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Arizona lawmakers on Capitol Hill are continuing to work to restore funding to the [State Criminal Alien Assistance Program](#), or SCAAP. The program, which included \$400 million for Fiscal Year 2009, helps defray the costs that Arizona and other states incur in arresting, processing and incarcerating criminal illegal immigrants. President Barack Obama's Fiscal Year 2010 budget zeroed the fund out.

"Folks in Washington need to understand exactly what cutting funds from SCAAP would mean for us," said Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick, D-Ariz., who on Monday announced a "Save SCAAP" campaign. "The federal government has let our borders become a gateway for drugs, guns, money and people, and this program is one of the few ways they are helping us deal with the consequences. Our local law enforcement needs more resources, not fewer. They are being asked to play a critical role in stopping illegal immigration and the spread of drug cartel violence on the border into the United States. We cannot leave it to Arizona, alone, to pick up the tab for this national priority."

Kirkpatrick wants local law-enforcement leaders in the 1st Congressional District to write letters explaining SCAAP's importance. She will deliver any such letters to the White House and key House appropriators.

Last week, the House Appropriations Committee's subcommittee on commerce, justice and science advanced legislation that would provide \$300 million for SCAAP, or 75 percent of last year's amount.

Arizona's delegation wants the entire \$400 million restored.

"The Arizona Department of Corrections estimates it will spend \$128 million in 2009 to house, clothe, feed and provide medical care to illegal immigrant inmates," Kirkpatrick and Reps. Gabrielle Giffords, Harry Mitchell and Trent Franks wrote in a joint letter to Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey, D-Wis., and ranking GOP member Jerry Lewis, R-Calif. "That is over 10 percent of the Department's \$978 million budget. Currently, Arizona's state

prisons hold 6,100 illegal immigrants, which is 15 percent of the total inmate population. Arizona, like many states, is facing drastic state and county budget shortfalls. The reduction in SCAAP reimbursements currently included will result in less funding that states can spend on essential public safety services."

Giffords, a Democrat who represents Tucson and a southern Arizona border congressional district, said: "Full funding for SCAAP is essential. State and local law enforcement agencies depend on this money - now more than ever. As long as they are doing the federal government's job of securing our border, they must be compensated for it."

Mitchell, a Democrat from Tempe, said: "Arizona's law enforcement communities are burdened by the federal government's inability to secure the border. Their manpower and their budgets have been stretched thin and the SCAAP funding has been critical to helping ease the financial strain."

Franks, a Glendale Republican, added: "The federal government's inability to secure our border and enforce immigration laws has put an enormous burden on our local law enforcement agencies. The SCAAP funding is crucial given the fact that there are such high numbers of illegal immigrants in our jails. The federal government has a responsibility to ensure these cash-strapped law enforcement agencies are financially compensated for doing the job the federal government should done in the first place."