



*REGIONAL COUNCIL
OF
NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS*

5600 City Avenue Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19131 215/660-1985

May 19, 1989

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

My name is Father Joseph M. Kakalec, S.J. I am the Director of the Regional Council of Neighborhood Organizations, 5600 City Avenue, Philadelphia, 19131.

Over the past year or two, it has become clear to neighborhood groups that the so called, "war on drugs" is not being won by law enforcement officials fighting this war alone. In the New York Times on May 3, 1989, for example, it stated that, "Despite A Big Drug Raid In the Capital, Drugs Were As Plentiful As Ever." Such stories and headlines can be found in any one of our local newspapers.

What concerns neighborhood people is that while effort is being made to increase the number of policemen, weapons, and even legislation, people in the neighborhoods where the war is fought are being ignored. And if it needs to be said again no war can be fought without troops, in this case, the neighborhood people. Consequently drug use continues to flourish, supplies are constant and arrested pushers and dealers are back on the street within minutes of being arrested. Who is winning? Where is the impact?

This one dimensional approach to the war is doom to failure.

We feel that law enforcement officials can focus on the supply of drugs. This is where their ability lies. Only neighborhood people can work on the demand and curtailing the demand. But in order to do this we have to bring people, adults and youth into the effort with drug education programs, recreation programs, counselling, summer/work programs and basic organizing. Naturally all of this requires money and funding. So we are asking for a minimum of 70% of these funds returned to the communities from which they were taken.

It is hard for us to be sympathetic to those who claim they are underfunded. As a community person, let me tell you about underfunding. We are not a line item on anyone's budget. We give our time free, we search for a home or church to hold a community meeting. We have no staff. We frequently cannot afford a telephone. We write letters without a typewriter. And we are told to do our part as partners in this war on drugs. We want this money which rightfully belongs to the neighborhoods from which it was taken. It belongs to us. It was stolen from our communities.

Asking for these funds means we have to know how much money we are talking about. There is no public account or accountability of the funds. We hear that the drug industry in this country reaches 150 billion dollars a year. We hear that in Philadelphia, cocaine sales amount to 12.5 million a week (Inq. 9/18/89). We hear that from July 1, 1988 to

March 31, 1989 \$1.491 million was split between the police and the District Attorney. Then we hear that 80 to 90% of the money confiscated by federal agents is returned to local law enforcement bodies. The mass of data, the unbelievable dollar amounts and the confusing array of factual information demands public accountability and so a public audit must be written into law.

Any law passed by the state legislature, moreover, must apply to every political subdivision of the state. We cannot limit these amendments to first or second class cities. It must apply to all cities, boroughs, villages, townships and all other political subdivisions. Reading, McAdoo, Montgomery County, Bristol Township, Wilkes-Barre and Easton all need this money as well.

In summary, we need a total effort in this war on drugs. So we must ask: how much money are we talking about distributing? Who deserves it? We feel it should be returned to the neighborhood from which it was taken. How or who will control the distribution? We are convinced that answers to these questions which are found in our amendments are the best hope, the most thoughtful way to win the war on drugs.

Intelligence

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ould this money go to communities in this war. As Williams has said, "the success in the war on drugs goes well beyond police staffing to community involvement..." (Philadelphia Inquirer, Sept. 18, 1988)

Complex Puzzle

of the other side of the coin? supply of drugs is one piece of puzzle; addressing the drugs is equally important. Publications, from Drug Czar William Philadelphia Police Commission Williams, have acknowledged

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edged the vital front-line role of communities in this war. As Williams has said, "the success in the war on drugs goes well beyond police staffing to community involvement..." (Philadelphia Inquirer, Sept. 18, 1988)

Community residents, through their involvement in voluntary organizations, are already addressing the root causes of drug abuse. Community groups and social service organizations are fighting drugs the best way they know how: by providing constructive opportunities for young people before the lure of the drug trade ensnares them; by providing drug education and outreach in our schools and on the street corners; and by providing outpatient treatment programs for those people who have become dependent on drugs.

The sad fact is that the drug trade is stripping our communities of financial resources so desperately needed. Let's face it, our communities are the victims of disinvestment by business; local, state, and federal government; and now, by the drug trade that sucks what little money is left out of this region's neighborhoods.

