To finance their 1972 plan to seize power within the federal government, the White House strategists sought control over the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, which had grown from its inception in 1968 to a nearly $1-billion fund for dispensing grants by 1972. Donald J. Santarelli, the young and very ambitious attorney in the Department of Justice who had already demonstrated his loyalty to the White House group, having worked closely with John Dean and Robert Mardian, was chosen by the president to take over the administration of this agency immediately after the election. The funds of LEAA could be used for financing groups which for one reason or another did not wish to seek congressional appropriations—as they were used to fund, indirectly, the ODALE strike forces. The grants could also be used to reward local politicians and police officials who cooperated with the White House. To be sure, most of these funds were mandated by Congress to go to the states in block grants, over which the White House had little control; but there were still tens of millions of dollars left over for discretionary grants—certainly an amount sufficient to finance the unorthodox projects of the White House. Egil Krogh later explained, "Whatever discretionary money there was ... in many cases would come directly to the White House, and be addressed there by Mr. Ehrlichman, by my staff and in some cases the president directly.... It is very hard to separate the political interest from the substantive interest; at times this led you into dangerous waters." When these discretionary grants came before the Domestic Council, Krogh found that the "political dimensions ... and the substantive issues were impossible to separate." He observed, "In terms of developing [LEAA] programs, my office felt, first, yes, there is something that must be done as a policy proposition, but it is also something that must be done to make a political record in 1972."

As the election approached, the White House demanded that these discretionary grants, originally intended by Congress to help local police departments, be used for political muscle in the campaign. To illustrate how these grants were usurped by the White House for political purposes, Krogh described for me in considerable detail a case study of how $1 million was channeled to Mayor Frank Rizzo in Philadelphia:

Mayor Rizzo had been making overtures to the president ... about his interest in supporting Mr. Nixon for reelection in 1972. The president was smitten with the idea of Rizzo supporting him and carrying the state of Pennsylvania. Mr. Ehrlichman instructed me in 1972 to do all that was necessary to get Rizzo's programs on narcotics and law enforcement on the line as soon as possible. I was told to make sure that checks for federal funds were transmitted to his office as fast as possible.

When Krogh asked Rizzo what "services" he could provide, the former police chief and mayor of Philadelphia asked for immediate help in lowering the crime statistics for his city before the
election. The newly organized Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention in the White House had just developed a program called Treatment Alternative to Street Crime, or TASC, which arranged for heroin addicts with criminal records to be sent to city-administered treatment programs rather than to jail when arrested for some narcotics violation. If a substantial number of addicts were enrolled in the TASC program in Philadelphia and the local police and courts cooperated in not booking them for narcotics offenses or other minor crimes, there would be an immediate decrease in the crime statistics in Philadelphia (although no decrease in actual crimes). Realizing that such a program could bring some immediate benefits before the election, Rizzo asked Krogh to rush it through. Since Rizzo claimed that his staff had no idea even how to prepare the applications for a grant from LEAA, Krogh dispatched Jeffrey Donfeld, his former staff assistant and now a deputy in the Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention, to Philadelphia to assist Rizzo. Krogh recalled:

Donfeld was given a seventy-two-hour deadline to prepare the application grant, have it sent to Washington, signed, and transmitted back to Philadelphia. While he was in Philadelphia, I received a call from Mr. Ehrlichman at Camp David, who asked me, prior to the deadline, whether the check—as I recall, for one million dollars—had gone yet.... Mr. Ehrlichman said it was the president's decision that the check was to go out by the deadline and that there would be no excuses. Accordingly, the check was transmitted to Rizzo, and he was able to announce very shortly thereafter a greatly expanded mechanism in Philadelphia.

A few weeks later, Krogh paid a personal visit to Rizzo with Jerris Leonard, then the administrator of LEAA. On Ehrlichman's orders, Krogh had told Leonard that "the president felt that supporting Mr. Rizzo was a matter of first importance, that we knew that he had a severe law-enforcement problem, as all cities did have, and that he was to be provided the maximum support that LEAA could provide." Moreover, Leonard was instructed by his immediate superior, John Mitchell, to "provide whatever discretionary funding they could to Rizzo in his hour of need." At a press conference held immediately after the meeting, Krogh was bemused to hear "Leonard and Rizzo proclaiming the new cooperative venture which, at that point, had not been specifically agreed on, but nevertheless structured the relationship for future funding." Rizzo, although a Democrat, publicly supported Richard Nixon for reelection in 1972 (and was himself reelected mayor of Philadelphia).

Though Nixon's predecessors had also used agencies of their administrations to mobilize public support for themselves in reelection campaigns, they were constrained by both congressional oversight and the civil servants in the agencies themselves. However, in the case of LEAA, a newly created fund with virtually no staff except political appointees and with no real congressional control, Nixon had the potential greatly to enhance presidential influence. He was determined to repeat the "Philadelphia Story" in as many cities as possible, realizing that Congress could not easily refuse appropriations for any crime-control measures presented in an
election year. The White House strategists thus worked diligently to expand the discretionary grants for this agency and to complete their take-over of its administration.