

# Youth Violence in America's Cities

## The Issue

As the media reports daily about the loss of life in the war in Iraq, we often ignore the war being fought at home in city streets across this country. After a decade long decline of violent crime, it is again on the rise. In Hartford, for example, there were 197 shooting victims in 2006 - an 11.3% increase over last year's city reports.

The challenges facing the city of Hartford are not unique. This violence, perpetrated both by and against young people, has devastated urban communities in cities both large and small. In a disturbing trend, our city children and teenagers are losing their lives, losing their friends, losing their family members, and losing their youth. They feel fear, helplessness, horror and the sense that life and safety are in danger. Tragically, many have grown numb to the violence around them.

## The Solution

After a rash of youth violence in Hartford during the summer of 2006, Congressman Larson and noted civil rights leader Congressman John Lewis met with Hartford community leaders to discuss the importance of religious, political, and civic leaders coming together to address issues of their community and neighborhoods. During these discussions, former Hartford Councilman Steve Harris noted the devastating effect violence was having on urban youth.

In October 2006, Congressmen Larson and Lewis introduced the City Youth Violence Recovery Act to help city children and adolescents cope with the psychological consequences of being exposed to community violence. Specifically:

- The bill would create a grant program under the Department of Health and Human Services (in consultation with the Department of Justice)

- Funding would be awarded to a state mental health agency or a partnership between a state mental health agency and a city agency, other state agency, colleges and universities, nonprofit and other organizations

- Grant activities must be directed in urban communities with high or increasing incidence of youth violence
- The funding should support counseling, mental health services, mentoring, and violence-prevention education, however, only 15% of the funds should be used for violence prevention
- The bill authorizes \$10 million annually for FY08-FY13

Congressmen Larson and Lewis reintroduced the bill in the 110th Congress (H.R. 854).

## The Details

## Legislative Information

- Text of HR 854
- Current Cosponsors of HR 854
- Current Status of HR 854
- Introductory statement from Congressional Record

## Related Information

- The Effects of Community Violence on Children and Adolescents (US Department of Veterans Affairs, National Center for PTSD)
- Community Violence: The Effects on Children (New York University Child Study Center)
- Community Violence (National Center for Children Exposed to Violence)
- National Center for Children Exposed To Violence
- Youth Violence: Fact

Sheet (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control)

- Youth Violence Report (Surgeon General)
- National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center
- Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center

Congressman Larson was joined by Hartford Mayor Eddie Perez and students from Capital Preparatory Magnet School at the announcement of the City Youth Violence Recovery Act on October 11.