



United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Health, Education and Human Services Division

B-260974

May 2, 1995

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Crime
Committee on the Judiciary
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Schumer:

We were asked by your office to provide you with information on how funding provided under the Local Government Law Enforcement Block Grants Act of 1995 (H.R. 728) will be allocated to local governments responsible for providing police, courts, and corrections services. You were concerned that these governments may not receive funding in amounts that reflect their service delivery responsibilities.

This letter contains our estimates of the funding amounts for city, county, and township governments in three states (Texas, Ohio, and Florida) based on the grant distribution formula described in H.R. 728. To determine if grants will be targeted to those governments most responsible for delivering the public safety services funded by the act, we compared their projected grant funding to their spending on police, courts, and corrections services. In developing our estimates, we assumed that those governments most responsible for delivering these types of services report much higher spending in these areas than governments with more limited service delivery responsibilities.¹

Our comparison, as shown in figure 1, suggests an inconsistency between expenditures by local governments for public safety services and the funding they will receive under the act. Our analyses in enclosures 2 through 4 for the three states show that this inconsistency will vary from state to state.

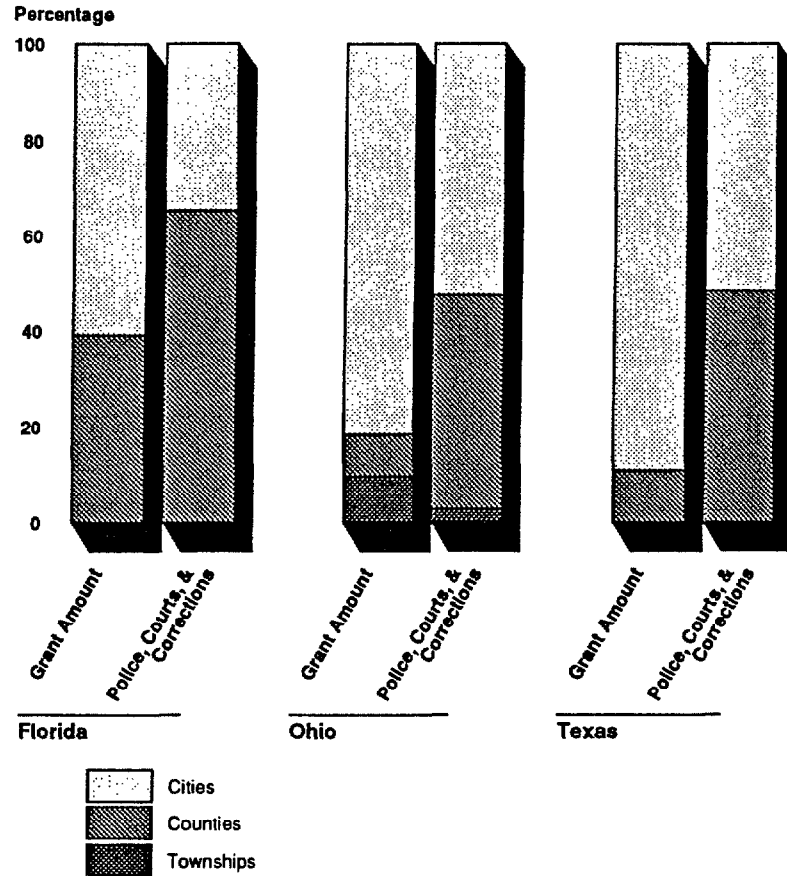
¹Using the grant distribution formula described in H.R. 728, we estimated the funding amounts based on data reported in the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Part 1, 1991-1993 Violent Crimes Master File. Enclosure 1 provides a description of the grant distribution formula. We obtained data on police, courts, and corrections expenditures for fiscal year 1992 from the Governments Division of the Bureau of the Census.

