

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Spencer Bachus (R-AL) says he wants schools in Alabama to know there are federal funds available for them to hire police to provide security in their schools.

"In light of last week's tragedy in Colorado, I want our schools and police departments in Alabama to be aware they can obtain a federal grant to provide better security for our children," Bachus said. "In an ideal world, we wouldn't need police in our schools, but regrettably in the real world some schools do."

The funds are available through a grant program funded by Congress called Community Oriented Policing -- COPs - in Schools. The program is administered by the Department of Justice and offers up to \$60 million to local law enforcement agencies throughout the country to help hire police officers to work in schools. The grants provide police departments up to \$125,000 over a three-year period for the salary and benefits of each new officer hired.

In order to be eligible to receive a COPs in Schools grant, a law enforcement agency must enter into an agreement with a specific school or school district and work with school officials to complete the grant application, detailing specifically how the new officers will be used in the schools.

"Many communities have already discovered that having trained police officers in their schools makes a difference and improves safety," said Bachus, noting that schools in Wisconsin, New Jersey and California have officers in their schools who not only deter violence and monitor troubled students but also counsel students on problems like drugs. "The presence of these officers provides schools with on-site security and a direct link to local law enforcement. Not only that, they help build relationships with schools and students and instill in them a respect for the law."