

**CES Opening Statement**  
**House Government Reform Committee**  
**Civil Service and Agency Organization Subcommittee**  
**Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources Subcommittee Joint Hearing**  
**“Federal Law Enforcement Personnel in the Post 9-11 Era:**  
**How Can We Fix An Imbalanced Compensation System”**  
**2154 Rayburn Office Building**  
**Wednesday, July 23, 2003, 10 A.M.**

Madam Chairwoman and Ranking Member, thank you for holding this hearing and for permitting me to testify. The issue we're addressing today is tremendously important to our efforts to protect Americans from crimes ranging from petty theft to terrorist attacks.

The cost-of-living crisis occurring in the ranks of federal law enforcement must be addressed immediately and it is a credit to your committees that you've convened this hearing on the issue.

I also want to recognize my colleague Senator Dodd and salute his efforts to address this crisis. I am a proud co-sponsor of his legislation and I know we will work together to make the lives of federal law enforcement officers easier.

In addition, I want to recognize the work of my colleagues Congressmen Filner, Van Hollen, Rogers, and King for the leadership they have provided on this issue.

Madam Chairwoman, federal law enforcement agents are our first line of defense when it comes to fighting terrorists, drug traffickers, sexual offenders, corporate criminals and the like. We depend on them to protect the lives of our children, our families and our friends.

Just as they take care of us, however, we must take care of them. For this very reason, I found it terribly frustrating to hear the stories of law enforcement agents in my hometown of New York.

The agents there are literally under siege due to the difficulties of serving their country on a government salary while dealing with the inflated big city cost of mortgages, gasoline and groceries.

Why is it so difficult for these federal agents to carry these financial burdens? Simply put, because of the high cost of living in certain areas of the country, they cannot afford to.

Let me give you a sample of things that agents have told me:

1. "I started my Bureau career debt-free. The bottom line is that after four years of service with the FBI, I have a net loss of \$110,000. I am paying to work for the FBI and I cannot afford it much longer."

2. “To survive financially, I have had to keep my family living three hours north from me so they could receive family support. This life situation has caused a strain on my marriage and family. Seeing my wife, my 5 year-old, and my 9 year-old only on the weekends has caused me to re-evaluate my career with the FBI.”

The reality behind these quotes is striking. The Federal Bureau of Investigation is experiencing an attrition rate 7 times higher than normal as agents depart for more lucrative opportunities in the private sector.

Those that remain with the FBI are leaving or bypassing altogether the high-cost-of-living areas for other regions of the country that are more affordable on a government salary.

This is troubling because these high-cost-of-living areas also happen to be America’s biggest targets – New York City, Washington D.C., Los Angeles and Chicago - to name a few.

If we want to prevent another September 11<sup>th</sup>, it is essential that we take immediate action to stem the flight of federal law enforcement agents from the cities that need them most.

Madam Chairwoman, as you know, several bills have been introduced both in the House and Senate that set out to end the cost-of-living crisis law enforcement officials now face.

While they contain several good ideas, I want to focus on the details of my legislation, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Pay Equity and Reform Act.

In order to help agents pay their next month’s mortgage and start their child’s college fund, my bill adjusts locality pay rates in 13 of the highest cost-of-living areas in the country so that pay rates more accurately reflect the real cost of living in the area.

To address other troubling issues that affect agents’ pay, my bill also directs the Office of Personnel Management to reconsider its 1993 study and determine if Congress should still establish a federal law enforcement specific pay system.

If OPM reconfirms its findings, the bill directs the Administration to implement the initiative slowly, beginning with a pilot project in one of the relevant agencies.

I am confident that my bill will help resolve the cost-of-living trap in which many federal law enforcement officials now find themselves so that these brave men and women can continue to protect all of us by doing the jobs they love.

We must act quickly, however, just as they do when we need them to go after criminals, and just as they do when we need them to investigate terrorist leads.

It's time for us to step up to the plate so that they can protect Americans from harm without putting their own financial security on the line.