



April 7, 2003

Dear Senator/Representative:

RE: Conference Committee Action on First Responder Funding

America's mayors thank the members of the House and Senate for including new first responder funding in the proposed FY 2003 supplemental appropriations bills. As you know, The U.S. Conference of Mayors has advocated for significant, direct and flexible funding. Now, as the supplemental moves to Conference Committee, we would like to raise several priorities for America's mayors.

First, we strongly urge that the final bill include language similar to that in the House proposal as regard to the \$700 million for discretionary grants for use in high-density urban areas, in high-threat areas, and for protection of critical infrastructure. The language in the House bill would guarantee that 80 percent of these funds would go to local governments, where the majority of first responders are located. By comparison, the Senate language provides no such assurance in regard to the funding for high-threat urban areas, and would provide only one-third of the funding for critical infrastructure protection to local governments.

Second, we urge that the final bill specifically direct the Department of Homeland Security to fund overtime expenses related to increased security being incurred by state and local governments, for both the formula and discretionary programs. We are concerned that the House bill only provides this requirement for the formula program, and the Senate bill only specifically allows overtime for the critical infrastructure program. A recent Conference of Mayors survey estimated that cities across the country are spending an estimated \$70 million per week on additional homeland security as a result of the war and high threat alert.

Third, we urge that the final bill include very tight time frames for allocation of the funding, as in the House bill which requires that funding go to the states in no more than 30 days, and that the states sub-allocate 80 percent within 45 days.

Fourth, we are pleased the Senate bill includes \$219 million for interoperable communications grants, and hope that this funding is included in the final bill.

The nation's mayors thank you for your leadership and look forward to working with you on this national priority. Please contact our Chief of Staff Ed Somers at (202) 861-6706 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[signed]

Thomas M. Menino
Mayor of Boston
President

[signed]

Martin O'Malley
Mayor of Baltimore
Chair, Homeland Security
Task Force

[signed]

J. Thomas Cochran
Executive Director