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- In Texas, counties account for 48 percent of local government spending on police, courts, and corrections; yet they would receive only 11 percent of the block grant funds. Conversely, cities would receive 89 percent of the block grant funds but account for only 52 percent of public safety spending.
- In Ohio, counties account for 45 percent of local government spending on police, courts, and corrections; yet they would receive only 9 percent of the block grant funds. Cities, on the other hand, would receive 82 percent of the block grant funds but account for only 53 percent of police, courts, and corrections spending. Similarly, township governments account for less than 3 percent of police, courts, and corrections spending but would receive over 9 percent of the block grant funds.
- In Florida, counties account for 65 percent of public safety spending but would receive 39 percent of the block grant funds. Cities, on the other hand account for 35 percent of the police, courts, and corrections expenditures, yet would receive 61 percent of the block grant funds.²

²Comparisons of individual cities and counties are listed in enclosures 2 through 4 for each state.

Figure 1: Block Grant Funds Are Not Proportionate to Expenditures for Police, Court, and Correction Services



Source: For grant amounts, GAO calculations based on FBI Part 1 1991-1993 Violent Crimes Master File. For police, courts, and corrections expenditures, fiscal year 1992 Bureau of the Census Governments Division data.

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In summary, our estimates suggest that, for the three states, counties would be receiving a less than proportionate share of grants than cities in relation to their respective expenditures for police, courts, and corrections facilities. Including a factor in the formula that reflects a local government's responsibility for delivering these services would more closely align grant funding to public safety expenditures.

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If you have any questions or would like to discuss this material further, please contact Jerry Fastrup, Assistant Director, on (202) 512-7211.

Sincerely yours,



William J. Scanlon
Associate Director,
Health Financing and Policy

Enclosures - 4

ALLOCATION OF BLOCK GRANTS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

The proposed Local Government Law Enforcement Block Grants Act of 1995 (H.R. 728) would authorize \$2 billion to be appropriated each fiscal year to local governments¹ between fiscal years 1996 and 2000. These appropriations would be used to, among other things, hire and train additional police, purchase equipment directly related to basic law enforcement functions, start prevention programs, establish drug courts, and organize cooperative and multijurisdictional task forces. The bill would require the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to allocate these funds to each state and local government in accordance with the following procedures.

The allocation process prescribed in the bill can be viewed as allocating funds to successive levels with separate formulas used at each level. Funds are allocated first to state areas; second, within state areas between two groups of local governments (reporters and nonreporters of violent crime); and lastly, to individual units within each of the two groups. The formula allocation process would follow these steps:

1. Compute State Amount. Each state would get a share of the \$2 billion equal to its percentage share of total violent crimes² of all states. However, no state would get a share less than 0.25 percent, and all states above that 0.25 percent floor would have their shares proportionately reduced to provide amounts needed to assure states that floor amount. In this step, allocations would also be made to the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

¹A local government is defined in H.R. 728 as "a county, township, city, or political subdivision of a county, township, or city, that is a unit of local government as determined by the Secretary of Commerce for general statistical purposes; and the District of Columbia and the recognized governing body of an Indian tribe or Alaskan Native village that carries out substantial governmental duties and powers."

²Violent crimes as used in this allocation process equal the average of three most-recent years of Part 1 violent crimes as defined under the Uniform Crime Reports program of the FBI. Violent crime consists of murder and non negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

2. Subdivide State Amount Between Reporters and Nonreporters.

Eligible local governments in each state are assigned to one of two groups within the state: (a) units that report violent crimes (reporters) and (b) units that do not (nonreporters). These two groups are then allocated an amount to be shared among the units assigned to that group. The share of the state amount allocated to each of these two groups is based on the total population of units in each group.

3. Allocate an Initial Amount to Each Local Government.

Of the amount to be divided among reporting units, each unit's share is determined by its share of reported violent crimes in the state. For units that do not report violent crimes, each unit's share of the amount for the nonreporters group is based on its share of imputed violent crimes in nonreporting units. The method for imputing violent crimes to units that do not report crimes assumes that their number of crimes per person equals the average crimes per person of reporting units of the same type (county, city, or township) and population size category within the state. Multiplying that average per capita violent crimes by the nonreporting unit's population generates that unit's imputed crime-data.

4. Apply Limitations to the Allocation Amounts. Units whose initial amount computed in the previous step is less than \$10,000 do not directly receive that allocation. Instead it is transferred to the governor of the state for use by the state police to provide law enforcement services to local governments. Next, any allocation amount that would exceed 100 percent of the local unit's law enforcement expenditures is capped at that 100-percent level. Any funds generated by capping initial allocations is then proportionally reallocated statewide among units not subject to this limitation.

