



# Memphis Police Association

Officer Robert J. Tutko

Board of Directors, North Precinct Representative

3265 Foxbriar Dr., Memphis, Tennessee 38115

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Dear Senators,

We, as police officers, never profess to be better than anyone else, we just have a different job. We're your neighbors, your friends, we shop where you do, go to church with a lot of you and our children and grandchildren go to the same schools as your children and grandchildren. However, most of you don't have to put on a bullet resistant vest, 34 rounds of ammo, a pistol, pepper spray, a flashlight and handcuffs to go to work in the worst neighborhoods in the city, because we CHOOSE to. That's the biggest difference.

I do my job because I love the job, and the principles behind it, not for the money. I made a lot more in a previous career in medicine. I do it for the personal reward and satisfaction I get from knowing that I do make a difference, and every minute I spend in the streets of Memphis makes it a little bit safer, maybe just for my shift, and my ward, but with all of the officers doing the same thing, it helps. It may not be obvious to everyone, all the time, but it is.

We're upset. But what I want you and all the people of this country to know is this: we, the police officers of Memphis, are professionals. Our dissatisfaction with politics will in no way affect the way we do our jobs, lessen our dedication, and decrease the protection we provide to you, or do anything less than what we have chosen as our profession, law enforcement. We don't need fancy "Operation This and That" or media coverage when we arrest thugs, or save a child's life or process a bloody crime scene to do what we do. We will continue to do it.

What we're upset about is that it seems that priorities of the present administration have shifted from the domestic crime problems we are facing to a more global approach, seemingly politicized by the Homeland Security frenzy the public is caught up in. In 1998, I can tell you specifically, that the COPS grant from the Clinton Administration actually put me on the street as one of the "100,000 more cops on the streets" initiative that year. Our COPS grants in Memphis over the last several years have taken a turn which actually provided the COPS grants for equipment and technology, not more police officers on the streets, a subject near and dear to both citizens and police alike. In 2000, we received a modest grant in the COPS in Schools program, but nothing like the previous years provisions.

Our LLEBG grants, described as local entitlement grants, have significantly decreased, for example, in 2002 we had a \$1.5 million dollar grant, which dramatically decreased to \$380K the following year, to \$600K the next and back down to \$350K this year. None of these block grants actually assists in directly putting more police on the streets. The inconsistency is what is most difficult to deal with, with most metropolitan areas dealing with crisis in funding basic services, let alone increased police presence. The decrease in funding will most likely directly correlate to an increase in inner city crime, since we are short

in every precinct, leaving some areas unprotected on a rotating basis, because we don't have enough officers to patrol those areas. Police departments nationwide are struggling with recruiting issues, and a decreased interest in law enforcement careers, due to the problems faced by cities and counties with financial inability, on their own, to hire an adequate number of police officers, and properly equip them with basic equipment. Usually, it's the most crime ridden, inner city wards that suffer that loss, and not the more affluent suburban areas.

Again, I am not an administrator, nor a politician, but a police officer. To us, crime crosses all boundaries, regardless of race, sex, or any political affiliation. I was told to "make sure they (Federal Government) know we appreciate ANY funding, and we have received significant Homeland Security funds here in Memphis", but I can tell you that to the people who have suffered the loss of the 94 homicides as of July 6, 2006, countless violent assaults, gang activity, drive by shootings, robberies and general violent crime in their neighborhoods, it means little. That is not to downplay the positive effect it can have on reducing the risk of future terrorist attacks in Memphis, but rather the need for more specifically directed federal funding aimed at putting more cops on the streets. Most significantly in Memphis, the crime and violence has targeted younger and younger victims, the most recent homicides being an 11 year old boy, and a 13 year old girl, shot in gang retaliation shootings, as they played outside their homes. Homeland Security to them is a great catchy phrase that they see on the news, and unfortunately, the terrorists we deal with, are home grown, low level thugs, not Al-Qaeda or Palestinian in any shape or form. To the people who live in Memphis, these gangsters and gangster "wannabe's" are the terrorists **they** fear, genuinely, which affects the day to day lives they attempt to live. Cuts in federal funds to local police departments mean less police on the streets, equaling more dangerous surroundings.

The manpower crisis in Memphis is critical. In the North Precinct alone, we average approximately 3,200 calls for service per week, with the precinct divided into nine wards and four shifts of officers. Typically, two officers are assigned per ward, per shift, but due to manpower shortages, we usually "pull", or have no coverage, in at least one or two of those wards per night. This amounts to longer response times for calls, increased stress on the officers who are working, and citizens becoming more and more anxious over the delays in police response. This direct relationship between the loss of the COPS grants and decreased funding of the LLEBG programs with the rise in violent crime cannot be easily explained away. Statistics can be what you want them to be, but the actuality of it is, we're fighting for our collective lives out here.

I genuinely do this job for the love of people, not the money, and certainly not any personal motives. Help us help you, put more police on the streets of the United States, where they belong.

Respectfully,

Officer Robert J. Tutko  
Crisis Intervention Team  
Memphis Police Department  
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