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Barrow Blasts Proposed Budget Cuts in Local Crime Enforcement Initiatives; COPS Program

Georgia Congressman questions why the Administration would eliminate funding for the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program, drug enforcement, and juvenile justice grants

Washington, DC – Speaking from the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives, 12th District Georgia Congressman John Barrow (D-Savannah) last night called on Congress to reject recent proposals to cut nearly \$1 billion from local crime control programs; slashing funds from the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Program, regional drug enforcement efforts, and grants that reimburse local law enforcement for the cost of incarcerating undocumented criminal aliens.

Released last week, the 2007 federal budget proposal included \$1.1 billion in cuts to funding for state and local law enforcement initiatives – a 54% decrease from the 2006 level.

“This budget flatly ignores the needs of our local police and law enforcement agencies,” Barrow said. “Local police officers are on the front lines of homeland security, protecting our communities and our neighborhoods. Instead of cutting their funding, we ought to be giving them more support, so that they have the tools they need to fight crime.”

Some of the proposed budget cuts include:

- \$376 million cut from the **COPS Program**. The COPS Program provides grants to help local communities hire, train, keep, and equip local police officers. It also helps improve the crime fighting technology available for local law enforcement agencies. In FY 2004, the State of Georgia received \$4,623,612 in COPS funding.
- Eliminating funding for the **Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant program** (Byrne-JAG). Byrne-JAG grants help state and local law enforcement agencies identify and dismantle regional drug trafficking syndicates. In particular, the grants have been important weapons in the fight against the spread of drugs like methamphetamines. In FY 2006, the State of Georgia received \$8,016,199 in Byrne-JAG grants

According to preliminary figures released by the FBI, violent crimes like homicide rose by 2.1 percent nationwide in the first six months of 2005 – the first increase since 1991.

“With violent crime on the rise, we need to preserve funding for programs such as these – we can’t afford to fall asleep at the switch,” Barrow said. “The COPS program and the Byrne-JAG grants are both designed to help make sure our police officers are ready to respond to the needs of their communities.”

Barrow also criticized the budget’s slated elimination of funding for the **State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP)**. According to the Department of Justice, SCAPP grants provide federal payments to states and localities to help cover personnel costs incurred from incarcerating undocumented criminal aliens who have violated state or local laws. In FY 2005, the State of Georgia received \$1,861,952 in SCAAP grants.

“Illegal immigration is a national crisis that has a serious effect on our local communities,” Barrow said. “If we expect our local law enforcement agencies to work with the federal government in cracking down on illegal alien criminals, then we ought to give our police the resources and the money they need to do the job. Cutting SCAPP funding leaves our local communities with the bill – and that just drains resources from other important responsibilities.”

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Contact: Harper Lawson, (202) 225-2823