Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 20, 2012

The Honorable Frank Wolf, Chair
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice
Science and Related Agencies
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chaka Fattah, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Wolf and Ranking Member Fattah:

Thank you for your ongoing and diligent efforts to appropriately rebalance limited resources in this difficult fiscal climate in order to support our nation's highest priorities. As you begin to craft the Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) appropriation bill for Fiscal Year 2013, we urge you to include sufficient funding for the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) Program and the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) programs, in particular the COPS Hiring program. These programs are critical to ensuring that state and local law enforcement have the tools, personnel, and resources necessary to protect and serve their communities.

The federal government has an important and appropriate role to play in helping to prevent and fight crime which knows no boundaries. The Byrne JAG and COPS programs are the cornerstone federal justice assistance programs that support this crucial role. Since their inception, the Byrne JAG and COPS programs have enabled law enforcement agencies to form vital partnerships among communities and law enforcement officers, combat criminal activities, and develop and implement problem-solving and crime prevention programs nationwide. The two programs work hand-in-hand to provide evidence-based and innovative programs to address a multitude of problems within the criminal justice system.

The strength of the Byrne JAG program is in its impact across the criminal justice system, from law enforcement to prosecution and courts, crime prevention and education, corrections and community corrections, drug treatment and enforcement, program planning, evaluation, technology improvement, and crime victim and witness initiatives. Byrne JAG funds can be deployed quickly to address emerging trends, such as gang violence, the manufacture of methamphetamine or, more recently, prescription drug abuse.

The Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office and its corresponding programs provide invaluable resources and technical assistance to state and local law enforcement agencies. Since its inception, the COPS Hiring program has placed over 115,000 officers in communities across the United States to advance community policing and crime prevention efforts. These are critical bodies on the street patrolling high crime neighborhoods and working on drug and gang task forces. While the COPS Office is well known for its hiring program, it also provides many other valuable resources and support to assist law enforcement to update technology, strengthen school safety, assist tribal territories, prosecute child sexual predators, and enhance methamphetamine reduction efforts.

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In this tough economic time, when there have been increases in violent crime, drug sales, and threats to our homeland security, it is essential that law enforcement has the resources necessary to effectively and efficiently protect the public. Continued investment in the Byrne JAG and COPS programs is critical to ensuring our law enforcement men and women have the support and tools necessary to keep themselves and our families safe. In recent years, law enforcement agencies have watched their budgets diminish significantly, resulting in agencies making extremely difficult sacrifices. For example, many law enforcement agencies have been increasing the size of an officer's patrol area and decreasing the number of officers on a shift due to a lack of available personnel. These setbacks not only pose a serious risk to officers who may now patrol a high-crime area alone or wait longer for back-up; they also hamper law enforcement's ability to effectively and efficiently fight and prevent crime in communities.

We appreciate the difficulty you face in appropriating adequate resources for the programs under your jurisdiction. Continued support for the Byrne JAG and COPS Hiring programs is imperative to the success of law enforcement in keeping our communities safe. These programs supplement the manpower and incentivize the collaboration across agencies necessary to build upon successful crime reduction efforts over the past 20 years. For these reasons, we respectfully request that you include strong funding for the Byrne JAG and COPS programs, especially the COPS Hiring program, in the FY2013 CJS appropriations bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

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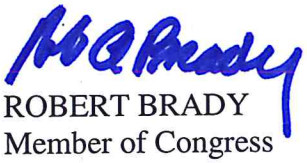

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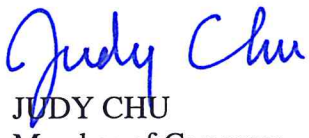

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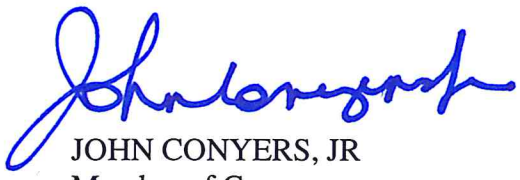

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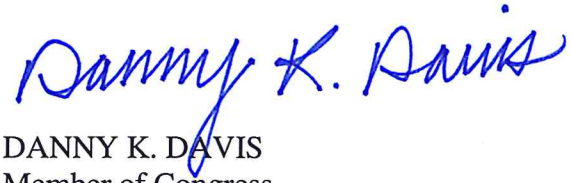

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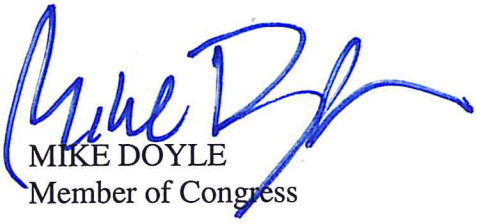

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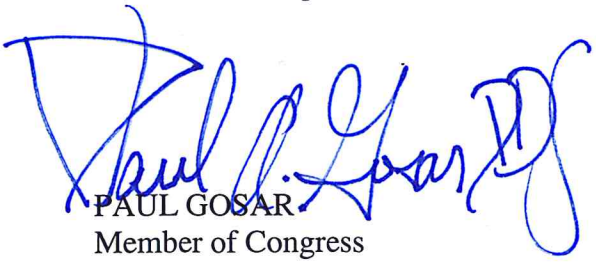

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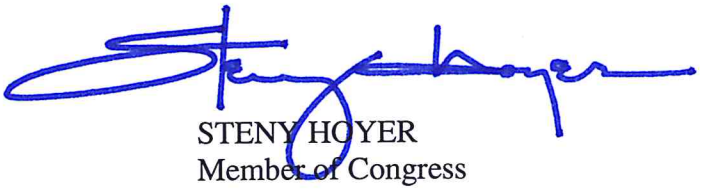

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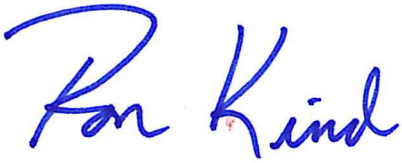

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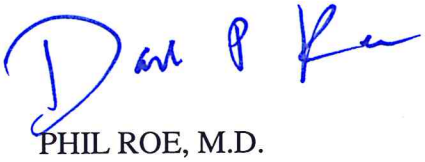

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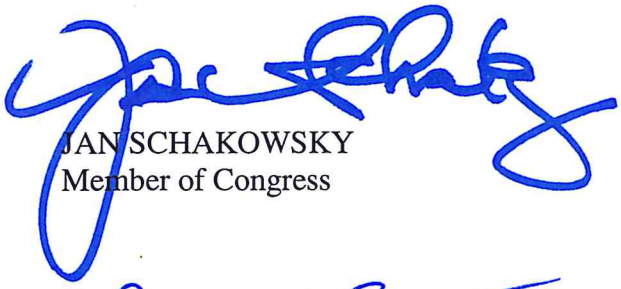

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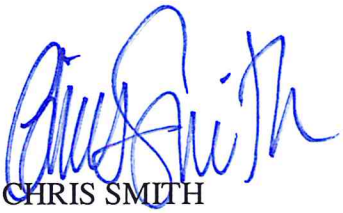

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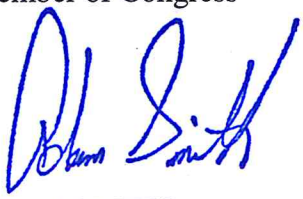

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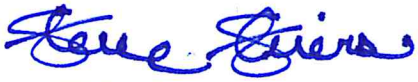

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