



Representative Jerry McNerney (CA-11)

Testimony

**Gang Crime Prevention and the Need to Foster Innovative Solutions at the
Federal Level**

House Committee on the Judiciary

Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security

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Thank you Chairman Scott and Members of the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security: I appreciate the opportunity to speak today about gang crime, and my bill, H.R. 3474, the National Safe Streets Gang Crime Prevention Act, which provides law enforcement agencies across the country the tools they need to fight gangs and prevent crime.

My constituents, and individuals across the nation, are fighting to protect their communities, schools, and children by taking a strong stand against gangs.

Unfortunately, growth in gangs and gang activities shows that existing enforcement mechanisms alone are not sufficient to stop gangs. We also need to establish strong prevention tools for our authorities to manage and reduce gangs and gang related problems. We need to stop gang crime before it gets started.

We should provide all levels of law enforcement the necessary resources to prevent gang activity, and one of the best things we can do is share information and work together.

Gang activity does not stay neatly within one jurisdiction; it spreads across geographic boundaries. Therefore, law enforcement officials need a mechanism to easily share intelligence and track crime.

I have witnessed what this level of cooperation can do locally to prevent gang activity. In my district, the City of Stockton Police Department coordinated efforts with the DEA, FBI, ATF, and other local jurisdictions to target suspected drug traffickers and gangs operating in San Joaquin County. Impressively, these efforts have resulted in 51 arrests since January.

It's clear: when law enforcement agencies share information and work together they can reduce gang activity.

Interagency coordination is critical to preventing crimes.

That is why I introduced the Safe Streets Gang Crime Prevention Act of 2007. My bill creates a National Gang Activity Database to allow law enforcement officials nationwide - and at all levels - to share information and track gang members and their activities.

The database will contain information on gangs, gang members, firearms, criminal activities, vehicles, and other background information that can help solve crimes. This database will be accessible to law enforcement officials nationwide to help prevent gang crime.

Additionally, my bill provides funding to expand the FBI's Safe Streets Program, which conducts long-term investigations of violent gangs in coordination with other law enforcement agencies.

This legislation will have a significant impact on reducing gang activity.

Since coming to Congress, I have seen firsthand how federal, state, and local law enforcement officers have done an outstanding job in their fight against gang crime. I cannot commend them enough. In fact, just this weekend, the Manteca Police Department's Gang Unit discovered a large cache of weapons and was able to arrest the documented gang member who was responsible.

Yet despite some successes, gang crime still constitutes a significant threat to our nation.

In the largest city in my district, there are at least 84 gangs and hundreds more in the state of California. With this level of membership and activity, information sharing is absolutely vital.

Mr. Chairman, gang crime can be prevented if we work together.

I thank you again for this opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee. I yield back the balance of my time.