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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

March 2, 2006

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The Honorable John P. Walters  
Director  
Office of National Drug Control Policy  
Executive Office of the President  
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Walters:

I am writing to express my concern about the possible elimination of funding for the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program, reduction in funding for the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program and restriction of HIDTA primary national drug distribution or transit zones only. These programs are a critical component of local treatment, prevention and law enforcement activities to stem the tide of illegal drugs in communities throughout eastern, central and southern Oregon and elsewhere around the country.

During the series of seven town hall meetings I held in my district last year focused on the effects of methamphetamine, and in follow-up meetings since, I've spoken with many local leaders who've told me time and again how integral these federal funds are to their successful anti-drug efforts. I've seen firsthand the good work made possible by these funds and know the need for federal assistance is particularly acute in rural areas like Oregon's Second Congressional District where the tax base is limited and local budgets are particularly tight. Three counties in my district – Jackson, Deschutes and Umatilla – receive funds from HIDTA and nearly every county receives JAG funding which is used to leverage local and state dollars that support supply and demand reduction efforts that would otherwise not be possible.

Without funds received from the HIDTA and JAG programs, many local taskforces in Oregon would have to severely curtail operations, reduce staffing levels or even cease operations completely. According to an assessment recently conducted by the Oregon HIDTA office, cutting federal assistance for local anti-drug efforts could reduce front line operations by local taskforces by 25 to 75 percent. The profound and immediate effects of such a drop would be staggering to communities and families around the state, and would significantly reduce the ability of local officials to battle the scourge of illegal drugs.

I am further concerned that proposed changes to the HIDTA program could result in funds being withheld from designated counties in my district. HIDTA counties have already gone through a difficult vetting process during which they have demonstrated the scope of the

The Honorable John P. Walters  
March 1, 2006  
Page Two

local drug problem and how it contributes to drug use in the region. Curtailing HIDTA efforts in counties that are not national distribution or transit zones would severely undermine ongoing efforts in those communities.

These concerns aside, I truly appreciate the sincere efforts of Scott Burns and John Horton of your office, both of whom have traveled with me in my district on a number of occasions and whose understanding of and advocacy for Oregon's unique issues have been outstanding and very much appreciated.

I hope that you will be willing to work with my colleagues and I to preserve these critical programs for local communities and the anti-drug activities they support to fight drug production, trafficking and abuse. Please contact me if I can be of any assistance.

Best regards,

  
Greg Walden  
Member of Congress

cc:

The Honorable Scott Burns, ONDCP Deputy Director for State and Local Affairs  
The Honorable John Horton, ONDCP Associate Deputy Director for State and Local Affairs