



Pine to Prairie Drug Task Force

*Proudly Serving the Counties of:
Norman, Polk, Roseau, Red Lake, Marshall,
Pennington, Kittson, and Lake of the Woods*

P2P DTF (VCET)
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Senator Mark Johnson
Representative Steve Gander
Representative Bidal Duran Jr.
Representative John Burkel

Re: HR 2259 and SF2228

Dear Elected Officials,

With deep regrets, I am unable to attend the hearing in St. Paul today, but hope that my letter makes it to you. It has come to my attention that there is an excellent opportunity through appropriations to provide increased support to law enforcement in this state and specifically northwest Minnesota.

The Pine to Prairie Drug Task Force is a multi-agency violent crime enforcement team (P2P VCET) serving 8 counties in NW Minnesota from Norman County to Lake of the Woods. P2P started in 2008 with a state grant of \$100,000 for one county and three officers managed by the Office of Justice Programs (OJP). The majority of funds were directed to officer salary reimbursement to offset the cost of having a police officer or deputy dedicated to investigating violent crime. The smaller agencies in NW Minnesota have a limited number of personnel and the grant helped offset the cost of replacing them on patrol. In 2015, OJP and the Violent Crime Coordinating Council (VCCC) asked that all VCETs become multi-jurisdictional in order to compete for funding. P2P became an 8-county Task Force with assistance from Homeland Security (HSI) and US Border Patrol. Border Patrol understood the vast expanse of our area and the limited number of officers, so they provided four additional Federal Agents to assist with no increased cost. Our mutual intent was to limit the flow of drugs and guns both north and south through the border. Due to the influx on the Mexican border, all of our Federal Agents were reassigned, leaving only 8 local deputies and officers to cover all 8 counties.

Since 2014, P2P has made a conscious effort to reduce reliance on forfeitures to supplement our budget. At the same time, the mandatory (additional) liability insurance has gone from \$2,500 in 2015 to \$25,500 this year. These budget adjustments have forced us to provide less and less salary reimbursement each year. On average, P2P uses 75% of the grant to cover personnel.

In 2026, two more VCETs plan to come online, but there is no additional funding in the state. According to OJP, at least two existing VCETs are already underfunded, which puts them at risk of disbanding. OJP's intent is to reduce the funding for all existing VCETs to help stand up the two (much needed) teams and properly fund the ones that are struggling. P2P cannot afford another decrease in funding or our Sheriffs and Chiefs may be forced to remove their assigned Task Force Officers to help cover their local needs. Please support any increase in appropriations to the Violent Crime Enforcement Teams in Minnesota so we can continue to protect our communities.

Very Respectfully,

Sgt Aeiiso Schrage
Commander