

Testimony of

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On

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Good morning. I am Chris Bollwage, Mayor of Elizabeth, New Jersey. I also serve as Chair of the Criminal and Social Justice Committee of The United States Conference of Mayors, a non-partisan organization that represents over 1,100 cities in America.

I want to thank the Task Force for calling today's hearing. I also want to recognize the leadership of my Congressman, Robert Menendez, for all he is doing for New Jersey and the nation as Chair of the Democratic Caucus in the House.

In the wake of September 11 and the anthrax mailings, emergency management planning has been redoubled in cities across the country, and there have been significant new deployments of public safety resources.

The Conference of Mayors released a survey that estimated that from September 11, 2001 through the end of 2002, cities spent an additional \$2.6 billion on new homeland security priorities including equipment, overtime and training.

A more recent survey we released estimated that cities nationwide spent \$70 million a week extra as a result of the Iraq war and increased threat alert. The costs reflected in this survey come on top of billions spent by cities on homeland security since 9/11, does not include indirect costs, and does not include major equipment purchases or other important security needs.

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

We have been working very closely with the Administration, Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge and his Department, and other federal agencies to improve intergovernmental cooperation on homeland security.

In October of 2001 the Conference of Mayors sponsored a Safety and Security Summit at which we developed a National Action Plan covering transportation security, emergency management, and law enforcement. There has been major progress on many of the action items contained in that agenda.

For example, the nation's mayors were among the first groups to call for federalization of airport screening security, which has become law.

We also called for the creation of a new federal department, which has become law.

And, we called for the passage of information sharing legislation, which has become law.

I want to thank the Congress for working with us on these priorities.

We also called for increased federal support for first responders. We are pleased that new money has begun to flow from Washington, but have serious concerns with the funding mechanisms, which I would like to briefly discuss.

### **Supporting our First Responders**

Cities are America's frontlines in ensuring homeland security. When you call 9-1-1, the phone doesn't ring at the White House or the State House. Those emergency calls come into your city's police, fire and emergency medical personnel.

At a January 24, 2002 White House meeting with 300 mayors, President Bush announced his \$3.5 billion first responders initiative, which we praised as an important step forward. As we stated then, we want to work directly with Congress to refine that proposal and make sure that those dollars are provided in the most efficient and effective manner.

To that end, it is our belief that funding must be provided directly to city and county first responders, rather than all flowing through the states as proposed by the Administration.

I know that this Task Force may be hearing from governors, so I want to stress this point. I am very concerned that despite the best intentions of the Administration in developing its plan, the needs of the local first response community will not be met unless funding is provided directly to cities and counties.

We must also ensure that the funding can be used to not only prepare for a possible attack, but to also help prevent future attacks. Our police departments must have access to the funding, and officer deployments such as overtime should be specifically authorized.

For example, mayors called for and support the more detailed terrorism alert system now being managed by Secretary Ridge, but these alerts require more officers on the streets -- in essence national security being provided by local law enforcement.

Mayors appreciate that the FY 2003 supplemental included \$2.2 billion in new first responder funding, but again the majority of this funding is being channeled through the states. The Conference of Mayors is going to launch a monitoring campaign to track -- as best we can -- how much of this funding is reaching cities and major population centers. However, I want to strongly encourage the Congress to institute its own tracking effort and to require DHS to provide timely and accurate information as to how much of this funding is reaching cities, and how quickly.

### **The Ongoing Fight Against Crime**

While we wage the new war against terrorism, we must not retreat from the ongoing fight against crime.

In the 1990's, mayors worked closely with our police chiefs and officers to increase public safety -- with dramatic results.

Mayors strongly believe that major factors in this crime reduction were 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 Local Law Enforcement Block Grant (LLEBG).

But while there have been major reductions, crime is still a major issue in many cities, and in many neighborhoods within cities.

In addition, we know that key indicators, such as the economy and return of more than 625,000 ex-convicts annually to our cities, have led some experts to predict an upswing in crime rates in coming years -- with some cities already seeing these increases.

Many cities want to hire additional officers, move existing officers onto the streets, and place new officers in schools. In addition, there is a major interest in new crime fighting technologies.

That is why we find it counterintuitive that OMB is proposing to cut COPS by 77 percent and eliminate the block grant by merging it into the state Byrne Grant program.

We must ensure that cities have the resources needed to fight both the domestic war on terrorism and the continuing war against crime. We simply cannot fund homeland defense by de-funding local law enforcement.

And I must stress that we strongly believe that one of the best ways to prevent terrorism is to have more officers on the streets armed with better technology.

## **Port Security**

Let me briefly touch on an issue of particular importance to the City of Elizabeth, Port Security. The Port of Elizabeth is the largest containerized, deep-water shipping terminal in North America. It generates more than 5,700

jobs and \$150 million in revenues. The terminal handles more than 12 million tons of container cargo and more than 9,000 containers a year. The 2,463-acre port has more than 5.5 million square feet of storage and distribution space, and accounts for 75 percent of the region's ocean-borne traffic with more than \$2 billion in foreign merchandise being received annually.

Mayors are greatly concerned that U.S. Customs is in the position to inspect just 2 percent of the 6 million cargo containers annually, making seaports and the final destinations of the containers all across America vulnerable to terrorists.

I want to stress the needed funding to improve port security infrastructure, including container inspection systems, vehicle and cargo inspection systems using gamma ray imaging, video camera surveillance systems for port-wide infrastructure and cruise terminal operations, explosive detection equipment for use at the passenger cruise ship terminals, and new watercraft to assist port law enforcement, including the U.S. Coast Guard, Customs Service, and INS at each of the nation's 361 ports.

We also urge the expansion of the sea marshal program and strongly urge greater cargo inspection at foreign ports of origin or call.

I am pleased that the Port of Elizabeth has been selected to receive funding under the high threat program Congress funded in the FY 2003 supplemental as Secretary Ridge announced in an event in Elizabeth several weeks ago, and I hope this funding will be substantial.

## **Conclusion**

There are many other issues that mayors are concerned about including transit and highway security, bio-terrorism, border security, and water security which I cannot cover this morning.

I want to thank the Task Force for this opportunity to testify, and I look forward to continued discussions as together we work to strengthen our nation's homeland defense.