

BIRMINGHAM – **The following are the prepared remarks of Congressman Spencer Bachus (AL-6) for today’s briefing on the records management modernization project at the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office**

Our law enforcement agencies are always working to protect public safety. We are glad to do whatever we can to support them.

Technology plays a huge role in law enforcement these days. Timely information and data are the lifeblood for any officer. The ability to get information, analyze it, share it, and act on it quickly is critical.

It can sometimes be the difference between making an arrest, or allowing a suspect to slip away.

To look at the importance of having information on-line that can be shared among law enforcement agencies, just think about 9/11.

There was incriminating data on the terrorists held by various police

agencies. These included suspicious activities at flight schools. There were immigration and criminal records available.

The difficulty was tying the information together, sharing it, and getting law enforcement officials in different agencies and states to communicate with each other – what we call "connecting the dots."

With this new system, Jefferson County is taking a big step forward in "connecting the dots."

This replaces a system that has been used since the 1980s. When you think about the rapid advances in computer technology since then, 1980 might as well be 1880!

The Jefferson County Sheriff's Department will now have a state-of-the-art communications and data system. This is important because Jefferson County has the largest number of records of any local agency in the state. The ability to have those records instantly accessible to not just our local officers, but to others across the state is essential.

The system will:

- Automate the daily operations of the jail and streamline booking and intake
  - Allow officers to access records from the field. So if an individual is stopped for a traffic infraction, records can quickly be looked up. This is critical because the great majority of arrests occur during traffic stops!
  - Allow the department to more easily share information with local and national agencies and with the Jefferson County courts
  - Make much more efficient use of officers' time.

With this system, Jefferson County will further secure its reputation as the community where law enforcement agencies are using cutting-edge technology to arrest criminals and protect our safety.

The National Computer Forensics Institute, of course, has been established at the Hoover Public Safety Center. This will bring in law enforcement officials from across the state and country here to Jefferson County for training in how to use the latest in technology to fight crime.

So we are giving our officers the training and the know-how to be able to use computers and technology to track down criminals, and to use that data in the courtroom to secure convictions.

Indeed, juries today demand scientific and forensic evidence. The number of phones, computers, blackberries, GPS units, and other devices from which information can be extracted is mushrooming. This information can be used to put identity thieves, child molesters, murderers, and even terrorists behind bars. But there is a bottleneck getting this valuable data into the courtroom, hence the need for the Institute which we are proud to have here in Jefferson County.

What are learning is that these days, accurate and timely electronic data is as important to our law enforcement officers, as good old-fashioned shoe leather.

Criminals who always counted on getting away by exploiting "gaps" in the system, will find it much harder to escape the law in Jefferson County and our neighboring counties as a result of this system.

This is an important project, and we in the Alabama delegation are always happy to work together when it comes to supporting our law enforcement agencies and the public safety. My congratulations go to everyone involved with making this project a reality.