

Altmire Votes to Put 50,000 More Cops on the Streets

(Washington, DC) - U.S. Representative Jason Altmire (PA-4) today voted to pass H.R. 1700, the COPS Reauthorization Act, of which he is a cosponsor. The bipartisan measure is designed to help local law enforcement agencies hire an additional 50,000 police officers over the next six years. The legislation comes as violent crime is on the rise nationwide, according to a recent GAO report, a law enforcement association study and new FBI statistics. H.R. 1700 passed the House of Representatives today by a vote of 381 to 34.

"Putting more officers on our streets and in our neighborhoods deters crime and makes our communities safer places to live and raise our families," said Congressman Altmire. "Today's reauthorization reinvigorates the COPS program that has had a highly successful track record since its creation in 1994. It was unfortunate that the program was eliminated by the Republican-led Congress last year, but H.R. 1700 will breathe new life into the COPS program and its effective hiring grants."

Over the last few years, the Republican-led Congress sharply cut funding for COPS hiring grants - from more than \$1 billion a year in the late 1990's to only \$198 million in 2003 and then just \$10 million in 2005. In 2006, the Republican-led Congress completely eliminated the program.

"Since its inception, the COPS program has helped local law enforcement agencies hire 117,000 additional police officers across the country," Congressman Altmire pointed out. "Between 1995 and 2005, COPS hiring grants awarded nearly \$245 million to law enforcement agencies in Pennsylvania and helped hire over 3,000 officers, reducing crime across the Commonwealth. If this bill becomes law, an estimated 180 new police officers could be put on the beat in the Fourth Congressional District to fight crime in our neighborhoods."

Under the COPS hiring grants program, our nation experienced a significant drop in crime rates, and independent studies confirm that these grants played a significant role. A nonpartisan GAO study concluded, "COPS-funded increases in sworn officers per capita were associated with declines in rates of total index crimes, violent crimes, and property crimes." According to the study, between 1998 and 2000, the hiring grants were responsible for reducing about 200,000 to 225,000 crimes - one third of which were violent.

"The men and women of law enforcement put their lives on the line each day," said Congressman Altmire. "This bill is going to once again give them the resources they need to fight crime and to keep our neighborhoods safe."

H.R. 1700 has been endorsed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Sheriffs Association, the Fraternal Order of Police, the National Association of Police Organizations, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and the National League of Cities.