

Statement
of the
Consortium of Social Science Associations

submitted for the record on the
Fiscal Year 2002 Appropriations

for the
National Institute of Justice
Bureau of Justice Statistics

prepared for the
Subcommittee on the Departments of Commerce, Justice,
and State, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies

Committee on Appropriations

U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Frank Wolf, Chairman

March 20, 2001

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

The **Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA)** greatly appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Fiscal Year 2002 appropriations for programs under the Subcommittee's jurisdiction, including the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs (OJP).

COSSA is an advocacy organization supported by more than 105 professional associations, scientific societies, universities, and research institutes that promotes attention to and federal funding for the social, behavioral, and economic sciences. It serves as a bridge between the research community and the policy making community. Our member organizations include the American Psychological Association, American Society of Criminology, American Sociological Association, and the Association of American Law Schools. A complete list is attached to the testimony.

Mr. Chairman, these are fortunate times. For the eighth year in a row, both the FBI's Uniform Crime Report (UCR) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), two major sources of crime data, report significant decreases in crime. Homicide rates have been in decline since 1993 and juvenile homicide arrests fell nearly 20 percent between 1994 and 1998. In 1999, the last year for which data is available, violent crime rates reached the lowest level ever recorded.

Unfortunately, crime cannot continue to drop indefinitely – crime rates cannot go negative. Eventually, the crime rate will level off, or, more likely, begin to rise again.

We are also at an auspicious point in time, because we have the opportunity to prevent the drift to more violent times. The challenge before us is to **keep the crime rate low**.

This requires first knowing what caused the decline in crime that began in the early 1990s. While a police commissioner may attribute a local crime drop to his police force and an advocate for prisons may attribute falling crime rates to increased incarceration, only scientific, evidence-based approaches can indicate the true causes of the decline in crime. They are numerous, and are not easy to separate, according to Alfred Blumstein (former President of COSSA) and Joel Wallman in *The Crime Drop in America*,¹ a scholarly and highly-praised examination of the 1990s decline in crime.

Second, keeping the crime rate low requires evaluating crime prevention and reduction programs, continuing effective programs and terminating ineffective and inefficient ones, and developing new initiatives to keep up with a changing nation. As the Congressionally-mandated University of Maryland crime study, *Preventing Crime*:

¹ Alfred Blumstein and Joel Wallman, eds. *The Crime Drop in America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

*What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising*² demonstrates, we simply do not yet know enough about the active ingredients of successful crime programs.

National Institute of Justice (NIJ)

To these ends, the **National Institute of Justice** engages the Nation's brightest criminal justice researchers in understanding the causes and correlates of crime, and determining the most effective methods of preventing crime. Created by the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, the NIJ is the Nation's primary source of research and development in the field of criminal justice. The 1968 crime bill specifically calls on NIJ to sponsor special projects and research and development programs to improve and strengthen the criminal justice system and reduce and prevent crime. NIJ supports both extramural (universities and other research institutes) and intramural (within the NIJ) research, which is lauded by the criminal justice community as well as the research community at large for its highly rigorous scientific standards.

Recognition of the value of the scientific approach to addressing social problems appears to be growing. **Science-based research and evaluation exposes ineffective, costly programs and forms the basis of efficient, effective programs.** Indeed, President Bush has repeatedly stressed the need for *research-based* and *evidence-based* approaches, to issues like improving education and combating crime and drug abuse.³ Consequently, modest funds spent on crime and criminal justice research at NIJ work to ensure that more sizeable amounts directed to crime-fighting programs are spent wisely and will serve to keep the Nation's crime rate at the low level we enjoy today.

One example of such a program is NIJ's **ADAM (Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring) program**. ADAM collects information about drug use from arrestees in urban areas. Using both interview data and drug testing, the program reveals patterns of drug abuse and its relationship with crime, and allows policymakers and law enforcement to develop effective enforcement, treatment, and prevention strategies. Furthermore, as the only national drug research program built upon data collection at the local level, ADAM has revealed that there is no *single* national drug problem – there are different drug problems that vary from city to city. Since 1987, ADAM (and its forerunner, the Drug Use Forecasting [DUF] program) has allowed local communities to understand their drug problem and empowered them to develop their own programs to reduce drugs and related crimes in their areas.

Currently only 35 sites benefit from this program. Expanding the program would create a more representative sample size and make the fruits of this program available to more local communities to inform **effective, bottom-up strategies** for fighting drugs and crime.

² Lawrence W. Sherman *et al.*, *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising: A Report to the United States Congress*

³ *A Blueprint for New Beginnings: A Responsible Budget for America's Priorities*; and *No Child Left Behind*

NIJ's ADAM is just one example of how modest investments in criminal justice research can not only tackle drug and crime problems, but do so with more **effectiveness and efficiency**. (ADAM's 1999 Annual Report is available online at <http://www.adam-nij.net/report.htm>.)

