

Bill would restore neighborhood police

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Neighborhood officers have vanished nationwide thanks to funding shortages, but a new bill would return thousands to street beats, USA Today reports. Police departments nationwide are decrying funding shortages that have led to closing neighborhood precincts. "It's easier to get money to build up the infrastructure of Baghdad than it is to get help for Camden, N.J.," Arturo Venegas, Camden's public safety director, told USA Today. Presidential contender Joe Biden, a Democratic senator from Delaware, said he sees "community policing going away," but a new bill he authored would reboot funding of a 1990s program that added 100,000 police to U.S. streets. Such neighborhood-level policing is credited for a decade of decreases in violent crime nationwide. Violent crime nationwide jumped slightly in 2006 for the second consecutive year, FBI statistics show. Meanwhile, police forces nationwide have stagnated or dwindled. Cleveland, for instance, laid off 250 officers in 2004 while Pittsburgh removed 86 officers three years ago. Some, however, don't believe there's a problem. Crime analyst David Muhlhausen of the conservative Heritage Foundation called it "hogwash" and said police are trying to "shake down" money, USA Today reported.

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