



The Washington Report

The Newsletter of the National Association of Police Organizations
Representing America's Finest

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Senate Moves National Police Week Priorities

On May 18, during a markup in honor of National Police Week, the Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously approved by voice vote four of NAPO's priority bills: the Recruit and Retain Act, the Project Safe Neighborhoods Reauthorization Act, the COPS on the Beat Grant Program Parity Act, and the Strong Communities Act. NAPO has been working over the past several months with Committee leadership and staff to move these bills during National Police Week and we are grateful for the Committee's support.

S. 546, Recruit and Retain Act would boost recruitment opportunities for state and local law enforcement agencies by expanding the Department of Justice's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Program to help agencies that are understaffed and struggling to attract new applicants. It would also create a new program to encourage partnerships between schools and police departments to foster a stronger local pipeline for law enforcement careers. It is sponsored by Senators Fischer, Coons, Cornyn, Klobuchar, Cotton, Tillis.

S. 1387, Project Safe Neighborhoods Reauthorization Act of 2023 would reauthorize the Project Safe Neighborhood (PSN) Program for five years, ensuring that state and local law enforcement can continue to fight gang and firearms-related violent crimes in our cities and our communities in the most efficient and effective manner. It also expands the allowable uses of the grant funding to include overtime costs for officers and the hiring of crime analysts and law enforcement assistants to aid agencies participating in the program. It was introduced by Senators John Cornyn (R-TX), Gary Peters (D-MI), Charles Grassley (R-IA), Thom Tillis (R-NC), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Ted Cruz (R-TX), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), and Chris Coons (D-DE).

S. 1530, COPS on the Beat Grant Program Parity Act of 2023 would expand the COPS Program to allow rural, low-income communities to use COPS Hiring Program (CHP) grant funding to increase law enforcement wages, and it would remove the preference for agencies that can afford a higher match than required. The bill would also provide for a lower match for qualifying lower-income rural communities that gradually increases over time to ensure these departments can participate in the CHP grant program. This bill is sponsored by Ranking Member Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN).

S. 994, Strong Communities Act of 2023 would allow for COPS Hiring Program funds to be used to pay for local law enforcement recruits and officers to attend schools or academies if the recruits agree to serve in the communities in which they live. This legislation is sponsored by Senators Gary Peters (D-MI), John Cornyn (R-TX), Richard Durbin (D-IL), Thom Tillis (R-NC), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Ted Cruz (R-TX), Marsha Blackburn (R-TX), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and Jon Ossoff (D-GA).

Senate Passes House Resolution Disapproving of D.C.'s Police Reform Statute

The Senate passed a joint resolution (H.J.Res. 42) on May 16 by a bipartisan vote of 56-43 that would overturn a District of Columbia (D.C.) police reform law, the Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act (CPJRAA). H.J.Res. 42 passed the House on April 19 by a vote of 229-189. The resolution is on its way to the President's desk, but President Biden has promised to veto it, stating that he would "not support congressional Republicans' efforts to overturn commonsense police reforms". A bipartisan majority of the House and Senate would disagree with that statement.

NAPO has some serious concerns with the CPJRAA that was enacted by the D.C. City Council on January 19, 2023. Most significantly, this Act is an attempt by the Council to strip officers of their Constitutional rights in the name of police reform. We sent a letter to all Senators urging them to join us in support of the resolution and laying out our concerns with the D.C. law.

The CPJRAA will negatively impact the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and the City it serves. The underlying message of this act is that law enforcement officers cannot be trusted. It strips the men and women of the MPD of their right to bargain over accountability or disciplinary issues. This creates substandard collective bargaining rights for the officers, setting them apart from their fellow public servants in the District, who are allowed to bargain over disciplinary issues.

Further, the CPJRAA undermines officers' Constitutional rights, including the right to due process, a right we give to all citizens. This is incredibly concerning. Without guidelines and procedures to protect officers' due process, officers are too often subjected to the whim of their departments or local politics during internal investigations and administrative hearings. The CPJRAA also violates officers' right to privacy by disclosing officer disciplinary records, without regard to personal identifiable information, which risks putting officers and their families in harm's way.

We believe the CPJRAA will exacerbate the current hiring and retention crisis the MPD is facing. With the City Council not respecting or trusting the officers who serve and protect their citizens, it will further hinder recruitment and impact officer morale. NAPO thanks the Senators and Members of Congress who voted to stand with law enforcement officers and overturn this statute.

House Passes POLICE Act

On May 17, the House passed the NAPO-backed Protect Our Law enforcement with Immigration Control and Enforcement (POLICE) Act (H.R. 2494), sponsored by Congressman Andrew Garbarino (R-NY), by a bipartisan vote of 255-175. This bill would make the assault of a law enforcement officer a deportable offense.

Increased penalties make important differences in the attitudes of criminals towards public safety officers and can ensure protection for the community. *Any* persons contemplating harming an officer must know that they will face serious punishments.