Forfeited drug money represents a perfect way to reinvest in the community. RCNO's Forfeiture Coalition seeks to put confiscated drug money back into the community where it can be used to chip

away at the iron-grip of drugs. You do not have to look far to find excellent examples of how groups can utilize forfeited monies. In Montgomery County, for instance, nonprofit organizations providing drug education programs in schools and operating drug hot-lines have received forfeiture funds. Five hundred "drug-free zone" signs have also been purchased.

Hot Spot Programs

The Northwood Community Association in the West Oak Lane section of Philadelphia received \$1,000 from the district attorney's forfeiture fund to implement a "hot spot" program. Residents anonymously identify drug hot spots and, in cooperation with the local police precinct, are successful in shutting-down crack houses and notorious drug corners. Residents and law enforcement officials have hailed this as a model program.

Other community groups are organizing recreational programs for youth and working to bring new jobs to their neighborhoods, thus providing real alternatives to the drug trade. Forfeiture funds could be used to sustain and expand community-based efforts like these, and others too numerous to mention, in towns and neighborhoods across this region.

Fighting the war on drugs and the root causes of drug abuse is no easy task. It can become difficult and dangerous. We need everyone to fight this cancer that is destroying our social and cultural fabric. Community groups, law enforcement officers, political officials and business must join the effort.

Amending the Forfeiture Law, and returning confiscated money back to the areas from which it was taken, is a very real and substantial step in helping community groups to wage their own kind of front-line offensive in this long and difficult fight.



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Forfeiture Fact Sheet

A quick survey of local newspaper articles reveals the following information about confiscated drug money in this region:

FACT: From July 1, 1988 - March 31, 1989 the Philadelphia police and District Attorney split a total of \$1,491,148 in forfeiture money.
(Phila. Inquirer: March 31, 1989; B-1)

FACT: As of January 22, 1989 an additional \$4 million was being processed for forfeiture.
(Phila. Inquirer: January 22, 1989)

FACT: According to the D.A.'s office, \$7,000 of forfeiture funds have gone to community organizations to assist them in anti-drug efforts in the neighborhoods (0.5%).

The following are examples of drug monies confiscated in single drug arrests:

13APR88	Cash seized in Philadelphia drug bust (<u>The Leader</u> ; April 13, 1988)	\$478,000
MAY88	Cash seized in Philadelphia drug bust (<u>Phila. Inquirer</u> : August 11, 1988; B-1)	\$159,000
7JUL88	Cash seized in Philadelphia drug bust plus 12 vehicles (<u>Phila. Inquirer</u> : July 7, 1988; B-4)	\$490,000
AUG88	Cash seized in Philadelphia drug bust (<u>Phila. Inquirer</u> : September 18, 1988)	\$4,250
23NOV88	Cash seized in Philadelphia drug bust (<u>The Leader</u> : November 23, 1988; p. 6)	\$43,000
24JAN89	Cash seized in Philadelphia drug bust (<u>Phila. Daily News</u> : March 22, 1989; p.4)	\$669
2MAR89	Cash seized in Philadelphia drug bust (<u>Phila. Inquirer</u> : March 2, 1989; B-2)	\$319,000
22MAR89	Cash seized in Philadelphia drug bust (<u>Phila. Daily News</u> : March 22, 1989)	\$750
21APR89	Cash seized in Federal/Philadelphia drug bust (<u>Phila. Inquirer</u> : April 22, 1989; B-1)	\$89,000
MAR88-JAN89	Total cash seized from one Philadelphia dealer plus jewelery valued at \$60,000 (<u>Phila. Inquirer</u> : January 5, 1989; B-6)	\$500,000

JAN88-JAN89	Total cash seized in Delaware County plus 25 vehicles and 28 weapons (<u>Phila. Inquirer</u> : January 8, 1989; DC-6)	\$114,000
28JUL88	Bucks County D.A. auctions forfeited property D.A. estimates \$650,000 in forfeited property seized from APR86-JUL88 (<u>Phila. Inquirer</u> : July 28, 1988; H-30)	\$36,000