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U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

NEWS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER



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CRIMINAL YOUTH GANGS

DOLE/HATCH AMENDMENT EXPANDS FEDERAL ANTI-GANG LAWS; FUNDS FOR FEDERAL PROSECUTORS; \$100 MILLION FOR ANTI-GANG PROGRAMS

I am pleased to join with my distinguished colleague, Senator Hatch, in offering this amendment to address the rising level of gang-related violence in our country.

In fact, not long ago, the Washington Post ran a front page story on the problem of youth gangs in Wichita, Kansas. Anytime that crime in Wichita, Kansas is front page news in Washington, you know there's a big problem out there.

In my own state of Kansas, gang activity is on the rise, not only in Wichita, but in Topeka and Kansas City as well.

The Kansas Bureau of Investigation has identified 2,895 gang members in the state. And if you include those who call Kansas City, Missouri their home, the number of gang members wreaking havoc in Kansas exceeds 3,300.

Balanced Approach -- Focus on Law Enforcement and Prevention

This amendment takes a balanced approach--focusing both on law enforcement and prevention. It was crafted with the assistance of the Justice Department during the Bush Administration, and with the help of federal prosecutors who are on the front-lines in the war against violent crime. The amendment reflects the anti-gang provisions of the Neighborhood Security Act, which Senate Republicans introduced earlier this year.

Tougher Anti-Gang Laws

On the law enforcement side, the amendment would give federal prosecutors clear-cut authority to prosecute illegal gang activity by creating a new federal anti-gang statute.

The amendment specifically makes it a federal criminal offense to commit, or attempt to commit, a "predicate gang crime" with the intent to promote or further a criminal street gang. The amendment defines "predicate gang crime" as any act, or attempted act, which is chargeable under federal or state law and punishable for imprisonment for more than 1 year, involving murder, attempted murder, kidnapping, robbery, obstruction of justice, and illegal drug activity.

The amendment also makes it a federal crime to participate in, or to conspire to participate in, a criminal street gang, and to induce others to join the gang.

Tough mandatory minimum penalties would apply to those who violate these provisions of the new federal anti-gang statute.

Funds to Prosecute Gang Activity

The amendment also authorizes \$100 million over five years to hire additional assistant U.S. Attorneys to prosecute gang activity and directs the Attorney General to develop a national strategy aimed at coordinating federal gang-related investigations.

It's one thing to make the criminal laws tougher, but it is equally important to give our federal prosecutors the resources to ensure that these laws are enforced.

In addition, the amendment establishes crimes involving the use of minors as predicate crimes under the R.I.C.O. Statute. And it creates a presumption in favor of adult prosecution of the leaders of juvenile gangs or juveniles with a history of violent crime or drug activity.

Prevention: Help Get Gang Members Off the Streets

On the prevention side, the amendment establishes a \$100 million grant program under the juvenile justice and delinquency prevention act. Monies under the grant program would be made

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available to states and to private, not-for-profit organizations who work with juveniles and gang members. The purpose of the grants is not to coddle gang members, but to help them get on the right path through mentoring, role-models, and other valuable programs.

This amendment won't stop gang activity overnight, but it is a significant step in the right direction.

There is no excuse, no reason, that can justify the vicious crimes of violence that gang members commit on our streets. More often than not, it is the innocent bystander, and not the gang member himself, who ends up getting caught in the crossfire.

If my colleagues want to get tough with gangs and with criminal gang activity, then they should support this amendment.

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