

Remarks of Senator Patrick Leahy
Full Committee Mark-up
Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill
June 5, 2013

I very much appreciate the hard work of Senators Mikulski and Shelby to protect so many important programs for law enforcement, victims, and other key issues in the fiscal year 2015 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

I would like to thank the Chairwoman Mikulski and Ranking Member Shelby for including additional resources for state task forces working to combat the emerging heroin crisis that has particularly impacted Vermont. It is a crisis that impacts too many states in New England and around the country.

I am also pleased this bill provides direction and guidance for a Federal Task Force, to be led by the Attorney General and DOJ, to establish a federal response to the heroin crisis that works across federal agencies. We know that we cannot arrest our way out of this problem. A meaningful response will require collaboration among prevention, treatment, and law enforcement efforts. I look forward to working with the Task Force to share what we've learned in Vermont, and to help establish a thoughtful and coordinated approach.

Through funding for task forces to disrupt and dismantle networks that distribute drugs in our states, to programs such as Byrne JAG Grants, Youth Mentoring grants and funding for Drug Courts, this bill will help support state and local law enforcement in their drug enforcement and treatment efforts and provides critical resources that will make a real difference to communities.

I would also like to thank the Chairwoman and Ranking Member for providing continuing funding for programs authorized by the Violence Against Women Act, including strong support for lifesaving programs that provide shelter, legal assistance, and other protections for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Combined with funds for Debbie Smith grants to address the backlog in DNA testing, and funding for programs such as Kirk Bloodsworth Post-Conviction DNA Testing grant program, this bill helps ensure the protection of all victims, not just a select few.

Finally, this bill contains strong investments in law enforcement training and support programs like the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program and COPs hiring grants. The Subcommittee's consistent commitment to this funding ensures that our law enforcement officers have the training and equipment they need to help keep us safe.

I would like to thank Chairwoman Mikulski and Ranking Member Shelby again for their hard work on this bill. I know they are faced with very difficult funding decisions, and I commend them for the bipartisanship they have demonstrated again and again.

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