5. Resolution of "Disparate Allocations." This provision of the bill requires a testing of the allocations between counties and other eligible units of local government within the county. Under certain circumstances,³ the allocations to a county and certain

³These circumstances arise when two conditions are met: (1) the attorney general of the state certifies that the county bears more than 50 percent of the costs of prosecution or incarceration that arise from the Part 1 violent crimes reported by an underlying city, township, or tribe and (2) the amount allocated to the county government and other eligible local governments existing within the county boundaries would satisfy either a 200-percent or 400-percent test for disparate allocation amounts. The 200-percent test would be triggered if any underlying local government unit would receive a formula allocation amount that exceeds 200 percent of what the

other eligible units within the county would be withheld until a joint application is submitted by the county and those units. The joint application must specify how funds would be distributed among them. These amounts could differ from those calculated by the above formulas.

overlying county government's allocation amount would be. The 400-percent test would apply if the sum of formula allotments to underlying units (excluding amounts subject to the 200-percent test) exceeds 400 percent of the amount allotted to the overlying county.

COMPARISON OF GOVERNMENT LAW ENFORCEMENT BLOCK GRANT FUNDS
TO EXPENDITURES FOR POLICE, COURTS, AND
CORRECTIONS SERVICES FOR TEXAS

Figures are percent

	Share of block grant funds	Share of current spending	Grants as a percent of spending
State summary			
Counties	11.0	48.5	22.7
Cities	89.0	51.5	172.8
Total	100.0	100.0	--
Examples of local governments			
Bexar County	0.4	3.3	12.9
San Antonio	5.1	3.9	131.4
El Paso County	0.3	1.7	16.2
El Paso City	4.2	1.7	251.0
Harris County	3.5	11.2	31.1
Houston	18.2	10.7	170.2
Travis County	0.3	2.5	11.1
Austin	2.1	2.1	98.8

Source: For block grant funds, GAO calculations of funding amounts based on violent crime data reported in the FBI Part 1 1991-1993 Violent Crimes Master File.

COMPARISON OF GOVERNMENT LAW ENFORCEMENT BLOCK GRANT FUNDS
TO EXPENDITURES FOR POLICE, COURTS, AND
CORRECTIONS SERVICES FOR OHIO

Figures are percent

	Share of block grant funds	Share of current spending	Grants as a percent of spending
State summary			
Counties	8.7	44.8	19.5
Cities	81.5	52.5	155.3
Townships	9.8	2.8	351.4
Total	100.0	100.0	--
Examples of local governments			
Cuyahoga County	0.9	8.7	10.0
Cleveland	14.3	8.7	163.4
Franklin County	0.6	4.2	14.0
Columbus	11.6	7.3	158.8
Hamilton County	0.6	5.6	10.9
Cincinnati	9.4	4.1	228.7
Lucas County	0.1	2.4	6.0
Toledo	5.4	3.6	149.5

Source: For block grant funds, GAO calculations of funding amounts based on violent crime data reported in the FBI Part 1 1991-1993 Violent Crimes Master File.

COMPARISON OF GOVERNMENT LAW ENFORCEMENT BLOCK GRANT FUNDS
TO EXPENDITURES FOR POLICE, COURTS, AND
CORRECTIONS SERVICES FOR FLORIDA

Figures are percent

	Share of block grant funds	Share of current spending	Grants as a percent of spending
State summary			
Counties	39.1	65.4	59.8
Cities	60.9	34.6	175.8
Total	100.0	100.0	--
Examples of local governments			
Dade County	12.4	14.9	83.5
Miami	9.1	2.6	352.4
Hillsborough County	2.9	4.7	61.9
Tampa	6.1	1.7	356.4
Orange County	3.2	4.5	71.0
Orlando	2.1	1.2	179.1

Source: For block grant funds, GAO calculations of funding amounts based on violent crime data reported in the FBI Part 1 1991-1993 Violent Crimes Master File.

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