

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 26, 2006

Dear Port Security Conferees:

As you begin your work on the House-Senate conference regarding H.R. 4954, the SAFE Port Act, we write to express our strong support for inclusion in the conference report of a Senate-passed provision authorizing the creation of a Rural Policing Institute (RPI).

Despite the fact that a majority of America's law enforcement agencies serve rural communities and small towns, there is no office within the federal government dedicated specifically to training rural and tribal law enforcement personnel. To fill this gap, the Senate's version of the SAFE Port Act creates the RPI, which would be administered by the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center's Office of State and Local Programs.

The RPI would be authorized to 1) assess the needs of rural and tribal law enforcement agencies, 2) develop and export training programs directly to rural and tribal law enforcement agencies, and 3) conduct outreach to ensure that rural and tribal law enforcement agencies are aware of the new training opportunities. The Senate passed bill authorizes \$35 million over six years for the RPI.

Rural and tribal law enforcement agencies face two central obstacles to receiving adequate training: tight state and local training budgets and the time away from work that training programs require. These obstacles are exacerbated in rural and tribal communities, which often have especially strained budgets and small staffs. By exporting training programs into the field, the RPI would address these obstacles and provide our rural and tribal law enforcement officers with the training they need and deserve.

Law enforcement officers, from communities large and small, are at the front-line in the battle for homeland security, and it is undoubtedly in our national interest that they have access to the best possible training. It is our strong belief that the RPI is the best vehicle to ensure such training for our rural and tribal law enforcement agencies. The Senate recognized the value of this common-sense proposal, and we urge you to work with House conferees to retain this important provision in the final conference report.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Ken Salzman

[Signature]

Maria C. [Signature]

Joe Biden

Chuck Schumer

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Mark Boyer

Saxby Chambliss