

Date: 3/12/2013

To: House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice

From: Craig Mellecker, Chief of Police

Reference: Support for Senate Bill No. 16

Approximately four years ago the Dodge City Police Department initiated a Federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization (RICO) and Continuing Criminal Enterprise (CCE) investigation. This investigation centered on the Norteno violent criminal street gangs in Dodge City.

The investigation was conducted by the following agencies: Dodge City Police Department, United States Attorneys Office, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Kansas Bureau of Investigation, Ford County Attorneys Office and the Ford County Sheriff Department.

This investigation resulted in federal indictments being issued for twenty-seven (27) Norteno violent criminal street gang members in Dodge City. We are currently in the prosecution phase of this investigation.

In my opinion, if Senate Bill No.16 would have been available at the state level four years ago it would have made our investigation easier and it would have been completed in less than four years.

I base my opinion on the following:

- We had to have a sponsoring Federal Agency to initiate this investigation. Due to our tremendous working relationship with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms they agreed to be our sponsor.
- The closest BAFT office is located in Wichita. This required the agent assigned to our investigation to drive back and fourth to Wichita on a regular basis. This drive time is 5 hour round trip.
- Our agent was also assigned to other priority investigations in the Wichita area during our RICO and CCE investigation.
- If a federal search warrant was obtained we had to have a federal agent present at the time of service.

- My detectives assigned to this investigation have made several trips to Wichita to meet with BAFT agents, the United States Attorney assigned to our case, and to provide Grand Jury testimony.
- The United States Attorney assigned to our case had to make several trips to Dodge City for case updates and prosecution meetings.
- Now that we are in the prosecution phase of this investigation, it is requiring my detectives to be in Wichita for court proceedings.

If we would have conducted this investigation under a state level RICO law we would not have had all the time consuming Wichita trips. The need for a federal sponsoring agency would not have been necessary and the BATF could have devoted their time to the other priority investigations in other parts of the state.

Search warrants would have been obtained at the state level and served by my detectives or officers.

The twenty-seven (27) indicted violent criminal street gang members would have been arrested under state issued arrest warrants and not indicted. This would have made the multiple trips to Wichita for Grand Jury testimony unnecessary.

I can't thank the BATF, United States Attorneys Office and the Kansas Bureau of Investigation enough for their help in our investigation. With their cooperation and hard work along with our detectives this investigation would not have been successful.

Enclosing, I urge the Judiciary Committee to adopt Senate Bill No.16 so local law enforcement agencies have another state level tool to utilize when dealing with violent criminal street gang members.

Sincerely

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