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MAYORS ASKS CONGRESS TO HELP CITIES WITH SECURITY COSTS

O'Malley Says Fight Against Crime in Neighborhoods Should Remain a Priority

Washington, DC – Testifying on behalf of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley told the Senate Committee on Appropriations today that America's cities need federal assistance to cover the tremendous security costs they are incurring since September 11. He also urged Congress not to cut funding for programs that combat street crime, including the COPS program.

"Mayors know the importance of public safety and are 100 percent committed to the homeland war against terrorism," O'Malley told the Committee. "But we must forge a new federal-local partnership to make sure that our domestic troops – police, fire, emergency workers and other city employees – have the resources needed for this new challenge."

In an effort to ensure homeland security, he said that Baltimore is bolstering police and security presence at city buildings, protecting potential vulnerabilities such as major buildings and water systems, and recruiting a civil preparedness expert. So far, the security and emergency preparedness upgrades have cost Baltimore approximately \$6.5 million. This figure excludes any costs for fighting local street crime.

O'Malley cited a U.S. Conference of Mayors study that found U.S. cities will spend an additional \$2.6 billion on homeland security priorities including equipment, overtime and training between September 11, 2001 and the end of 2002. He said the nation's mayors –

- Support President Bush's request for an additional \$3.5 billion in assistance for local first responders. Mayors believe, however, that funding must be provided directly to city and county first responders, rather than flowing through state bureaucracies, as proposed by the Administration. Mayors want to work with Congress to ensure that these new dollars are provided in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

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- Support legislation, sponsored by Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, to create a highly flexible \$3.5 billion Homeland Security Block Grant, which would channel funding directly to cities, where it can be most efficiently utilized.
- Want to ensure that funding can be used to prevent future attacks. Police departments should be able to access the funding, and officer deployments and overtime should be specifically authorized.

In addition to homeland security, O'Malley stressed the importance of continuing progress in the national fight against crime. Last year, violent crime was estimated to be at a 20-year low nationwide. Mayors attribute recent reductions in crime to additional officers on the streets, the deployment of new technology, and a new focus on community policing – all of which were greatly assisted by the COPS program and the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant.

Mayors and police chiefs across the country strongly oppose a proposal in the Administration's fiscal 2003 budget to cut funding by 80 percent for the COPS program, a federal-local partnership that promotes community policing and funds additional police officers and new technology. The budget also seeks to merge the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant program, which helps local police departments pay for hiring, training, and overtime for officers, with another grant program. The combined new program would then face a \$200 million reduction, on top of a 25 percent reduction last year.

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