

Washington, DC - U.S. Representatives Steny H. Hoyer, Chris Van Hollen and Donna F. Edwards applauded the approval today of \$2.7 million for gang prevention and suppression efforts in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties. The funding was included at their request in the FY2010 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act that passed the House this evening.

Incidents of gang activity have remained steady in both Montgomery and Prince George's counties, with three specific areas identified as hot spots for gang violence-Langley Park, Hyattsville and Landover. 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 claims too many lives, tears apart too many families, and ravages too many communities," **said Congressman Steny H. Hoyer.** "Effectively combating gang violence requires a comprehensive approach that includes enforcement, education, and prevention. I am hopeful these resources will enhance the ability of Prince George's and Montgomery Counties to work in partnership to suppress violent gang activity in our region and strengthen and expand the prevention services that strike at the root of the problem."

"Gang violence in Maryland and across the country is something that cuts short too many young lives and leaves too many communities in the crosshairs," **said Congressman Van Hollen.** "The \$2.7 million requested for the Bi-County Gang Prevention and Suppression Task Force will help keep our communities safe and has the potential to positively change the lives of thousands of children."

"As gang activity continues to rise in our area, it is important that we provide our local police departments the resources they need to protect residents and assist youth at risk," **said Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards.**

"I am confident that the appropriations funding allotted for additional law enforcement personnel and programs for prevention and intervention activities will make a 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.

"Prince George's County has worked tirelessly implementing police task force suppression measures to disrupt and eradicate gang activity, as well as promoting prevention and intervention programs in communities," **said Prince George's County Executive Jack Johnson.** "These funds are critically important to continuing the Bi-County Joint Gang Task Force work, in coordination with Montgomery County, stamping out gang activity in the Washington Metropolitan region."

"Montgomery County is very appreciative of the support from Congressman Steny Hoyer and Congressmembers Chris Van Hollen and Donna Edwards to build on our continuing efforts to address gang activity and crime," **said Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett.** "Their leadership allows both Montgomery and Prince George's counties to utilize prevention, intervention and suppression strategies to combat this problem. These funds will help support community-based programs that offer youth positive options, as well as innovative law enforcement approaches that ensure those who break the law are pursued and apprehended."

Approval by the House is the first major step in the Federal appropriations process. The Senate must pass its version of the measure and reconcile that with the House bill, before sending to the President to be signed into law.

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