



**Testimony of Nicholas V. Lampson  
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***"Gang Crime Prevention and the Need to Foster Innovative Solutions at the  
Federal Level"***

**before the  
House of Representatives  
Committee on the Judiciary  
Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security  
2141 Rayburn House Office Building  
Tuesday, October 02, 2007**

Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Forbes, and Members of the Subcommittee: thank you for taking my testimony today about my efforts to catch, prosecute and incarcerate gang members.

Gang participation has reached unacceptable levels in our country and is threatening the safety and security of big cities, as well as small towns. According Department of Justice, 82% of police departments serving large cities have reported youth gangs while the DOJ also reports gang activity has been increasing in smaller cities since 1999.

In my district, in Houston, crime has been on the rise, FBI reports growing trends of murder, rape and assault from 2005 to 2006. According to law enforcement officials, much of this increase in crime in Houston is related to the relocation of street gangs and drug traffickers from New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. The New Orleans gangs are extremely violent and intimidate many of the established Houston gangs. As such, gang-related crime, particularly gang-related murders, has increased significantly. Additionally, New Orleans gangs have expressed intent to take over large portions of the Houston drug market, which could lead to further violence.

We must be vigilant to protect our communities from these thugs and criminals. Recently I introduced the Prosecutorial Tools Improvement Act of 2007, which will make our homes safer by providing greater latitude and resources to our nation's prosecutors to go after gangs with the fullest extent of the law.

H.R. 3462 protects families and communities by enhancing criminal penalties for violent felonies committed during and in relation to drug trafficking crimes. According to the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC), high levels of violent crime in Houston, Texas are "closely associated with the distribution and abuse of illicit drugs, particularly crack cocaine and methamphetamine. Crack cocaine is the drug most associated with violent and property crime."

The NDIC affirms that gangs involved in drug crimes are responsible for violent "assaults, carjacking, drive-by shootings, home invasions, robberies, and firearms violations." They commit these acts "to protect and expand their drug operations." These criminal activities must be stopped. My legislation sends a strong and clear message – we will catch you, and we will put you in jail.

Texas' highways have become thoroughfares for the drug trade, unfortunately Houston has become the on ramp. The Texas Highway Patrol leads the nation in criminal arrests and seizures of drugs and currency, between 60 and 80 percent of drugs pass through Houston alone.

My bill imposes stiff penalties for crimes committed by drug traffickers and gangs that participate in drug trafficking. The Prosecutorial Tools Improvement Act of 2007 mandates a life sentence for incidents of murder or kidnapping that are in relation to drug trafficking. Other violent felonies will result in imprisonment for a minimum of 30 years. And crimes such as, conspiracy to commit a violent crime, will result in imprisonment for a minimum of 10 to 20 years.

By instituting harsher penalties, and strengthening the consequences for gang involvement, prosecutors will be given tools they need to pursue and punish modern gangs.

According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, NCMEC, the income drug trafficking provides for gangs serves to attract many young people, especially runaways and homeless children.

NCMEC has outlined that gang activity, when combined with the trafficking of crack or other drugs is "becoming increasingly involved in the prostitution of youth," which can prove to be very profitable for gangs.

As co-chairman and founder of the Congressional Missing and Exploited Children Caucus, this is an issue of the utmost importance to me. As a father and grandfather, I know that the protection of our children is paramount. We can deter our nation's children from joining gangs, by imposing stiff penalties for gang activity, as well as providing opportunities for young people in their community that keeps them off the street.

Finally, my bill increases the ability for our law enforcement agencies to pursue terrorists by increasing the statute of limitations from eight years to ten. Terrorism is the greatest threat we face as a free nation, time should not stand between terrorists and justice. We must ensure that prosecutors have every tool they need to fight terrorism.

Gangs cause irreparable damage to communities and families throughout the United States. My bill gives prosecutors the tools they need to stop gang violence from invading our neighborhoods. Violent Gang complaints are up 38 percent since 2002, but convictions have only increased 12 percent. Clearly, we need more tools and resources to combat and stop gangs. That is exactly what my bill, the Prosecutorial Tools Improvement Act, does.

Thank you.