Since September 11, 2001, many in this Nation and this Congress have come to recognize the importance of the sacrifices made by men and women in law enforcement. As a former police officer with the Michigan State Police and the Escanaba City Police Department, I am a member of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Justice Assistance grant program that provides funding for 19 different programs for counterdrug initiatives in rural communities for funding our jails, and 19 different programs to allow local law enforcement to do what is necessary in their communities to best serve and protect their people. These grants are used to administer, as I said, vital programs such as multi-jurisdictional drug enforcement programs, anti-drug education programs, treatment programs, staffing our jails, running investigative bureaus, and also all the way to alternative sentencing initiatives.

If enacted, the President’s budget cuts will have far-reaching effects on our local law enforcement communities. Local drug enforcement teams are crucial to keeping our communities drug-free. If the Byrne grant programs are zeroed out, as they are required to be underneath our budget, they will be unable to hire officers needed to sustain their drug enforcement teams.

Let me tell my colleagues, when it comes to drug abuse, no community, rural or urban, is immune from this problem. To highlight how important these local teams are to our rural districts, there is a recent article in our local newspapers in my first congressional district of Michigan. On April 13, Huron Undercover Narcotics Teams seized 3,000 Oxycontin tablets from a home in the rural part of Presque Isle. This is just one example of the critical work these narcotic teams do day in and day out to keep drugs out of our communities and our schools.

This country’s drug problems are not going to go away with this one bust. In fact, with the emergence of prescription drugs used and dealt illegally like Oxycontin, some would argue the problem is only getting worse. My question is, why are we zeroing out the funding that enables programs like HUNT, the Huron Undercover Narcotics Team, to exist and combat this problem that is only growing more serious?

Congress also needs to provide assistance to help regional law enforcement officers and first responders talk to each other in a time of emergency. It is called interoperability. My bill, H.R. 3370, the Public Safety Interoperability Act, would provide grants to local law enforcement agencies to modernize their communications systems and become interoperable. Interoperability of an officer’s communications system is how law enforcement agencies in different jurisdictions to communicate with each other in time of crisis.

Currently, firefighters and law enforcement officials may not be able to talk to each other, even if they work in the same jurisdiction. The tragic events of September 11 only illustrates and highlights why it is so important that our law enforcement officials are fully able to talk to each other via interoperability. Mr. Speaker, 343 firefighters and 72 law enforcement officers were awarded a Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance grant program that provides funding for 19 different programs for counterdrug initiatives.
to each other. No one could tell them to get out of the building.

When our first responders are confronted with an emergency situation, it is absolutely necessary that they are able to communicate with each other so they can assess the situation and how best to handle it. These are the kinds of resources and tools our first responders need. We need to do everything possible to ensure that our law enforcement officers that play an integral role in our Nation’s antiterrorism efforts are fully interoperable and able to talk to each other, whether it is State, Federal, or local law enforcement, or first responders.

Without interoperability, our public safety agencies face the challenge of being able to talk to each other when the emergency crisis strikes.

My State of Michigan is one of the leaders in its mission to build a communications network that allows its entire local and State public safety agencies the ability to talk with one another by radio, regardless of agency or jurisdiction. The network has right now 400 local and State agencies on it, but there are another 1,300 agencies that are interested in the network, and the main obstacle in reaching this goal is being able to get on the same network and talk to each other via the spectrum they need and the funding they need, which is why we have heard from national police and public safety organizations about the funding levels. If we tried to fund the whole Nation, it would cost about $10 billion, and that is what is needed to make this Nation’s first responders interoperable or being able to talk to each other, regardless of the jurisdiction or agency they work for. But so far, it appears that only about $800 million in Federal grants have been provided for interoperability. Of this $800 million, we are not sure where the money all went to. In fact, why was it used? Was it used to buy radios? Were those radios able to talk to each other? Was it to upgrade systems, or was it just to study the problem? These are the questions we have asked on this floor of this House, because there is nothing more important to anyone in law enforcement than to be able to talk to each other to tell the situation they are in and ask for assistance if they so need it.

In fact, the independent 9/11 Commission’s hearings in Detroit to examine the communication gaps that actually occurred between law enforcement officers and public safety agencies and first responders during their response to the attack on the World Trade Center. What the Commission learned firsthand was that fire chiefs in the building lobbies, in the lobbies of the World Trade Center, knew little of the conditions upstairs, did not hear anything about what police officers and firefighters were seeing as they circled the World Trade Center. Federal reports on the 9/11 emergency response concluded that the inability of these first responders to talk to each other, these first responders from different agencies to talk to one another was a key factor in the death, as I said earlier, of at least 121 firefighters. No one could tell them it was time to get out of the buildings, as it may fall upon them.

Since then, the Federal Government has called upon our States and local law enforcement officers and first responders to be even more vigilant and be prepared for possible attacks on territory yet our public safety agencies continue to lack the ability to communicate with each other, between agencies and between jurisdictions. Firefighters cannot talk to police, local police cannot talk to State police, and so on and so on.

Despite the creation of the Department of Homeland Security and grant programs for first responders, program funding for modernizing their communications systems has fallen far short of the billions of dollars we need to talk and to help each other. Why are agencies interoperable. As I said earlier, approximately $800 million has been devoted to local public safety communications systems but, then, in 2004, no funding was provided at all. Again, how is this helping to solve the problem, when in 2004 one dime went specifically to grants of interoperability. Why is it that we are always talking about the priority to make our communications system interoperable so we can talk to each other, but we are not providing the resources to get the job done?

