



January 7, 2003

Dear Senator/Representative:

The nation's mayors and first responders are 100 percent committed to the new homeland war against terrorism. Since September 11, 2001, local governments across this nation have spent billions of dollars to increase security and strengthen preparedness efforts, as well as respond to numerous federal alerts and changes in threat levels. Recognizing that the new homeland war against terrorism must be a partnership between the federal government and state and local governments, President George W. Bush called for a \$3.5 billion first responders initiative in January of 2002. Unfortunately, the 107th Congress adjourned without providing the resources needed by our front-line domestic troops.

We are pleased that Congress has approved legislation to streamline homeland security preparedness and prevention efforts at the federal level through the creation of a new Department of Homeland Security, and that important information sharing legislation is included in the bill. But these acts alone will not make our communities safer. New resources, in addition to continued funding for existing federal-local public safety programs, are needed directly at the local level for planning, training, equipment and overtime expenses related to homeland security - so that we can both prevent and prepare for acts of terrorism, which should not come at the expense of existing federal-local public safety programs. The needs of first responders were strongly echoed in the recent report released by former Senators Gary Hart and Warren Rudman.

Therefore, we urge that when the 108th Congress convenes, the \$3.5 billion first responders program be one of the first matters of business, and that funding be included in either the individual appropriation bills, an omnibus bill, or another continuing resolution. Also, we strongly believe that a majority of the funding must be provided directly to cities and counties to avoid delays and ensure that our nation's front-line troops - which are predominantly at the local level - have immediate access to flexible resources. We are extremely concerned that the proposal to allow states to develop their own formulas and mechanisms for distribution of this federal funding could result in our nation's cities and major population centers not receiving appropriate or timely assistance.

We thank you for your leadership and look forward to working with you as together, we strengthen the federal-local partnership on public safety and ensure that our domestic troops are fully trained and equipped for the new domestic war against terrorism. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Executive Director J. Thomas Cochran or Chief of Staff Ed Somers with The U.S. Conference of Mayors at (202) 293-7330.

Sincerely,

THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS
MAJOR CITIES POLICE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE ORGANIZATIONS
POLICE EXECUTIVE RESEARCH FORUM