MAYORS, POLICE CHIEFS URGE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE TO RESTORE FUNDING FOR STATE/LOCAL HOMELAND SECURITY PROGRAMS

Washington, D.C. – In anticipation of today’s full committee markup of the Homeland Security spending bill, The U.S. Conference of Mayors, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, and the Police Executive Research Forum wrote last week to House Appropriations Committee Chairman Harold Rogers, and Ranking Member Norm Dicks to express their opposition to proposed deep cuts in homeland security funding and to urge the Committee to restore the funds to this year’s level at a minimum.

The letter is posted to the U.S. Conference of Mayors website at www.usmayors.org and reads as follows:

“We write on behalf of The U.S. Conference of Mayors, Major Cities Chiefs Association, and Police Executive Research Forum to express alarm at the draconian cuts in state and local first responder funding contained in the FY 2012 homeland security appropriations bill reported out of Subcommittee last Friday.

“The bill would cut funding for state and local programs to $1 billion, a cut of more than 50 percent below this year’s level, and 62 percent below the FY 2010 level. In addition, it would combine them into a single program to be administered at the discretion of the Secretary of Homeland Security, and restrict UASI grants to the 10 highest risk urban areas. Separately, the bill would cut firefighter grants 54 percent to $350 million next year.

“It is particularly ironic that these cuts and changes, which we strongly oppose, are proposed in the same year that our nation is marking the 10th anniversary of the September 11th attacks and at the same time that cities across the nation are increasing counterterrorism operations because of concern with possible retribution for the killing of Osama bin Laden. It is police officers and other local authorities – in touch with their communities and a presence in them every day – who often gather the intelligence and take the action needed to stop terrorist threats.

“These cuts also come at a time when local governments face severe funding limitations due to decreased revenues and limited ability to increase those revenues. Many cities have been forced to lay off first responders, including police officers and firefighters.”

“While we understand the severe fiscal constraints facing the Committee, we are confident that needed funding reductions could be spread more equitably across the homeland security spending bill. We urge you to restore funding for these programs at least to this year’s funding levels.”

The letter is signed by Philadelphia, PA Mayor Michael Nutter, Second Vice President and Chairman of the Task Force on Mayors and Police Chiefs for The U.S. Conference of Mayors, and Philadelphia Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey, who serves at the President of the Police Executive Research Forum and of the Major Cities Chiefs Association.

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