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This morning, NAPO participated in a “No Cells in Cells” teleconference. “No Cells in Cells” is a coalition of interested organizations and companies in law enforcement, corrections, telecommunications, technology, and victims’ rights. Its mission is to educate Members of Congress, their staff, and the Administration about the threat to public safety posed by cell phones in U.S. correctional facilities and to provide a forum to discuss legal technological solutions. The coalition’s goal is to mitigate the threat to public safety posed by inmate access to cell phones in U.S. correctional facilities. (Currently, there is no proven method for keeping cell phones out of prisons).

The coalition is in the process of updating its mission statement to stress that “No Cells in Cells” does not advocate jamming technologies. Also, coalition leadership noted that the group does not support any one technology over another.

Additionally, conference participants discussed the role of the federal government in addressing this issue, and conversed about the federal government providing resources to state and local correctional facilities to assist with the purchase of new technology to reduce the threat of cell phones in U.S. correctional facilities. Coalition leadership discussed using the Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP) grant program as a model to address this issue. (In 1998, Congress enacted legislation that created the BVP grant program through the Department of Justice to help fund efforts by state and local law enforcement to purchase bullet resistant vests for their officers).

Coalition leaders and meeting participants explained that cell phones in correctional facilities is a public safety issue, but the general public does not understand or lacks an opinion on this subject. The coalition maintains a goal of educating the public and Congressional staffers on the impact of cell phones in prisons.

Throughout the conference, coalition members reiterated that solving this issue will require cooperation with technology carriers and law enforcement agencies.

NAPO will provide feedback on future “No Cells in Cells” conferences as they occur.

Please monitor NAPO’s website www.napo.org, and Facebook page: National Association of Police Organizations, and follow us on Twitter at NAPOpolice for breaking news and updates.