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Town of Washington
P.O. Box 408 – 40 Old Union Road
Washington, Maine 04574

August 27, 2003

Knox County Commissioners
Knox County Courthouse
62 Union Street
Rockland, Maine 04841

Dear Commissioners;

The letter is to inform you that the Board of Selectmen has voted and strongly disagrees with the recommendation by the Law Enforcement Funding Task Force to allocate a 25% credit to the Knox County Sheriff's Department Annual Budget to those municipalities that operate their own municipal police departments. These municipalities do so at their own choice. We disagree with the conclusion of the Task Force that *"the municipal police departments providing law enforcement were of value to all county residents."* There may be somewhat of an indirect benefit of reduced patrols in those towns, but certainly not to the extent of 25% reduction. We in the "hinterlands" of the county should not be taxed more for the decision by the four municipalities that have chosen to operate their own police departments.

If such a drastic step is taken in just one area of the county budget, then other areas should be considered too. We would ask that a study or task force be commissioned to look at the costs of operating the county jail. Currently, the jail budget is allocated as if all prisoners were proportionally equal from all county municipalities, with the county jail budget allocated at the same percentage of assessment as the rest of the county budget. We know that is simply not the case. Before implementation of a credit for municipal law enforcement is given, we ask that you look at this inequity of paying for this area of county services; specifically, what has been the town of residence for Knox County prisoners over the last five years. If municipalities can receive a reduction in county assessment for having municipal law enforcement, then other towns should receive a similar reduction based on historical data of jail population.

The Commissioners are considering major expansion to the Knox County Airport. A new terminal building has been proposed at a cost in excess of \$900,000 to county taxpayers. Are you considering conducting a task force or study to determine the direct economic benefit of the airport to each of the county's towns, the town of residence of each of the passengers flying out of the new terminal, and allocating the cost of the new terminal to each town based on those percentages? Washington is over 30 miles from the Knox County Regional Airport and is, in fact, closer to the Augusta State Airport. The larger municipalities surrounding the airport are the ones receiving the benefit and have most of the passenger traffic. If the conclusion of the law enforcement task force is applied to the airport expansion, communities surrounding the airport should pay a higher percentage of the airport expansion cost since they receive more benefit.

In conclusion, we believe that to reduce just one area of the county budget (law enforcement) without looking at all areas that should be allocated on a percentage of use basis is inherently unfair to the remainder of the county's municipalities. Why should we subsidize their decision to operate their own municipal police department when other portions of the county budget could also be reallocated based on percentage of use or benefit?

We strongly urge you to vote on "No" the recommendation of the Law Enforcement Task Force to offer a 25% credit to the four municipalities that operate municipal police department.

Sincerely,



Donald Grinnell
Selectman