Gov. Perry Announces Grants to Fund First Phase of New Gang Strategy

More boots on the ground key to combating vicious transnational gangs

*Note - Gov. Perry frequently departs from prepared remarks.

Wednesday, October 29, 2008

Thank you, Mayor Hardberger and thank you to all the members of your team here in San Antonio.

As you all know too well, Texas has a growing gang problem that poses an increasing threat to our citizens.

In cities all across our state, our law enforcement community is running up against gangs who are better-armed, better-organized, and better funded than ever before.

I am here today to announce that we are fighting back against these gangs with funding of our own, with $4 million in grants to local police departments who are engaged in this increasingly dangerous struggle.

Here in San Antonio, the police department will receive more than $500,000, which they will use to put more boots on the ground, and really take the fight to these gangs.

The threat posed by these transnational gangs is very, very real. For example, just last week, 23 members of the Texas Syndicate were arrested in the Metroplex for trafficking drugs including methamphetamine and cocaine.

Gangs like these do not hesitate to kill, kidnap or torture as a means of eliminating their criminal competition, or terrorizing citizens into silence.

Mexican drug cartels are utilizing these gangs to distribute drugs and move contraband across the state, whether that's stolen vehicles, weapons or human cargo. The cartels need their help more than ever because of our successes in securing our southern border.
The number one contributor to those successes has been our state’s well-equipped and supported law enforcement personnel, our “boots on the ground.”

No one has a better grasp of the situation on the ground than the people standing here with me today: peace officers who patrol the neighborhoods, know the people, and tackle the challenges of law enforcement every day. These officers are the key to our new gang initiative.

In the upcoming session, I will be asking our legislators to fund a comprehensive $24 million effort to dismantle these gangs, and eradicate the deadly threat they pose to communities across the state.

In addition to paying overtime, these funds will go to essential items like the collection, analysis and sharing of intelligence among local, state and federal agencies, improved equipment, and education programs designed to reduce gang recruitment.

However, these ultra-violent gangs like the Mexican Mafia, the Texas Syndicate, Barrio Azteca and MS-13 will not pause their criminal activities until some legislation is passed.

That is why we are making this investment today, to get after these gangs now, before their strength and influence grow even more.

Ultimately, we will leave them nowhere to hide, no way to communicate, and no ability to intimidate our citizens.

This fight will take time, resources and perseverance, but we are ready to dismantle these organized crime groups, one piece at a time.

Together, we’ll make a safer Texas.

Thank you and God bless.