

Washington, DC - U.S. Representatives Steny H. Hoyer, Chris Van Hollen and Donna Edwards announced that \$2.7 million they secured for gang prevention and suppression efforts in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties was approved today in the FY2010 House-Senate Omnibus Appropriations Conference Report that passed the House. Passage of the omnibus package is the final step in the appropriations process, with the bill now only needing Senate approval before it is sent to the President to be signed into law.

Gang activity continues to be a persistent problem in the Washington Metropolitan Region, as evidenced by last month's raids in Maryland leading to the indictment of 19 Latin Kings gang members. The approved funding will provide additional resources for a joint Prince George's County-Montgomery County Gang Prevention and Suppression Task Force that will coordinate law enforcement activities and provide program support for prevention and intervention efforts. The program will be administered through the University of Maryland Public Safety Training and Technical Assistance Program.

"Gang violence must be addressed in a comprehensive way, both in the approaches we use and in coordination across jurisdictional lines," **said Congressman Steny H. Hoyer.** "This funding will provide a significant opportunity to enhance gang prevention and suppression initiatives in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties, as well as bolster anti-gang efforts throughout the Washington Metropolitan Region."

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"We are committed to working with our state and local partners to combat gang activity in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, and the \$2.7 million in federal funding for the Bi-County Gang Prevention and Suppression Task Force will go a long way to assist that effort," **said Congressman Van Hollen.** "Gang violence has taken too many lives and destroyed too many families. In cooperation with law enforcement and human services officials, we are working hard to change that and to keep our communities safe."

"As gang activity continues to threaten the safety and security of our communities, it is important that police departments in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties receive the

resources they need to protect residents and provide assistance to youth at risk," **said Rep. Edwards.**□

"I am confident that the \$2.7 million in funding for additional law enforcement personnel and programs for prevention and intervention activities will make an immediate and significant impact in reducing gang activity in both Prince George's and Montgomery Counties."

The Department of Justice's 2009 National Gang Threat Assessment outlines the challenges American communities continue to face in combating the 20,000 criminally-active gangs throughout the country. In the Washington Metropolitan region, the report identifies the presence and persistence of gangs throughout urban, suburban and rural communities, in particular *Mara Salvatrucha* or MS-13. Also noted, however, is the progress of the region's law enforcement agencies in disrupting gang activity by successfully targeting drug distribution and money laundering networks. Combined with the support and energy of organizations that provide constructive outlets for youth, the joint county initiative will help the region make further progress toward reducing the threat of gangs in area communities in a comprehensive way.

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