

WASHINGTON, Wednesday, August 16 — Alabama has been awarded a \$3.6 million federal grant to support improvements to the juvenile justice system at the state and local levels, U.S. Rep. Spencer Bachus (R-AL) announced today.

The grant is awarded under the Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant Program created by Congress in 1998. The funds can be used in 12 different areas, including constructing, expanding and operating juvenile detention facilities; hiring judges, probation officers and prosecutors; and funding drug testing for juveniles already in the juvenile justice system.

Bachus said some of the grant funding will go to the Shelby County juvenile detention facility in Columbiana and a Jefferson County information-sharing program that will convert the county's juvenile justice records from a paper-based to a computer-based system.

"Effective intervention can often prevent today's troubled youths from becoming tomorrow's hardened criminals," said Bachus. "The earlier we intervene, the more effective we are at protecting society and rehabilitating those young people headed down the wrong path."

To qualify for the grant, a state must have implemented accountability-based reforms to its juvenile justice system, including the prosecution of violent juveniles 15 years old or over as adults and reform of juvenile justice record keeping. The changes to record keeping must enable police and prosecutors to share information on juvenile offenders with schools and social service agencies.