

United States Senate

August 3, 2017

The Honorable Sharon Weston Broome
East Baton Rouge Parish Mayor-President
222 Saint Louis St.
3rd Floor
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Dear Mayor-President Broome:

I write with deep concerns about recent media reports detailing alleged misuse of Baton Rouge Area Violence Elimination (BRAVE) contracts. The original intent for the BRAVE program was to pursue strategies that reduce violent crime in Baton Rouge. However, the reports indicate that some contract recipients appear to have had political influence or provided questionable services unrelated to crime prevention, such as poetry workshops. I share the concerns of the community over the seemingly blatant waste of our federal tax dollars, but I am especially disturbed by two of the reported actions.

First, Arthur “Silky Slim” Reed – who recently said that “justice” was delivered last year when Gavin Long murdered three law enforcement officers and wounded three others – was awarded nearly \$10,000 to advocate for non-violence. Second, your administration removed from consideration a \$125,000 contract with LSU that would have provided law enforcement with statistical analysis to better predict gang violence and violent crimes. These actions call into question the tactics your administration is using to fight the ever-increasing violent crime rate in Baton Rouge.

Earlier this summer, my office held discussions about the BRAVE program with senior Department of Justice (DOJ) officials. My concern was that the city-parish may not spend the remaining BRAVE funds directly on law enforcement needs, and the press reports seem to have bolstered my concerns, unfortunately. I will continue those conversations in the coming weeks with the DOJ about BRAVE funding to determine whether the city-parish complied with the federal grant requirements and whether any tax dollars were misused.

I ask that you take immediate action to ensure that any remaining BRAVE funds are not misused. To prevent further program abuse, I hope that you will demonstrate a strong commitment to Baton Rouge law enforcement by allocating remaining BRAVE funds to local law enforcement agencies. I am committed to working with you and the DOJ to resolve any legal or administrative hurdles that may preclude your administration from taking this action.

Finally, I ask that you provide to the taxpayers and to me a list of BRAVE-related contracts and transactions funded with federal tax dollars. Within that request, I ask that you provide details of the selection criteria for each consultant and the specific metrics used to

evaluate recipients and subsequent award amounts. Please also provide a detailed explanation of the accountability measures used to ensure each consultant met the stated goals within the awarded contract.

Crime continues to plague our communities, and with Baton Rouge experiencing a surge in violence, I sincerely hope that taxpayer dollars meant for making dangerous areas safer are actually used for improving public safety. Thank you for your attention to this issue. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,


John Kennedy
U.S. Senator

CC: Daryl Purpera, Legislative Auditor