

Commerce, Justice & Science Appropriations Subcommittee
Member's Day Testimony
Rep. Jared Polis

Chairman Culberson & Ranking Member Serrano,

Thank you for providing the opportunity for members to come before your subcommittee and address our priorities within the CJS portion of the budget. I would like to address a few different items.

First, I encourage this subcommittee to not go backwards on vital science funding. Whether it is funding for the National Science Foundation or National Labs or research institutions, science is one of the amazing things that makes us a leader in the world. In my home state of Colorado we are home to 30 federal laboratories including the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, NOAA, NIST, and NCAR and high-quality research institutions such as CU and CSU. The results of the work that takes place at these locations are all around us, and even in our pocket (show smart phone). The results are their partnering with and spinning off into start-ups and small businesses are hundreds of thousands of jobs. If you decrease funding for the sciences, it is not just the research you take backward, but the billions of dollars of economic benefit, including \$2.6 billion in my state of Colorado alone.

Science is the underlying current moving our economy forward and I implore you to protect funding for our nation's science program.

On the other hand there are plenty of places within your budget that you can cut funds that will protect and expand the economy.

Last week the President's spokesman indicated that they may spend Department of Justice resources trying to disrupt legal recreational marijuana in states that have set up successful regulatory systems, such as Colorado. It appears they are doing this on the misguided notion that recreational marijuana is a scourge. Well, I can promise you it is quite the opposite.

In Colorado the initiative has been a success. Instead of a surge in teen usage of marijuana, violent crime, addiction rates, and the rest of the parade of horrors pundits warned about, we have seen the opposite. Our test case has proven that allowing responsible adults to use marijuana if they choose, gives money to classrooms, not cartels, creates jobs, not addicts, and boosts our economy, not our prison population.

Most importantly, in 2016, taxpayers Colorado gained more than \$200 million in tax revenue from the sale of regulated marijuana. Over 23,000 jobs have been created in Colorado since implementation. Nationwide, there are now eight states that have legalized recreational marijuana and 95 percent of all Americans live in a jurisdiction where some recreational marijuana or cannabis derivative is legal. Further, by 2020, the marijuana industry is expected to grow to \$21 billion. Anything done by the DEA to “crack down” on this industry just doesn’t make sense. It only serves to destroy America’s economy for small businesses and innovators.

I would ask that you include language that ensures the federal government does not waste its limited resources prosecuting men and women acting in compliance with state laws. This would be similar to the McClintock-Polis Amendment that was offered to the CJS legislation for FY2016. The DEA has more pressing concerns than state-legal marijuana businesses and users. I urge you to include language that will prevent the DEA from using resources to take action against regulated recreational or medical marijuana in states that have legalized and regulated it, and potentially decrease funding for the DEA as a whole for this effect.

The right to privacy is a fundamental right that must be protected from unlawful intrusion by the government. I encourage you to prevent the DEA from gathering bulk data on Americans’ personal communications, similar to an amendment that I offered, and passed, to the CJS bill for FY 2016. The American public, and Members of Congress, believe overwhelmingly that the kind of bulk data collection that agencies such as the NSA have engaged in needs to be stopped.

But our work cannot begin and end with the NSA. We must also make sure we prevent mass surveillance at the Department of Justice.

In a series of revelations from 2013 to 2015, it came to light that for 20 years the DEA was creating a vast database of information on Americans’ personal communications.

There was no Congressional authority for this program, no oversight by Congress or any area of the federal government. The overwhelming majority of Americans included in this secret DEA database were not suspected of committing any crime, yet details about whom they called (and where they called from) were collected, stored, shared, and scrutinized by government officials all the same. And legal

experts who weighed in after the program was made public have said without hesitation that the program was illegal.

In 2013, the DOJ finally brought this program to an end. But, there is nothing to stop the government from resuming it at will. Unless Congress acts, the DEA could once again act unilaterally to sweep up the communications records of millions of Americans.

We must make sure that the privacy of all Americans is protected from both the NSA and the DOJ.

I would encourage you to include language in your bill that prohibits DOJ from using federal funds to engage in bulk data collection of Americans' phone records or other data.

It's time Congress put an end to these abuses – whether they are perpetrated by our intelligence community or by the Drug Enforcement Administration.