kill a program faster than too much money and too little experience on how to use it. I think that the jump from \$63 million to \$268 million to almost a half-billion dollars in a three-year period is about as much as our states and cities can effectively spend. And I will return to this topic later.

I want you to know that the President and the Administration have the deepest and strongest personal commitment to help the states and cities reduce the plague of crime. It is a social priority of the first order.

As you may know, the Department of Justice is the only federal agency requesting a substantial increase in its budget for Fiscal 1971 -- most of this increase is for the LEAA anticrime program.

2. LEAA FUNDING CONCEPT

The general budget distribution theory for federal anticrime funds is that most of the money goes to states in block grants, according to their population. But 15 percent of the action grant funds may be allocated in a discretionary manner by the federal government. A great portion of these discretionary funds are going, and will continue to go, directly to the cities to implement the federal funds they are already receiving within the state block grant concept.

The remainder of the funds are devoted to research, educational training for law enforcement personnel, and special projects.

It is our concept that federal anticrime funds should be utilized in the broadest and most comprehensive sense -- to aid police, the courts, corrections, juvenile and narcotics problems, organized crime and riot control, and for community relations efforts with minority groups.

We think that it is extremely important to recognize the interrelationship between law enforcement, the courts and corrections. It is futile to improve the ability of the police to apprehend suspects if the suspects must

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wait a year or 18 months in the court system to be tried. It is useless to improve the efficiency of the courts if convicted persons are sent to correctional institutions which are merely revolving doors for a return to street crime.

The functional uses of the funds also are comprehensive; for planning, for the training of existing personnel and the hiring of new personnel; for new equipment; for the improvement of existing facilities and the construction of new facilities; for pilot research projects, and for communications and educational projects.

The LEAA is basically a matching fund program. In the area of planning, the federal government underwrites 90 percent of the cost; for anticrime action programs in general, the federal government underwrites 60 percent of the cost; for organized crime and civil disorder control, the federal government underwrites 75 percent of the cost; and for new construction, the federal government underwrites 50 percent of the cost.

3. THE CITIES AND LEAA

Here I should like to generally answer some of the criticism about the grant program including criticism contained in the thoughtfully done report of the National

League of Cities. I disagree with the conclusions of your report. I believe that the cities have fared extremely well under LEAA so far, and that they will continue to get the special attention they deserve.

We are aware that the crime rate in the urban areas is substantially higher than in rural areas. And therefore that some urban areas would prefer to receive their funds through direct federal grants rather than through state block grants.

As you know, the question of federal anticrime funds to cities was vigorously debated in Congress prior to the passage of the Safe Streets Act.

There was strong opposition to the state block grant concept. It was charged that the cities would be ignored and that the program would turn out to be an undersupervised pork barrel handout to the states.

It was also argued that a direct city grant concept would permit the federal government to directly control every major metropolitan area's anticrime efforts and that the federal government would ignore other areas of the state and the necessity to have statewide, comprehensive programs.

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The compromise which was reached was a block grant, matching fund program to the states with special safeguard provisions to insure adequate attention to the cities.

For example, 40 percent of the planning grant money must go to local government and 75 percent of the action grant money must go to local government. As a matter of fact, many state governments have given local government over and above the minimum 75 percent, with some states giving as high as 92 percent.

A second safeguard provision for the cities was the establishment of the 15 percent discretionary federal fund. It underwrites direct grants to cities with serious crime problems. It also funds special state projects, such as organized crime and narcotics control.

In its first year of operation, \$1.1 million was made available to the eleven largest cities. In its second year of operation, \$20 million is being made available -- \$10 million to 112 large cities and an additional \$10 million which will be supplemental aid mainly for cities.

Although our figures are only initial, it is believed that cities of 50,000 are receiving 60 percent of all the funds distributed by the states to local governments -- bearing in mind that these cities comprise less than 50 percent of the population and have about 62 percent of the serious crimes.

So far, I think I can safely say that the action grant and planning grant programs have been very successful.

For the first time in our history there are state-level agencies concerned with planning and program development for criminal justice.

These state planning agencies not only evaluate city plans but also attempt to coordinate the needs of more than one political subdivision.

For example, a number of states have received grants for statewide organized crime programs. Under the direct city grant approach, each independent political subdivision might start its own program with no cooperation from its urban or suburban neighbors. Since organized crime, once it establishes a foothold, tends to spread, I think you

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would agree that a statewide effort will be much more productive.

A number of states have also started statewide narcotics programs with emphasis on rehabilitative centers and educational campaigns among their youth. Here again, a statewide approach would appear to be much more productive since drugs are easily transported from one city to another, or from the city to the suburbs and back again.

Furthermore, the interrelationships between the cities and the suburbs make it mandatory that efforts to improve law enforcement, the police and the correctional systems should be integrated by urban area rather than by the artificial city line. The state planning agencies appear to be best suited to supervise urban-suburban efforts.

