



**For Immediate Release: January 31, 2008**

## **Barrow Urges President to Fully Fund the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program**

*Barrow calls on President Bush to “support our state and local law enforcement by adequately funding the SCAAP program in your FY 2009 Budget”*

*\*\*\*PDF of the Letter to President Bush Attached\*\*\**

**Washington, DC** – This week, Congressman John Barrow (GA-12) joined Congressional leaders urging President Bush to fully fund the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP), which is currently authorized at \$950 million.

SCAAP was created by the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 to reimburse state and local governments for the cost of arrest, incarceration, and transportation of criminal aliens (PL 103-322). SCAAP funding is particularly important in communities along the nearly 2,000 miles of southern border where state and local governments incur greater costs than other jurisdictions. Over the past several years, their costs have exceeded the amounts that they have been reimbursed by hundreds of millions of dollars. Most counties along the U.S.-Mexico border are reimbursed as little as 9% of the costs of incarcerating alien criminals.

“We rely on our local and state governments more than we should to help us enforce our national immigration laws,” Barrow said. “They do a great job, but they need more help. Without SCAAP funding, many local law enforcement agencies simply can’t make ends meet.”

Last November, Barrow led a group of seven other members of Congress to the U.S./Mexican border. During the trip, he met with federal, state, and local officials tasked with securing our southern border.

*Full text of today’s letter to President Bush:*

January 29, 2008

President George W. Bush  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush:

We are writing to ask you to fully fund the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP), which is currently authorized at \$950 million, in your Fiscal Year 2009 Budget proposal. As you know, SCAAP was created in the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 to reimburse states and localities for the arrest, incarceration, and transportation costs associated with criminal aliens (PL 103-322). Without SCAAP, state and local budgets would be overwhelmed by costs that are more properly the federal government's responsibility.

Securing our nation's borders is the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government. With this responsibility comes the added duty of punishing undocumented individuals that endanger our communities through criminal acts. Congress has consistently legislated that the federal government must either take illegal immigrants into federal custody or reach an agreement to compensate state and local jurisdictions for their incarceration.

Considering the immigration challenge in America, under-funding SCAAP places a significant cost burden on state and local governments, stretching their resources and hampering their ability to protect our communities and uphold the law. Communities across the country continue to face extraordinary costs associated with incarcerating undocumented criminals. Because of the limited federal contributions, the bulk of these costs are borne by counties, some of which are among the poorest in the nation and traditionally operate with slim budgets and staffing. Given the increasing reliance on local law enforcement personnel by the homeland security and immigration enforcement communities, supporting their contribution to this mission with appropriate funds is critical.

This is particularly important in communities along the nearly 2,000 miles of southern border where states and local governments incur greater costs than other jurisdictions. Unfortunately, over the past several years, the costs to qualifying jurisdictions have exceeded reimbursement by hundreds of millions of dollars. Most counties along the U.S.-Mexico border are reimbursed as little as 9% of the costs of incarcerating undocumented criminals.

Due to major state and county budget shortfalls, every dollar reduction in SCAAP reimbursement means a dollar less that a State can spend on essential public safety services. This is unacceptable. We therefore urge you to support our state and local law enforcement by adequately funding the SCAAP program in your Fiscal Year 2009 Budget.

Please take the appropriate steps to ensure that reimbursement of these costs, especially to Border States, remains a federal priority.

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Contact: Jane Brodsky, (202) 225-2823