This program also exemplifies NIJ's practice of **disseminating research findings** so that society as a whole can realize the benefits of progress in criminal justice research. This is a crucial aspect of any research agency. NIJ has established a robust and healthy relationship with both researchers and law enforcement officials in the criminal justice community. Through its Research in Progress lecture series and its Perspectives in Crime and Justice lecture series, NIJ ensures that the community is informed about important criminal justice research and practices. These lecture series also allow NIJ to actively solicit the views of the criminal justice community. In addition, NIJ sponsors a major research conference each July that attracts hundreds of practitioners to hear about the latest results of NIJ-supported studies.

ADAM is one of many innovative and promising programs run by NIJ. Other current programs include: **Breaking the Cycle**, a joint project with the Office of National Drug Control Policy, which tests the idea that early identification and assessment of drug-using defendants, followed by individualized treatment, intensive supervision, and strong judicial oversight, can reduce drug use and crime; **Community Mapping, Planning, and Analysis for Safety Strategies (COMPASS)**, which analyzes public safety with the support of timely, accurate, multi-disciplinary, automated data with a geographic reference; and those established by the **Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology** Advisory Council (LECTAC), which seeks advances in, among other areas, nonintrusive, concealed weapons and contraband detection, DNA testing, officer protection, less-than-lethal incapacitation, counterterrorism, crime mapping, location and tracking, secure communications, and noninvasive drug detection.

Unfortunately, the full value of these programs is difficult to realize under the current discretionary funding level. That is why ***COSSA strongly advocates an increase in the base appropriation for NIJ for FY 2002***. This will strengthen NIJ's ability to continue developing such initiatives, help us to understand the causes of the 1990s decline in crime, and allow the dividends from previous years' investments in criminal justice research to continue to be paid out. Ultimately, all Americans receive these dividends in the form of low crime rates. With the help of researchers at the National Institute of Justice and America's research universities and institutes, we will seize the opportunity and play an active role to ensure our crime rates *remain* at historic lows.

Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)

The **Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)**, the Nation's primary source for criminal justice statistics, collects, analyzes, publishes, and disseminates information on crime and the criminal justice system. The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), BJS' largest single data collection, offers insights into the nature of crime, its consequences, the relationship between victims and offenders, and the willingness of victims to report

crimes to law enforcement officials. BJS also maintains a wide array of statistical programs in the areas of law enforcement, adjudication, and corrections. **These data are essential to ensure that justice is both efficient and evenhanded.**

COSSA strongly supports an increase in the FY 2002 appropriation for BJS. In its data collection, analysis of crime and justice statistics, and dissemination of research findings, BJS is a fundamental yet underfunded component of the Nation's criminal justice efforts. With adequate backing, BJS can provide the hard data and objective analysis to underlie effective criminal justice operations.

Additionally, BJS fosters the states' ability to develop, collect, analyze, and disseminate criminal justice statistics through its support of state Statistical Analysis Centers (SACs). Because the dynamics of crime, policy, population, and so on vary from place to place, it is essential to possess the capability to address criminal justice issues at the state level. SACs conduct objective analyses to meet critical planning needs and address state-wide and system-wide criminal justice policy issues. Nearly every state has a SAC now. However, as the Centers have spread funding has not increased; each Center now receives less than \$50,000 per year. **State-level statistical analysis is another area in which relatively modest Federal investments can give a great boost to the Nation's ability to fight crime and ensure justice.**

Like NIJ, BJS does an outstanding job disseminating research results to government officials and policy makers in a timely manner to keep them informed of important criminal justice research findings. BJS publishes numerous research reports that are valuable to local, State, and Federal law enforcement communities. Some recent reports include: *Indicators of School Crime and Safety, 2000; Urban, Suburban, and Rural Victimization, 1993-1998; Homicide Trends in the United States; Sexual Victimization of College Women* (with NIJ); and *Crimes Against Persons Age 65 or Older, 1992-1997.*

COSSA greatly appreciates the support the Subcommittee has provided the National Institute of Justice and the Bureau of Justice Statistics over the last several years. Thank you for the opportunity to present our views.

Consortium of Social Science Associations

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American Economic Association
American Historical Association
American Political Science Association
American Psychological Association

American Society of Criminology
American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association
Association of American Geographers
Association of American Law Schools

Law and Society Association
Linguistic Society of America
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National Council on Family Relations
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Society for the Advancement of Socio-
Economics
Society for the Scientific Study of
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Society for the Scientific Study of
Sexuality
Sociologists for Women in Society
Southern Political Science Association
Southern Sociological Society
Southwestern Social Science Association
Urban Affairs Association

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