And finally, we think that it should be your state officials -- and not federal officials -- who evaluate your requests and negotiate differences. This Administration does not believe that Washington should directly monitor thousands of individual grant projects in cities and counties all over the nation. Your state officials are much more familiar with your problems than we are.

A direct grant program to the cities would make Washington a dictator over every anticrime project in the country. It would also by necessity spawn an enormous federal bureaucracy to evaluate these programs, and would undermine the whole concept of a federal-state cooperative partnership which this Administration is attempting to establish in the anticrime area and in other areas of social progress.

I think that the day is gone when cities were independent political fiefdoms, running their affairs without any consideration for the areas and even the states they dominate.

Considering the success of the LEAA program and the great benefits it has brought to the cities, I must disagree with those who still favor direct federal city grants. This opposition, if successful, would destroy our state-wide coordinated approach to law enforcement programs.

I think that by next year, at this time, the LEAA action grant programs should begin to show nation-wide signs of success. Then we will have convinced our critics that the block grant concept -- with particular safeguards

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for the cities -- is an effective way to decrease the crime rate in our city, in your neighboring cities and in your states.

4. FUNDING LEVELS

While I am answering critics of our program, I should like to take this opportunity to mention another point of contention. That is the suggestion that the federal government ask for \$750 million or \$1 billion this year for the anticrime effort rather than the \$480 million the President has recommended.

As I mentioned earlier, we have been extremely fortunate so far to find that most of our federal funds have been carefully distributed and very little has been expended on non-productive projects. The general bureaucratic law on grant programs is the more money you spend the more you tend to waste.

I want this program to continue and I want it to grow every year, but I also want it protected from its critics. If we were to distribute a billion dollars in anticrime funds this year, I fear that much of it would be wasted.

There would also be the problem that much of the money would remain unspent. The LEAA is a matching grant program and I question whether many states have the resources to increase their share 1500 percent in three years, in view of the increasing demands being made on them in the areas of education, social welfare, housing and environmental control.

Remember your city and state planning agencies are still in their infancy. We expect them to make some mistakes but we think that they should develop more before we go from \$280 million to a billion dollars.

A billion dollar appropriation could remain largely unspent because neither the states nor the cities could develop enough criminal justice experts to draw up plans and to implement new projects.

And I am not sure that we in the federal government could develop enough experts in LEAA to carefully evaluate state plans. In many ways, we are as inexperienced as you are. We are feeling our way.

I think we should be very pleased that in three years the cities, the states and the federal government have developed a new core of about 7,500 experts in the field of criminal justice planning.

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More experienced manpower is coming along especially under our program of college grants for criminal justice studies.

But I think we should make sure we have enough experienced personnel --- we should learn to walk before we start to run.

I am not saying that the LEAA program is perfect. Obviously, it is not. While many of the state plans we received were extremely promising and imaginative, some of the plans were only minimal. While many of the cities have utilized their funds fully, other cities have not taken advantage of the funds available.

On an overall basis, we find that more than 77 percent of all the funds have gone directly or indirectly to law enforcement. I believe that the police are the first line of defense and must be given better training and better equipment.

But I do hope that the cities and states will begin to concentrate on the problems of court congestion, juvenile rehabilitation and corrections. In the area of corrections alone we estimate that at least 45 percent of all adults released from prison are subsequently convicted.

In addition to the planning grant and action grant programs, the LEAA has several other programs which will directly benefit the cities. One of these is our National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice which funds special research projects.

The Institute is making research grants to cities, states and private groups to find new ways of improving the police, the courts and the correctional services.

The cities will also benefit from our educational grant program which will total \$45 million by the end of Fiscal '71. As of now, we have given grants or loans to more than 60,000 persons -- law enforcement officers who wish to take advanced studies and students who wish to pursue careers in law enforcement and criminal justice. More than 700 colleges and universities are participating.

The last major activity of the LEAA which ought to prove a direct benefit to cities is the establishment of the National Criminal Justice Information and Statistics Service.

One major part of this Service will be to analyze the results of criminal justice research projects all across the country in order to help cities and states evaluate their own projects and start new projects.

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The other major portion is the establishment of what we call "project search." It is a prototype system designed for the instant retrieval of offender history data by law enforcement agencies. This should also aid researchers in categorizing criminal behavior and the potential for rehabilitation.

CONCLUSION

It has been said that one mark of a great civilization is the quality of life in its cities. I am not prepared to admit that our cities must be paralyzed today by the street robber and the narcotics addicts while we wait for grand social programs which may prove effective a decade from now.

When this Administration took office it promised to act on behalf of our urban areas. One of our most significant and promising actions is the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration.

The cities of this nation are the centers of commerce, education, the arts and political activity. And they must solve their crime problem if they are to continue to grow and flourish.

We hope that we can put aside our differences over the block grant concept. It appears to be working well and we have great hope that it will work even better in the future. We are going to make it work, and we urgently need your support and cooperation.