



**Testimony of Adam B. Schiff**  
**Before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and**  
**Homeland Security**  
**October 2, 2007**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting me to testify before the Subcommittee. This hearing focuses on gang crime prevention and the need to foster innovative solutions at the federal level. I have long been interested in gang crime prevention, and I am proud that my legislation, H.R. 3547, the Gang Prevention, Intervention and Suppression Act, includes strong prevention and intervention components.

Since my days as a prosecutor, I have been concerned with the growing threat posed by gangs. I have seen the destructive impact that gangs have on families, our youth, and our communities. And I have the positive role that gang intervention workers, such as Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, play in helping gang-involved youth find an alternative to a life of crime.

As a state Senator, I authored one of the landmark approaches to dealing with juvenile crime, and for the first time, we invested as much in the prevention of crime as in the suppression of crime. We put \$100 million into preventive work to keep kids out of trouble, and we matched it with \$100 million in the COPS program. Analyses have demonstrated its effectiveness. I believe that such a model that invests heavily in prevention programs should be implemented at the federal level.

For this reason, in 2005, I introduced a bipartisan gang bill along with Rep. Mary Bono, and our counterpart Senate legislation was introduced by Senators Feinstein and Hatch. Our bill was a comprehensive effort to strengthen gang enforcement and prevention efforts. It included numerous tools to help law enforcement and prosecutors combat gang violence, and it provided resources to bolster the fight against gangs through law enforcement as well as intervention and prevention programs for at-risk youth. However, the prevention components of my bill were stripped out, numerous death penalties and mandatory minimums were added and the reintroduced bill was marked up in this Committee. I offered amendments to add back in the prevention elements, but these efforts failed. I was compelled to vote against the legislation.

This year, Rep. Bono and I joined with Senators Feinstein and Hatch to introduce new gang legislation. During Senate Judiciary Committee markup, a number of changes were made to the Senate bill and the bill has since passed unanimously. I have also worked with my colleagues and with numerous outside organizations interested in this issue to revise our legislation. We introduced the revised legislation two weeks ago. I am proud to have Chairman Conyers' support throughout the process.

The bill provides significant resources for evidence-based community-based gang prevention, intervention and reentry activities, and revises criminal penalties for gang members who are convicted of gang crimes. Significant funding in the bill is directed toward the High Intensity Gang Activity Area program, which targets resources in areas where gang activity is particularly prevalent. Half of the funding supports prevention and intervention initiatives through schools, community service providers and faith-based leaders to provide gang-involved or seriously at-risk youth with alternatives to gangs. The other half of the funding supports multi-jurisdictional criminal street gang enforcement teams and research to identify best practices among numerous gang prevention and intervention models to develop best practices.

Our legislation also provides new funding for community-based gang prevention and intervention programs for both communities with newly emerging gang problems and those with decades-old issues. The bill also recognizes that education and jobs are critical to help gang-involved youth and young adults that are reentering society from the criminal justice system. The bill includes grants to help youth develop educational skills and enhance their long-term employability. Another grant program works with young adults to develop the skills and education to be placed in an apprenticeship in the construction industries. These prevention programs total a \$700 million authorization over 5 years.

H.R. 3547 is comprehensive legislation that recognizes that enforcement efforts are necessary to address our gang problem and authorizes \$500 million over five years for suppression activities. The legislation includes funding for DOJ's Project Safe Neighborhoods anti-gang initiative. It also expands the FBI Safe Street program to support gang enforcement. The bill also provides grants to state and local law enforcement and prosecutors for hiring, technology, equipment and training.

The legislation also amends the criminal code to define "criminal street gang" and "gang crime" and sets out penalties for commission of a gang crime in furtherance of the gang and for recruitment. The bill also addresses violent crimes committed during drug trafficking. The bill limits possession of firearms by adjudicated gang members and terrorists, and it raises the statute of limitations on violent crimes and terrorism offenses.

I am proud of the efforts we made in this legislation to comprehensively address the gang problem, and I believe this legislation takes important steps to provide resources and tools attack the problem at its roots. The legislation is supported by Members and organizations across the political spectrum from the Conference of Mayors to the National Association of Police Organizations, from Los Angeles Mayor Villaraigosa to California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Thank you again Mr. Chairman for this opportunity to testify on my legislation.