



December 23, 2015

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Reid, Speaker Ryan, and Leader Pelosi,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we are writing to express our profound concern over the decision to suspend the equitable sharing payments under the Department of Justice Asset Forfeiture program as a result of provisions contained in both the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 (P.L. 114-74) and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016 (P.L. 114-113). This shortsighted decision by Congress will have a significant and immediate impact on the ability of law enforcement agencies throughout the nation to protect their communities and provide their citizens with the services they expect and deserve.

For over 30 years, the Asset Forfeiture program has allowed law enforcement to deprive criminals of both the proceeds and tools of crime. The resources provided by the equitable sharing program have allowed agencies to participate in joint task forces to thwart and deter serious criminal activity and terrorism, purchase equipment, provide training, upgrade technology, engage their communities, and better protect their officers. Given the remarkable success of this program, the provisions approved by Congress and the Administration are both baffling and disappointing. The suspension of equitable sharing payments may cause some agencies across the country to reconsider their ability to participate in joint task forces with the federal government. The effects of this decision are far reaching and not only a disservice to law enforcement, but also to the public they are sworn to protect.

We are also extremely disappointed over the failure of Congress and the Department of Justice to consult with its state and local partners before taking this drastic step on a program of such critical importance to the law enforcement community. Given the immense impact that this decision will have on agencies throughout the country, it is simply unconscionable that such a decision could be made without their input.

It is imperative that these provisions and the decision to suspend the equitable sharing program be immediately reconsidered. Their impact on the ability of law enforcement agencies to protect their communities is simply unacceptable.


Sincerely,



Terrence M. Cunningham
President, International Association of Chiefs of Police



Donny Youngblood
President, Major County Sheriffs' Association



William Fitzpatrick
President, National District Attorneys Association



William J. Johnson
Executive Director, National Association of Police Organizations



Jonathan Thompson
Executive Director and CEO, National Sheriffs Association



Thomas Manger
President, Major Cities Chiefs Association