



Congressman Dave Reichert
Washington's 8th Congressional District

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REICHERT FLOOR STATEMENT ON GANG DETERRENCE AND COMMUNITY PROTECTION ACT

WASHINGTON, DC— U.S. Rep. Dave Reichert today gave the following floor speech on the *Gang Deterrence and Community Protection Act of 2005*:

As [Congressman Gingrey] said, I have 33 years of law enforcement experience and in fact up until January 3rd of this year I was a cop. And one of the things I know about cops is that they need all kinds of tools, and we do need police officers on the street, but one of the most important things that cops want is to know their community supports them- local, state, and federal.

Mr. Speaker, we are here to talk about a very serious problem, today. Across the country, we are seeing a resurgence of organized crime sprawling into our towns and our neighborhoods. Gangs are becoming a magnet for our youth as they long to belong to something. And this is hardly the team we want our children to join.

Gang violence in America is not a sudden problem. It has been a part of urban life for years offering an aggressive definition and identity to those seeking a place to belong in the chaos of large metropolitan areas. However, as gangs gain momentum and invade smaller communities it is time to take a more serious, focused approach. My colleague, Mr. Forbes, addresses this critical problem, today, in the Gang Deterrence and Community Protection Act of 2005.

Prior to being elected to Congress, I served for 33 years as a cop. I worked with prostitutes, drug dealers and gang-bangers for that length of time. My colleagues in the Sheriff's office and I actively fought to curb the growth and influence of gangs. I know that not only in my home state of Washington, but across the country, law enforcement officers recognize gangs for the serious threat that they are to our community.

I believe in taking problems head on, not running away. You evaluate the facts, you make a decision and then you see that solution through. We have recognized the consequence

of letting this situation go forward for far too long. It is dangerous to all Americans. Whether a gang currently has a presence in our home towns or not, we need to take a careful look at where this issue is headed and stop the influence of gangs before it spirals out of control and out of our hands.

The United States Department of Justice cites that there are currently over 25,000 active gangs in 3,000 jurisdictions. *25,000 gangs!* That equals out to 750,000 gang members. If growth continues we could be looking at 1 million gang members across the country in only a few years.

These groups are a funnel to criminal activities, allowing a central point to encourage violence and a family that preaches drug trafficking, murder, prostitution and rape. In fact, street gangs are the primary distributor of illegal drugs in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I am a man of faith who believes deeply in family and responsibility. Our obligation is to American families and communities. We need to look out for their futures, we need to direct our youth towards a path of success and progress as productive members of society looking towards a better country. We can not afford to lose these talented youths to a life on the street with drugs and a gang hierarchy who's form of discipline is violence.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud the gentleman from Virginia's efforts to deter gangs across the country and I urge my colleagues to support the rule and vote for final passage later today.

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