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November 5, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Merrick B. Garland
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland:

I have recently learned from members of Iowa's law-enforcement community about frustrations they have had with applying for Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grants (Byrne JAG) because of the cumbersome nature of applying online for such grants. This increased difficulty in applying for Byrne JAG funding has made it so that smaller law-enforcement agencies do not have the resources to dedicate to making such applications. I am requesting that such application process be simplified as much as possible.

For example, members of the Iowa law-enforcement community tell me that the process for applying for Byrne JAG funding online used to take about 10 minutes. This process consisted of a simple online questionnaire asking things like how many officers the agency employs, how much overtime the agency pays, and what equipment it needs. I am told, however, that this has recently morphed into a three-hour-long process that requires logging in to two different websites, Grants.gov and then the JustGrants System, and answering sometimes complex questions. On top of that, one or more of these websites are apparently offline during several days each month, making it difficult to know when the application process can be completed. Large police departments in major metropolitan areas might have administrative staff that can deal with such processes, but many law-enforcement agencies throughout the country have small staffs. Often it is a deputy sheriff who must take the time to apply for such grants, which is time he or she cannot be out in the field serving the community.

I am sure you are aware how important Byrne JAG funding can be for law-enforcement agencies, often providing them with life-saving equipment such as bulletproof vests. I would hate to think smaller agencies forgo such funding and equipment simply because they do not have the time to apply for it. The Byrne JAG application process needs to be simplified so that applying for such funding is worthwhile to both large and small law-enforcement agencies throughout the country.

Should you have any questions about this matter, please contact John Schoenecker on my staff at (202) 224-5225.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary

RANKING MEMBER,
JUDICIARY

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