

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3005

February 29, 2008

The Honorable Kent Conrad
Chairman
Senate Committee on the Budget
642 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Judd Gregg
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Budget
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Conrad and Ranking Member Gregg:

As you work to craft the FY2009 budget resolution, I write to urge you to provide the highest funding possible for key homeland security grant programs. I know that you have an incredibly difficult task at hand, and recognize that there are many competing priorities to balance in the forthcoming budget resolution. Last year's budget resolution led the way for significant funding increases in homeland security grants to states and localities, and it is critical that we continue to build on that progress.

The president's budget request for next year makes some troubling decisions when it comes to the federal funds our first responders and local communities rely on to carry out their role as part of our homeland security network. While Congress demonstrated strong support for the State Homeland Security Grant Program, port security grants, and transit security funding, providing significant increases for each in FY2008, the president's budget disregards this progress almost entirely. Instead, the administration's request reverts these programs to at or below FY2007 levels. In the case of state homeland security grants, the budget request would cut funding by nearly 70 percent. This is wholly unacceptable.

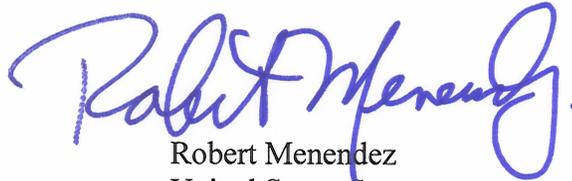
In states like New Jersey, these federal funds provide the resources our local police departments, fire departments, and emergency workers depend on to protect our communities. In particular, for states facing increased threats from highly-populated areas and communities in close proximity to ports, chemical plants, or airports, and for cities with mass transit, these funds are essential. In crafting the budget resolution for next year, I would like to draw your attention to a few of these grant programs that are of utmost importance:

- **State Homeland Security Grants.** These grants are critical to providing states a reliable and consistent funding stream. Funded last year at \$950 million, the president's budget asks for a meager \$200 million, which would undercut the homeland security activities in many states and shift the burden to local communities.
- **Port Security.** After years of inadequate funding to address the security needs of our nation's ports, last year, Congress doubled funding for port security grants, providing the amount authorized by the 9/11 Implementation Act. The president's budget would cut this number almost in half, to \$210 million.

- **Rail and Transit Security.** Six years after 9/11, our nation's mass transit systems still don't have the resources they should to protect against threats on our trains, subways, and rail systems. Last year, Congress provided a long-overdue increase for rail and transit security, providing \$400 million. The president's budget provides only a fraction of that, \$175 million, for transit security, and no funding for rail security.
- **Urban Area Security Initiative.** For states with densely-populated urban areas facing a higher threat risk, these risk-based funds provide critical support to bolster local capabilities to protect high-threat targets. It is crucial these urban areas continue to receive a consistent and reliable stream of funds.
- **Interoperable Communications.** The president's budget eliminates dedicated homeland security funding for interoperable communications. Many of our nation's first responders continue to work with subpar communications systems, often unable to communicate with neighboring departments or communities.

As you look to fairly distribute funding across a number of areas and draft a budget resolution that accurately represents the values and priorities of all Americans, I ask that you take into account the critical nature of these homeland grant programs and their importance to states like New Jersey. I appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to working with you to develop a budget resolution that adequately reflects our nation's priorities.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator