



# The Washington Report

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

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September 28, 2015

## NAPO Supports the Thin Blue Line Act

NAPO has pledged its support for the Thin Blue Line Act (S. 2034), introduced by Senator Pat Toomey (R-PA), as well as its companion bill, H.R. 814 (David Jolly, R-FL). The Thin Blue Line Act would make the targeting of or the killing of a local police officer, firefighter, or first responder an aggravating factor in death penalty determinations. It is important that this bill includes the targeting of and not just the killing of a public safety officer. Someone who attempts to kill a law enforcement officer, but instead kills a bystander, should face the same increased penalties as a person whose aim is true and murders a law enforcement officer.

This bill is critical, as persistent and nationwide calls for the killing of officers and anti-police rhetoric continue with little to no abatement. Establishing stricter penalties for those who harm or target for harm law enforcement officers will deter violent crimes. Any persons contemplating harming an officer must know that they will face serious punishments. Increased penalties make important differences in the attitudes of criminals toward public safety officers, and ensure protection for the community.

NAPO looks forward to working with Senator Toomey and Representative Jolly to pass this important legislation. If you have any questions about this bill, please contact Andy Edmiston at [aedemiston@napo.org](mailto:aedemiston@napo.org).

## DOJ Announces Awards for COPS Hiring Program

On September 21<sup>st</sup>, the Department of Justice (DOJ) announced more than \$107 million in grant funding through the Office of Community Oriented Police Services (COPS Office) COPS Hiring Program. The funding went to almost 200 law enforcement agencies to hire or retain 866 law enforcement positions.

The COPS Hiring Program provides funding directly to state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies for the hiring and re-hiring of entry-level career law enforcement officers in an effort to promote community policing and law enforcement prevention efforts at the state and local level. NAPO was the lead national law enforcement organization working to enact the COPS Program in 1994, and since its inception, the COPS Hiring Program has assisted over 13,000 jurisdictions with over \$14 billion in funding to hire more than 127,000 community police officers across the nation. This funding has contributed to the continued success in combating crime, drug use, and gangs; reducing and preventing the manufacture, distribution, and use of illegal drugs; and addressing emerging law enforcement needs.

The 2015 hiring grants gave additional consideration to those agencies who are incorporating the recommendations from the final report of the President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing into their community policing efforts, as well as to those whose areas of focus are school policing, homicide or violent crime, homeland security and the hiring or rehiring of a military veteran(s). The full list of grantees can be found at: [http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/2015AwardDocs/chp/CHP\\_Award\\_List.pdf](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/2015AwardDocs/chp/CHP_Award_List.pdf)

As stated in NAPO's September 14<sup>th</sup> *Washington Report*, we are working with the COPS Office and Director Davis to prioritize the 2016 hiring grants for recipients who will institute a policy of two person units for all patrol shifts and patrol assignments rather than focusing its grants on "procedural justice", "police legitimacy" and "collaborative reform" programs, which are recommendations from the Task Force report.

While working to ensure hiring funds are focused on promoting officer safety, we are also fighting to make certain that the Hiring Program gets the funding it needs. The Senate Appropriations Committee included \$187 million in COPS Hiring funds in the Commerce-Justice-Science (CJS) Appropriations bill that was reported out of Committee. However, the House Appropriations Committee did not include any funding for the COPS Hiring program in its version of the CJS spending measure. The Committee Chair, Rep. Harold Rogers (R-KY), stated that hiring funding was included in the \$409 million in funding for the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne-JAG) program so it is unnecessary to fund the COPS Hiring Program. NAPO continues to work with House leadership and appropriators to educate them that the COPS Hiring Program is a distinct program and cannot be replaced by Byrne JAG funding. NAPO strongly believes that both programs must be fully funded to provide state and local law enforcement with the necessary funding to assist their efforts to keep our communities safe.

Source: Department of Justice Press Release, "Justice Department Announces \$107 Million in Community Policing Hiring Grants to Nearly 200 Law Enforcement Agencies Across the Country", September 21, 2015. <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-107-million-community-policing-hiring-grants-nearly-200-law>

## DOJ Announces Awards for Body Worn Camera Pilot Program

The DOJ announced on September 21<sup>st</sup> that it has awarded \$23.2 million in grants to 73 local and tribal agencies across the country to expand the use of body worn cameras and explore their impact. The [body-worn camera pilot program](#) announced in May 2015 includes \$19.3 million to purchase body-worn cameras, \$2 million for training and technical assistance and \$1.9 million to examine the impact of their use. Grantees are required to establish a strong implementation plan and a robust training policy before purchasing cameras. Each agency awarded a grant is also responsible for developing a plan for long-term storage, including the cost of storing data.

In addition to the pilot program, the BJA has launched a comprehensive online toolkit that consolidates research, best practices, policies and other tools that address issues surrounding body-worn cameras, including implementation requirements; image retention; concerns of policy makers, prosecutors, victim and privacy advocates; and community engagement. The toolkit is available at <https://www.bja.gov/bwc/>.

NAPO continues to emphasize that decisions regarding officer-worn body cameras must be made on an agency-by-agency basis due to the many details and technical aspects that must be considered when implementing body camera requirements. Details to take into account when considering officer-worn body camera policies include: privacy concerns, storage costs, Freedom of Information Act requests, public expectations of this technology, and much more.

If you have any questions regarding the Body Worn Camera Pilot or the COPS Hiring Grants mentioned above, please contact Andy Edmiston at [aedmiston@napo.org](mailto:aedmiston@napo.org).