In addition to the POLICE Act, NAPO is calling on Congress to enact the Protect and Serve Act and the Back the Blue Act, to establish new federal laws designed to protect our nation's law enforcement officers:

- The **Protect & Serve Act** would add new federal criminal provisions to address the assault, attempted killing, or killing of law enforcement officers. This law would apply to federal law enforcement officers and would also apply to state and local officers in circumstances where the federal government can establish jurisdiction over the case. It establishes a new criminal offense for knowingly assaulting a law enforcement officer and causing serious bodily harm or attempting to do so in circumstances that affect interstate commerce. In 2018, the Protect and Serve Act passed the House by a vote of 382-35, with the support of 220 Republicans and 162 Democrats.
- The **Back the Blue Act** would add new criminal provisions to address the assault, attempted murder or murder of federally funded law enforcement officers and create a new federal crime for interstate flight to avoid prosecution for such crimes. The Back the Blue Act would help to bring federal resources to bear in the prosecution of those who attempt to harm or murder any public safety officer.

Persistent and nationwide calls for the violent resisting and even killing of officers and anti-police rhetoric continue with little abatement. Tepid responses to attacks upon police officers do nothing to discourage future attacks, which is why the POLICE Act, the Protect & Serve Act, and the Back the Blue Act are so important. Establishing stricter penalties for those who harm or target for harm law enforcement officers will deter violent crimes and add another layer of safety for our nation's law enforcement officers.

NAPO thanks Congressman Garbarino for his support for America's law enforcement community.

House Passes Federal LEO Gun Buyback Bill

As part of our National Police Week efforts, NAPO joined our national partner, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association (FLEOA), in support of the Federal Law Enforcement Officer Service Weapon Purchase Act (H.R. 3091). This bill would establish a commonsense program that allows federal law enforcement officers to purchase retired service weapons, which otherwise would be unnecessarily destroyed at a great cost to the federal taxpayer. The House passed this bill by a vote of 232 – 198 on May 17.

Current law requires the federal government to destroy service weapons after they have been retired from federal use. This comes at great cost to the federal taxpayer who pays for the weapons when purchased and pays for them to be destroyed. Instead, this bill would allow federal law enforcement officers "in good standing" to purchase their old weapons at a reduced cost, which would not only save the federal government money but would also bring in revenue.

Invest to Protect Act Introduced in House

Representatives Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ), John Rutherford (R-FL), Steven Horsford (D-NV), and Anthony D'Esposito (R-NY) reintroduced one of NAPO's priority bills, the Invest to Protect Act (H.R. 3184), which creates a broad grant program through the Department of Justice (DOJ) specifically for small state, local or tribal law enforcement agencies that will give them resources to help them train their officers, implement or expand body-worn camera programs, provide mental health resources for their officers, and retain and hire officers. A small agency is defined as one that employs fewer than 200 law enforcement officers.

The law enforcement assistance grant programs through the DOJ provide invaluable resources, training, and technical assistance to state and local law enforcement agencies, keeping our communities

safe. However, small agencies across the country find themselves getting left behind due to their size and lack of resources for participating in the onerous Federal grant solicitation process. We thank Representatives Gotthaimer, Rutherford, Horsford, and D'Esposito for their leadership, and we look forward to working with them to ensure all law enforcement agencies have the support and resources necessary to serve and protect our communities.

NAPO Backs Bill that Provides for Public Safety Recruitment and Retention Bonuses

NAPO pledged our support for the Enhancing COPS Hiring Grants for Local Law Enforcement Act, introduced by Representative Greg Landsman (R-OH) together with Representatives Mike Carey (R-OH), Max Miller (R-OH), and Emilia Strong Sykes (D-OH). This bipartisan bill would allow for COPS Hiring Program grant funds to be used for recruitment and retention bonuses. It would also modify the grant program to allow grant applications to be good for five years so that agencies do not have to reapply every fiscal year.

NAPO has long believed that the Federal grant solicitation process is onerous and an obstacle for small agencies across the country to receiving vital grant funding. Several NAPO-backed bills take on this issue, including this bill and the Invest to Protect Act.

NAPO thanks Representatives Landsman, Carey, Miller, and Sykes for their efforts to ensure all departments across the country have a chance to participate in and benefit from the vital resources provided by COPS Program.

Bill Introduced to Lift Financial Burdens for Officers Buying New Homes

NAPO is once again proud to support the Homes for Every Local Protector, Educator, and Responder (HELPER) Act (H.R. 3170 / S.1514), sponsored by Representatives John Rutherford (R-FL) and Bonnie Watson-Coleman (D-NJ) and Senators Marco Rubio (R-FL), Jon Ossoff (D-GA), and Sherrod Brown (D-OH).

Like many public servants, law enforcement officers serve and protect our nation and our communities for modest wages, and they often face financial obstacles when buying a home in today's competitive housing market. Especially with interest rates rising, many officers and their families have found it difficult to afford to purchase homes, making it harder for them to stay and live in the communities they serve.

Police1 conducted a survey in 2021 of 319 police departments where it was found that a staggering 68% of reporting departments stated that high housing costs are proving to obstruct their hiring process.

