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FISCAL & APPROPRIATIONS BRIEF

Modernizing the $5M Blue Envelope Grant Program for Digital Accessibility and National Scale

H.R. 6602 & S. 4089 | 119th Congress | November 11, 2026

Prepared for: House and Senate Judiciary Committees; Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittees

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$5M	$25M	37	$0
Proposed annual authorization	Five-year authorization ceiling	States with documented programs	Proposed increase in authorization

1. Executive Budget Summary — The Ask

- **Total authorization:** $5,000,000 annually for FY 2027–FY 2031, or up to $25,000,000 over five years, administered by the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), subject to appropriations.
- **Proposed administrative clarification: Ensure BJA may award and administer grants supporting accessible digital communication platforms, mobile and QR-based tools, and standardized digital first-responder training within the existing authorization.**
- **Projected fiscal impact: No increase to the proposed $25 million five-year authorization. Digital delivery may improve reach and reduce recurring distribution costs, subject to implementation and evaluation.**
- **Core recommendation: Seek clarification through BJA grant guidance, implementing rules where appropriate, and congressional committee report language that any portion—including up to 100%—of an eligible grant award may support qualifying digital tools, training, and accessibility solutions. Do not impose a minimum paper-envelope spending percentage. If statutory language requires physical materials, administrative action alone cannot waive that requirement; pursue a narrow legislative clarification only if necessary.**

2. The Fiscal & Operational Problem

- **Fragmented state patchwork:** As of November 11, 2026, 37 states have documented programs: 12 through legislation, four through state agency action, and 21 through local or association-led efforts. Thirteen states have no documented coverage in the supplied inventory; this does not prove that no local initiatives exist.
- **Unverified recurring funding and training:** Dedicated state appropriations and statewide officer training remain unverified in many adopting states. Arkansas estimated $10,000 for a system update and $735 for initial envelopes; Washington estimated $76,446 for officer and cadet training.

- **Paper-only limitations:** Physical envelopes depend on distribution points and manual updates, can be lost or damaged, and may not meet every language, sensory, visual, or communication need. Digital alternatives can improve accessibility, but must also work for people without smartphones or connectivity.

3. Flexible Grant Eligibility Within the $5M Annual Authorization

AIL recommends eligible uses and administrator discretion—not fixed funding quotas. The examples below are potential grant expenditures, not required percentages or allocations.

Eligible funding area	Grant flexibility	Examples	Funding limit
Digital accessibility platforms	Any eligible share	Wallet cards, QR tools, assistive technology	No fixed quota
First-responder training	Any eligible share	On-demand instruction, de-escalation modules	No fixed quota
Underserved access	Any eligible share	Offline access, hybrid materials, outreach	No fixed quota
Implementation and evaluation	Any eligible share	Security, directory, outcomes reporting	No fixed quota
TOTAL AUTHORIZATION	Flexible allocation	$5M annually / $25M over five years	No increase

Illustrative eligible expenditures

- **Digital communication and accessibility: Voluntary, privacy-protective device-held wallet cards; offline-capable QR communication profiles; multilingual, audio, high-contrast, and screen-reader accessible tools.**
- **Digital officer training: On-demand, trauma-informed and person-centered modules, developed with self-advocates, to support de-escalation and effective first-responder communication.**
- **Rural, Tribal and underserved access: Low-bandwidth and offline options, accessible community education, and hybrid physical/digital materials when needed.**
- **Program implementation and evaluation: Technical assistance, accessibility and cybersecurity safeguards, public program directories, and reports on reach, costs, and outcomes.**

4. Return on Investment & Efficiency Gains

- **Lower incremental distribution cost:** Downloadable resources can reduce printing, inventory, and distribution expenses at scale, although software development, hosting, accessibility, cybersecurity, support, and updates carry ongoing costs.
- **Officer readiness:** Modular digital training could help agencies deliver consistent instruction and refresh skills; training completion and outcomes should be measured rather than assumed.
- **Privacy by design:** The bills require voluntary participation and prohibit government participant registries. Device-held credentials and offline QR profiles may support this objective, provided implementation avoids centralized personal-data collection and addresses QR security and bystander access.
- **Universal accessibility:** Provide multilingual, audio, high-contrast, and screen-reader options alongside printable and non-digital alternatives, so access is not contingent on smartphone ownership.

Requested Congressional and Administrative Action

Preserve the bipartisan $5 million annual authorization; ask DOJ/BJA to expressly recognize eligible digital platform, training, accessibility, and evaluation costs in grant guidance and any appropriate implementing rules; permit administrators to fund any share, up to 100%, of an eligible award for those uses without a mandatory paper-printing allocation; retain voluntary participation, no government participant registries, and accessible non-digital

options. If the statutory physical-envelope requirement prevents a digital-only program, seek a narrowly tailored legislative clarification rather than assuming guidance can override the statute.

Sources: Supporting Blue Envelope Programs Act (H.R. 6602 / S. 4089), legislative summary dated Nov. 11, 2026; Blue Envelope Program Adoption by State, Nov. 11, 2026. Digital eligibility and flexible allocation language are AIL policy recommendations, subject to statutory requirements.