



# Department of Justice

STATEMENT

BY

ATTORNEY GENERAL RAMSEY CLARK

BEFORE

SUBCOMMITTEE NO. 5  
OF THE  
HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

ON THE

PROPOSED SAFE STREETS AND CRIME CONTROL  
ACT--H.R. 5037 AND IDENTICAL BILLS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15, 1967

Two years ago this month, President Johnson, when announcing creation of the National Crime Commission and prescribing the Law Enforcement Assistance Act, observed that crime will not wait while we seek to eliminate its underlying causes. These are immense and stubborn forces pervading our environment, measuring our character and determining the quality of our lives. Through long-range effort we can conquer poverty, ignorance, disease, discrimination, social tension and despair, family breakdown, the dehumanization of mass culture, injustice. To do this is our firm commitment. But while we strive to uproot the causes of crime, we must secure the public safety.

Protecting the lives, the property and the rights of its citizens is the first purpose of government. The level and quality of public safety and criminal justice afforded by our governments is not adequate to our need. It must be made so.

Crime is a national problem. It tarnishes the goodness of life in every part of the country. The effectiveness of law enforcement, of corrections, of courts in any part of the nation affects the rest of the nation. If crime flourishes in one city, its tentacles reach others. When criminals go unapprehended or unpunished in one county harm results to others. If one state's prisons release inmates bent on further crime, some victims will be in other states. We must seek excellence in all processes of criminal justice in every jurisdiction throughout the country.

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But law enforcement is a local responsibility. As a nation we have preached local law enforcement. As a nation we have practiced it. There are more of New York's finest, the police of New York City, than there are federal law enforcement officers for the nation. Los Angeles county has six times more deputy sheriffs than there are deputy U.S. Marshals for the whole United States, and the Los Angeles Police Department is larger than the sheriff's office. A single county has twice as many probation service officers as the entire Federal Probation Service. The Federal Bureau of Prisons has less than five percent of the prison population of the nation. The federal judiciary is but a tiny fraction of the judiciary of the states.

We would have it no other way. Our safety and our liberty depend on the excellence of local and state law enforcement.

The Safe Streets and Crime Control Act of 1967 is the way, consistent with our principles, that Congress and the President can lend their powers to reduce crime in America. It is the heart of President Johnson's national strategy against crime. It is the one appropriate way the federal government can make a major difference. Its potential is immense.

It is based on the demonstrated need for more resources, better applied, to improve the estate of criminal justice in America. The need is to carefully study and plan, to coordinate among agencies, to raise standards and train personnel, to develop new techniques through research, to implement proven methods, to provide more and better police; to devote new sciences and expanded resources to corrections; to assure fairness, effectiveness and efficiency to courts.

This proposed Act recognizes that we spend only a little more than four billion dollars a year for local, state and federal police, corrections and courts, and that this is not nearly enough. Approximately \$2.8 billion is for police, \$1.03 billion for corrections, some \$300 million for courts and prosecution. It is estimated that the average annual increase in investment for these functions is five percent.

The Safe Streets and Crime Control Act seeks to create and guide new investment.

It takes into account the wide diversity and variations of needs and problems among law enforcement agencies, and the necessity for flexibility. It recognizes that law enforcement is a service with perhaps 90 percent of its expenditures going for salaries; that there are 40,000 police jurisdictions with more than 420,000 officers; that corrections and courts are undermanned and controlled by state laws often needing change; that crime is increasing more rapidly in urban than in rural America; that the cost of law enforcement per capita ranges more than three times as high in large cities as in rural areas and small towns; that 50,000 new police officers must be recruited this year to fill present positions.

It is supported by the most comprehensive study of crime ever undertaken in this country. The National Crime Commission has amassed an invaluable reservoir of fact, experience and judgment. The theory of the Act is buttressed by 18 months grant experience involving the expenditure of \$10 million for research, demonstration, training and education in law enforcement under the Law Enforcement Assistance Act of 1965.

Because a mere increase in expenditures is both inadequate and inefficient, the Act provides lead time for the most careful planning by agencies of criminal justice. It will permit potential applicants to begin planning upon its passage. Fifty million dollars will be sought to provide adequate planning funds and continued research, development and demonstration.

For fiscal year 1969, \$300 million will be asked to commence a sweeping action program. The funds will be granted generally for calendar, and fiscal years beginning in 1969, providing ample time for careful planning and detailed budgeting.

The Crime Control Act as planned can triple the rate of increase in resources devoted to criminal justice, from 5 percent to more than 15 percent. Requiring the normal five percent increase for eligibility, federal funds for action programs will be available up to 60 percent of the expenditures above that level. Instead of a normal \$200 million increase, an additional \$700 million can be available for better police, corrections and courts by the injection of \$300 million from the program.

The grants can cover the spectrum of criminal justice and will emphasize such priority areas as:

- (1) Specialized training, education and recruitment programs, including intense training in such critical areas as organized crime and police-community relations, and the development of police tactical squads.
- (2) Modernization of equipment, including portable two-way radios for patrol officers, new alarm systems, and improved laboratory instrumentation for applying advanced techniques in identification.
- (3) Programs for the reorganization of personnel structures and the coordination and consolidation of overlapping law enforcement and criminal justice agencies.
- (4) Advanced techniques for rehabilitating offenders, including the establishment of vocational prerelease guidance in jails, work-release programs and community-based corrections facilities.

- (5) High speed systems for collecting and transmitting information to police, prosecutors, courts, and corrections agencies.
- (6) Crime prevention programs in schools, colleges, welfare agencies and other institutions.

In addition to planning and action grants, the Act contemplates construction grants for innovating facilities and firm commitment to the research, development, demonstration programs pioneered under Law Enforcement Assistance.

It is a vital proposal, urgently needed. On this Ides of March, we are informed by the FBI that the number of serious crimes reported to the police in 1966 increased 11 percent over 1965. This is a trend we must arrest and then reverse. The Crime Control Act of 1967 can make a safer America tomorrow. We must act now.