- Nearly two-thirds of respondents answered that low inventory in the housing market and high costs are creating the biggest obstacle.
- Regarding home solutions of the reporting departments, 18% indicated officers rent hotel rooms or apartments with other officers, 8% said officers sleep in temporary accommodation like campsites, and 4% said officers sleep in their vehicles.

The HELPER Act establishes a first-time homebuyer program through the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to provide mortgage assistance to law enforcement officers, firefighters, and other first responders. Specifically, qualified individuals would be eligible for a mortgage on a primary family residence with no down payment and no monthly mortgage insurance premium.

Eligible candidates must be employed for four consecutive years or released due to a duty-related disability. They also must be in good standing with their employer and meet the underwriting requirements established by the Secretary.

The HELPER Act would allow officers to live in the communities they protect which in turn creates better relationships with law enforcement and provides comfort to the families of these officers.

Public Safety Collective Bargaining Bill Reintroduced

Representatives Pete Stauber, (R-MN) and Dan Kildee reintroduced the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act on May 18. This important legislation would guarantee that law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical service workers in all 50 states have the right to discuss workplace issues with their employers. It will provide a framework for such discussions, while respecting the right and flexibility of states to write their own laws for public sector workers. This legislation will not overturn current collective bargaining laws – it will only provide basic collective bargaining rights to those who currently do not have them.

The Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act would allow law enforcement officers to have a say in their own working conditions to better serve and protect their families and the public. Most importantly, it will allow public safety officers to secure the necessary protections that will permit them to walk unselfishly into the line of fire to save the lives of our fellow citizens.

The public safety is best protected through effective partnerships between first responders on the front lines and the agencies that employ them. NAPO has been fighting for this bill for over 20 years and we will continue to press for its passage until all law enforcement officers are granted the basic American rights of collective bargaining for fair compensation and safer working conditions. We thank Representatives Stauber and Kildee for their support of the law enforcement community and for championing this important issue.

NAPO Supports Fentanyl Screening Equipment for Law Enforcement

Fentanyl, particularly illicitly manufactured fentanyl, and other synthetic drugs are having deadly consequences on communities across the country, both big and small, and local law enforcement officers are on the front line in the fight against these drugs. Because illicit fentanyl is so powerful — just a few salt-sized grains can kill an adult — small amounts go a long way for drug traffickers. These relatively small and potent amounts mean fentanyl is difficult and hazardous to detect, making it easy to traffic and a danger to those trying to stop its spread into our communities.

To ensure that state and local law enforcement have the resources needed to identify and fight the diffusion of opioids, NAPO has once again endorsed the Providing Officers with Electronic Resources (POWER) Act, sponsored by Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH).

The POWER Act will help state and local law enforcement detect fentanyl and protect themselves from accidental overdoses by using the same screening equipment Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents have successfully used to stop fentanyl at the border. This legislation would support state and local law enforcements' efforts to conduct drug investigations and prosecute drug crimes by providing essential funding for agencies to purchase chemical screening devices and giving them resources to help safeguard officers in the field from possible deadly exposure.

NAPO believes rank-and-file law enforcement officers must be given the training, resources and support necessary to keep themselves and the communities they serve safe in the fight to end the opioid crisis. We will work with Senator Brown to ensure state and local law enforcement are given the equipment necessary to help address our nation's growing drug epidemic.

Law Enforcement Officers Parity Act Introduced in Senate

Senators J.D. Vance (R-OH) and Cory Booker (D-NJ) introduced the **Law Enforcement Officers' Parity Act**, which would expand the definition of "law enforcement officer" for retirement purposes to ensure that all federal law enforcement officers, no matter what their classification, are treated equally regarding retirement benefits. Currently, certain federal law enforcement officers who hold the same classifications and risks as others are not granted the same retirement benefits.

Because of a regulatory loophole, nearly 30,000 federal police officers are denied the enhanced retirement benefits that other federal law enforcement officers receive. By expanding the definition, enhanced retirement benefits would be extended to federal employees who are authorized to carry a firearm and whose duties include the investigation and/or apprehension of suspected criminals, including NAPO members, the officers of the U.S. Postal Police, as well as those of the FBI Police, U.S. Capitol Police, Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs Police Services, the Federal Protective Service, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

This legislation would also provide all federal law enforcement with the ability to retire after 20 years of service at the age of 50 or after 25 years of service at any age.

It does a disservice to the federal law enforcement community to not recognize all officers' sacrifices in their respective line of duty. No officer that incurs the risks and dangers of the law enforcement profession should be excluded from the benefits that his or her peers reap.

With all federal law enforcement officers eligible for the same enhanced retirement benefits, it will improve the ability of agencies to recruit and retain experienced and highly trained officers. This is incredibly important at a time when all law enforcement agencies at the federal, state, and local levels are experiencing recruitment and retention issues.

Representatives Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ), Andrew Garbarino (R-NY), Gerry Connolly (D-VA) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) introduced the House version, the Law Enforcement Officers' Equity Act (H.R. 1322) earlier this year.

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