

# The Pueblo Chieftain

Your print and online news source for Southern Colorado

March 08, 2008

## Billings voices concern over federal funding cuts

By Patrick Malone

Law enforcement nationwide is facing funding cuts, while being asked by the communities they serve to do more with less.

Pueblo Police Chief Jim Billings was part of a contingent of more than 100 from the International Association of Chiefs of Police that shared concerns about this trend last week with members of Congress.

The proposed federal budget for 2009 was released last month and reflected cuts of almost \$2 billion from state, tribal and local law enforcement assistance programs, bringing the funding for these types of programs to a 10-year low.

“The proposed budget gutted funding for tried and true programs that we count on to keep our community safe,” Billings said. “These cuts really affect Pueblo and all other Colorado communities, so I worked with more than 100 law enforcement executives in Washington, D.C., urging our representatives to return money to these programs. I believe that Congress listened and will help us protect our hometowns and our homeland.”

Among the programs on the chopping block for funding in the proposed budget are some that Billings and other chiefs of police regard as quite successful. They include Community Oriented Policing Services (a cut of \$587 million), the Justice Assistance Grant Program at the Department of Justice (minus \$170 million) and the Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program at the Department of Homeland Security (shorted \$442 million). An additional \$1.58 billion in cuts to 28 other programs are outlined in the proposed budget.

Compared to the funding levels in the fiscal year 2002, the proposed budget for 2009 represents a reduction nationwide of more than \$3.4 billion, or 90 percent.

Billings said U.S. Sen. Ken Salazar, D-Colo., made time to hear his concerns, despite a busy schedule.

“The senator was conducting a meeting and he adjourned it long enough to hear what we had to say, wish us well and listen to some of our concerns before resuming the meeting,” Billings said.

ON THE NET

**International Association of Chiefs of Police:** <http://www.theiacp.org/>