



**Testimony Before the House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Crime,
Terrorism, and Homeland Security
By: Congressman Charles W. Dent (PA-15)
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Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Forbes, and Members of the Subcommittee:
Thank you for allowing me to come before you today to discuss HR 3152, the Anti-Gang Task Force Act of 2007.

This bill will help our local law enforcement communities combat the scourge of gang violence. It authorizes \$20m for each of Fiscal Years 2008 through 2011 to establish new multi-jurisdictional anti-gang task forces, bringing together state and local prosecutors with federal officials from the FBI, DEA, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (BATFE), DHS, and others.

Gangs are mobile and they often cross jurisdictional lines in order to facilitate the dealing of drugs or to avoid detection by local law enforcement authorities. Providing funds so that different municipalities may, with federal assistance, pool resources to track, combat, and prosecute combat gang activity will be a major assist to the quality of life in communities that are plagued by gang violence.

A multi-jurisdictional approach is clearly necessary in order to stop the proliferation of gang violence and gang activity. My District encompasses a good portion of what is called the Route 222 corridor. This corridor bisects five cities—Easton, Bethlehem, Allentown, Reading, and Lancaster—located in four southeast Pennsylvania counties. It is uniquely situated, in that it is linked directly to New York City, approximately eighty miles away via Interstate 78, and, through other easily accessible roads (including Route 222), to Philadelphia, which is 60 miles to the southeast.

Gang violence along the 222 corridor, primarily involving drug trafficking and armed robberies, dates back more than a decade and has been a chronic problem infecting each of the five cities within the corridor. The roadways that have allowed commerce to thrive in the region have also strongly benefited the gangs, who can move between the cities with relative ease, thereby making their operations much more difficult to detect and to track.

As a result, the 222 corridor has been plagued by gang activity. Each of the cities in the corridor has a number of home-grown violent gangs, most of which are involved in drug trafficking, according to the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. These gangs, such as the 2nd (Street) in Allentown and the 10th Street Gang in Reading, usually operate in relatively small areas of their respective cities and use violence to control and defend their drug trafficking operations. While these gangs generally do not use symbols or dress similarly to identify themselves, they are often as violent as their national counterparts. And many gang members are illegal aliens who migrate to the 222 Corridor from the southwest and New York City and join existing gangs.

HR 3157, the Anti-Gang Task Force Act of 2007, would bring federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies together to help stop multi-jurisdictional gang activity in places like the Route 222 corridor. Further, HR 3157 would be a nice complement to a recent anti-gang initiative funded through the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) program in our area.

This PSN initiative involves a cooperative law enforcement effort between the counties and cities along the corridor. For the reasons I described earlier, I pushed very hard to make sure that the Corridor was one of the six locations included in this \$15 million Comprehensive Anti-Gang Initiative undertaken by the Department of Justice. The initiative has a three-pronged approach to combating gang violence: prevention of gang affiliation, enforcement of existing laws, and the rehabilitation of gang members seeking to re-enter society.

Mr. Chairman, I commend the work that your Subcommittee is doing to curb gang violence, and I want to thank you for providing me the opportunity to talk about the Anti-Gang Task Force Act of 2007 and the Project Safe Neighborhoods Anti-Gang initiative. I hope that you and the rest of the Subcommittee will be supportive of both of these endeavors in the future.

Thank you, I yield back the balance of my time.