



Durbin calls out Attorney General Sessions for attempt to eliminate vital funding for gun violence prevention

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WASHINGTON—During today’s Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) assailed U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions for threatening to cut off Chicago’s access to federal Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne-JAG) funding unless local police forces commit to assist the Department of Homeland Security in its enforcement of federal civil immigration laws. Earlier this year, the Department of Justice placed new and onerous conditions on local law enforcement’s access to federal funding through the Byrne-JAG program, forcing cities

to choose between losing critical violence prevention funds or redirecting already scarce resources from local policing efforts to enforcing federal immigration laws.



“So far this year, 3,000 people have been injured by gun shot in the City of Chicago and over 500 have been killed. This is not something that is a political debate in my heart, it breaks my heart to think what the families are going through in the city that I represent.

The Superintendent of Police who's worked in that police department for 30 years, I want to read to you what he said: 'The federal government's plans will hamper community policing and undermine the work our men and women have done to reduce shootings by 16 percent so far this year.' And this is the sentence I want to focus on. 'I've said it before and I will say it again, undocumented immigrants are not driving violence in Chicago and that's why I want our officers focused on community policing and not trying to be the immigration police.'

The City of Chicago plans to use Byrne-JAG money in Fiscal Year 2017 for Shot-Spotter technology that helps detect unlawful gunshots so they can be investigated by police. Since 2009, the City of Chicago and Cook County have received \$58,135,399 in Byrne-JAG grants.

Durbin continued, "You want to cut back these funds because you want the City of Chicago to play the role of immigration police on federal civil laws. Mr. Attorney General, you're not helping us solve the murder problem in the City of Chicago by taking away these federal funds and the Superintendent says that your pursuit of undocumented immigrants has little or nothing to do with gun violence in Chicago."

In August, Durbin joined 52 members of the U.S. House and Senate in [calling out](#) Attorney General Jeff Sessions for holding critical violence prevention funds used by American cities hostage to the Trump Administration's extreme immigration agenda. Attorney General Sessions and the Justice of Department have not responded to this letter. In February, Durbin and Duckworth [urged](#) President Trump to do more than just tweet about the gun violence epidemic in Chicago, and join them in providing a surge in federal support and resources to assist in public safety, law enforcement, and economic development efforts in the city.

Video of Durbin's remarks to the Judiciary Committee is available [here](#).