March 15, 2012

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Chairwoman, Senate Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Commerce,  
Justice, Science and Related Agencies  
503 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC  20510

The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison  
Chairwoman, Senate Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Commerce,  
Justice, Science and Related Agencies  
284 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC  20510

The Honorable Frank Wolf  
Chairman, House Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Commerce,  
Justice, Science and Related Agencies  
241 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC  20515

The Honorable Chaka Fattah  
Ranking member, House Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Commerce,  
Justice, Science and Related Agencies  
2301 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC  20515

Dear Senators and Congressmen:

We, the undersigned Attorneys General, write to ask your support for the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) program in the Fiscal Year 2013 appropriations bill under your jurisdiction. Byrne JAG plays a central role in our states and territories. It is the cornerstone federal justice assistance program because of its flexibility, breadth, and ability to leverage, and therefore stretch, other state, federal, and local funds. Byrne JAG grants are guided by a statewide strategic plan which ensures the most effective use of the federal funds.

The recession has caused us, as it has you, to look with fresh eyes at the services and programs we fund and administer. Difficult choices have to be made about where to invest scarce resources. Some programs have shown to be central to the core functions of government and are deserving of continued funding. Byrne JAG is one of those programs.

Byrne JAG is flexible, allowing funds to be targeted where the need is greatest. And because the funds are directed to the state, territorial, tribal and local levels, cross-jurisdictional partnerships can be initiated and supported in a way few other programs can.

Byrne JAG funds may be deployed broadly across the criminal justice system. This flexibility is critically important because we know that public safety is best protected when the criminal justice system functions in balance. Through the state’s Byrne JAG strategic planning process and collaborative programming, states and territories are able to fill gaps and improve efficiencies across the entire system - in law enforcement, the courts,
prosecution and defense, corrections and community corrections, victims services, information sharing, prevention and education programs, and substance abuse prevention and treatment.

Finally, Byrne JAG is focused on developing evidence-based, data-driven initiatives so we are learning what works in preventing and fighting crime and how best to replicate successful programs in other jurisdictions. These investments are proving to be both critical and durable.

Byrne JAG has been cut by almost one-third the past two fiscal years. The choices you will have to make in the FY13 appropriations bill will be difficult, yet we write to ask that Byrne JAG be spared from further cuts. Thank you for your continued support.

cc: Senator Daniel Inouye, Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee

Senator Thad Cochran, Ranking member, Senate Appropriations Committee

Members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies

Representative Hal Rogers, Chair, House Appropriations Committee

Representative Norm Dicks, Ranking member, House Appropriations Committee

Members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies

Sincerely,

Tom Horne
Arizona Attorney General

Luther Strange
Alabama Attorney General

Fepuleai Arthur Ripley, Jr
American Samoa Attorney General

Kamala Harris
California Attorney General

George Jepsen
Connecticut Attorney General

Douglas F. Gansler
Maryland Attorney General

Michael Geraghty
Alaska Attorney General

Dustin McDaniel
Arkansas Attorney General

John W. Suthers
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Mark Shurtleff  
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Vincent Frazer  
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J.B. Van Hollen  
Wisconsin Attorney General

Wayne Stenehjem  
North Dakota Attorney General

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Alan Wilson  
South Carolina Attorney General

Robert E. Cooper, JR.  
Tennessee Attorney General

William H. Sorrell  
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Rob McKenna  
Washington Attorney General