

December 7, 2010

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia: Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3353 will allow the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa to be treated as two separate entities for the purposes of the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program. Currently, these two areas are treated as one State for the distribution of Federal Byrne grants.

The Byrne Justice Assistance grants are a leading source of Federal justice funding to State and local jurisdictions. The program provides States, tribes, and local governments with critical funding necessary to support a range of program areas, including law enforcement, prosecution, courts, prevention, education, corrections, and crime victim and witness initiatives.

Although this bill does not change the Byrne grant formula, particularly the statutory minimum amount of the 0.25 percent that each State or territory is entitled to, it does change how the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa will be given funding under the grant program. The statutory minimum is granted to a State regardless of its population or crime rates. However, the Byrne grant funding increases if States have larger populations and higher crime rates. The three other territories--Puerto Rico, Guam, and the United States Virgin Islands--are presently entitled to the minimum funding, as are all 50 States. The objective of this legislation is to provide the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa with the same statutory minimum to which every other State and territory is entitled.

I urge my colleagues to support the legislation.