Another question: Congress has provided more than $4.4 billion in first responder grants and to the States, but it appears no one knows how much of this grant money has been used for communications, I even asked my home State of Michigan. They have received some $120 million in the State formula Department of Homeland Security grants, but no one could tell me or my staff how much was used for communications systems and communications systems that were interoperable.

The bottom line is there is a lot of talk around here about interoperability, but no real reliable resources to help make this happen so agencies can talk to each other in times of disaster or, heaven help us, a terrorist attack.

As I said earlier, I have a bill that would help address this urgent need, and the bill is the Public Safety Interoperability Implementation Act, which sets up a public safety communications trust fund in the U.S. Treasury to expeditiously move our Nation’s public safety agencies into the modern day state of communications. In the short term, it is clear, local agencies and the States cannot afford to do this on their own. It is clear specific funding will not be set aside in our current appropriation bills for this priority. It is time that we provide our first responders with the tools they need to do the job the Federal Government has called upon them to do.

Today we had an evacuation of the Capitol building and the office buildings here. I really wonder, could the Capitol Police talk to the Metropolitan Police? Could Metropolitan Police talk to the Secret Service? Could Secret Service talk to the Park Police, could they talk to the emergency people, could they talk to the ambulance drivers, could they talk to the fire department. They all responded, but could they talk to each other and communicate with each other? Could they talk to each other to direct the resources, the manpower, the personnel we needed at the right time if it would have been a serious attack or threat here in our Nation’s capital. I know in the Nation’s capital from previous testimony they have spent over $300 million on interoperability in the Washington, D.C. area. I also know that it is not fully operational and not all jurisdictions talk to each other. So we have some work to do. There is new technology out there now which will bring down the cost of interoperability, but we have to put forth the resources to bring this together.

It is clear, local agencies and the States cannot afford to do this on their own. It is clear specific funding will not be set aside in our current appropriation bills for this priority. It is time that we provide our first responders with the tools they need to do the job the Federal Government has called upon them to do, especially now during National Law Enforcement Week.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about it, firefighters and law enforcement officials may not be able to communicate with each other even if they work in the same jurisdiction. As I said, the tragic events of September 11 certainly indicated why this is so important. We talk about the events of September 11.
or the 150 some law enforcement officers who will be placed on the memorial wall who died here in the past year, and we need to do everything we can to ensure programs like the Thin Blue Line are fully funded. The Thin Blue Line is a nonprofit, volunteer organization that assists and supports the families of injured or deceased officers of law enforcement agencies. Thin Blue Line began in Michigan and is now expanding throughout this Nation. Thin Blue Line volunteers assist families with applying for benefits, counseling, and answering their questions during the most difficult of circumstances. These officers have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty, and their families deserve to be honored, respected, and supported in any way we can.

I am hopeful that we can continue as a Nation, as a Congress, and as citizens of this great Nation to show our commitment to law enforcement by supporting important funding needs, including showing our full support for the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial. It is the least we can do for those individuals who put their life on the line each and every day.

Mr. Speaker, I want to dedicate this time to law enforcement officers and Law Enforcement Week. As I said, Sunday night, they will be putting the names of the officers who have fallen, 153 in the past year, plus 262 others killed in prior years, on a Peace Officers Memorial at the National Candlelight Vigil at the National Memorial here in Washington, D.C., and I hope during this next week while we are in and out of Washington, D.C., we take a moment to reflect upon those individuals who provided so much to us, people and individuals we often take for granted, our law enforcement officials throughout this great Nation.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE
By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:
Mr. Moran of Virginia (at the request of Ms. Pelosi) for today.
Ms. Wasserman Schultz (at the request of Ms. Pelosi) for today after noon.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED
By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:
(The following Members (at the request of Mr. Pallone) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)
Mr. Paschel, for 5 minutes, today.
Ms. Woolsey, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. Cummings, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. Emanuel, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. Pallone, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. McDermott, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. Davis of Illinois, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. DeFazio, for 5 minutes, today.
(The following Members (at the request of Mr. Tiahrt) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)
Mr. Poe, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. Gutknecht, for 5 minutes, May 18.
Mr. Tiahrt, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. Garret of New Jersey, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. King of Iowa, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. Frank of Arizona, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. Jones of North Carolina, for 5 minutes, May 16, 17 and 18.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED
Mr. Trandahl, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled a bill of the House of the following title, which was thereupon signed by the Speaker:
H.R. 1289. An act making Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2005, and for other purposes.

BILL PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT
Jeff Trandahl, Clerk of the House reports that on May 11, 2005 he presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bill:
H.R. 1289. An act making Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2005, and for other purposes.

ADJOURNMENT
Mr. Stupak. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn. The Clerk clerked. The vote was taken accordingly (at 10 o’clock and 15 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, May 12, 2005, at 10 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.
Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker’s table and referred as follows:
1948. A letter from the General Counsel/FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department’s final rule—Final Flood Elevation Determinations—received April 28, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 501(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.
1951. A letter from the General Counsel/FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department’s final rule—Final Flood Elevation Determinations—received April 28, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 501(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.
1952. A letter from the General Counsel/FEMA, Department of Homeland Security,