Source: Department of Justice Press Release, "Justice Department Awards over \$23 Million in Funding for Body Worn Camera Pilot Program to Support Law Enforcement Agencies in 32 States", September 21, 2015. <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-awards-over-23-million-funding-body-worn-camera-pilot-program-support-law>

## NAPO on Capitol Hill

On September 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, NAPO met with leadership staff of both the Senate and House Law Enforcement Caucuses to reiterate and provide information on our legislative priorities. Following up on the meeting NAPO Executive Director Bill Johnson had with the Republican Policy Committee Law Enforcement Task Force, NAPO restated the imperative need of the DOJ and the Administration to change course and publicly and forcefully defend officers and

condemn the targeting of officers for assassination. We also focused on the need for Congress to fully fund state and local law enforcement grant programs, including the COPS and Byrne-JAG grants.

In addition to the above priorities, NAPO discussed the following bills with the staffers:

- **James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Reauthorization Act:** This important legislation will permanently reauthorize two critical programs providing medical treatment and compensation for 9/11 heroes – the World Trade Center Health Program and the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund (VCF) – that are set to expire in October 2015 and October 2016, respectively. Unless Congress acts to reauthorize these programs, the Health Program will cease to operate next year and the VCF will have to cut awards by as much as 60 percent and will stop taking claims next year. For those who are expected to come down with a 9/11 cancer or disease, this means they will have no alternative or recourse. It is vital that Congress act quickly and pass this bill.
- **Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP) Grant Program Reauthorization Act:** The BVP Grant Program provides matching funds to state and local law enforcement departments to assist with efforts to purchase bulletproof vests for their officers. This legislation would reauthorize the highly successful BVP Grant Program and ensure that all of America’s law enforcement officers are provided with the life-saving protection they need. NAPO strongly believes the advancement of this legislation is essential to assist state and local law enforcement efforts to purchase bullet resistant vests for their officers.

The staff was very receptive to our priorities. NAPO looks forward to continue working with the House and Senate Law Enforcement Caucuses to address the needs of our nation’s public safety community. If you have any questions about these meetings, please contact Andy Edmiston at [aedmiston@napo.org](mailto:aedmiston@napo.org).

## **NAPO Endorses Legislation to Increase Protections for Veterans**

NAPO has endorsed two bills introduced by Representative Thomas Rooney (R-FL), the Secure Legal Services for Veterans Act (H.R. 2863) and the Veterans Protection Enhancement Act (H.R. 2862).

The increasing veteran population and the current struggles of Veterans Affairs (VA) to meet the demand of the rising number of benefit claims has led to an environment where our veterans are being defrauded under the guise of legal assistance. While it is currently illegal for anyone who is not a VA-approved agent or attorney to charge any fee for assisting a veteran in filing a claim or appeal with the VA, doing so does not carry a penalty. As a result, our veterans have become targets of financial predators who offer to help with their cases, charge thousands of dollars in fees, and then provide little or no assistance.

Our veterans sacrificed and put their lives on the line to protect us. NAPO strongly believes that anyone who deliberately targets our most vulnerable veterans for financial fraud should face harsh penalties. Therefore, NAPO has given its support for H.R. 2863 and H.R. 2862, which, respectively, would make the illegal charging of fees a misdemeanor and increase the federal penalty for any crime that deliberately targets veterans.

NAPO looks forward to working with Representative Rooney to pass these important pieces of legislation. If you have any questions about these bills, please contact Andy Edmiston at [aedemiston@napo.org](mailto:aedemiston@napo.org).

## **NAPO in the News**

On September 23, 2015, NAPO’s Executive Director, Bill Johnson, was quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* article, “More Police Go to Trial in Killings, but Convictions Remain Rare”. The focus of the article is on the growing number of police officers who are charged with crimes for deadly on-duty shootings and the difficulty of prosecutors to land a conviction of murder or manslaughter. NAPO and other police advocates see the reason behind the lack of convictions being prosecutors bending to political will and public pressure by bringing dubious cases to trial.

Johnson explained: “It’s a political response to media coverage in Ferguson and South Carolina and Staten Island”.

The inability of prosecutors to convince jurors that police shootings are anything other than unexpected and unfortunate incidents that occur during the course of officers performing their duty is proof that most cases are brought to trial due to political pressures.

The full article is available at the following site: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/more-police-go-to-trial-in-killings-but-convictions-remain-rare-1443044871>

**NAPO will continue to ensure our members’ voices are heard loud and clear on the Hill, with the Administration, and in the media. If you have any questions about the publication cited above, please contact Bill Johnson at: [bjohnson@napo.org](mailto:bjohnson@napo.org).**

## **House Speaker Boehner Announces Resignation**

On September 25<sup>th</sup>, Speaker of the House John Boehner announced that he will be resigning as Speaker and from his congressional seat at the end of October. Facing a growing rebellion within the House Republican ranks and a looming shutdown of the federal government, Speaker Boehner made the decision to resign. With his resignation, House Republican leaders with the support of Democrats will most likely be able to avoid a government shutdown over the funding of Planned Parenthood and pass a Continuing Resolution to fund the government through December 11, 2015.

NAPO continues to engage Congressional leadership to ensure our priorities remain at the top of the Congressional agenda. We will keep our members updated on all relevant issues.

Source: Mike DeBonis and Paul Kane, “House Speaker John Boehner to resign at end of October”, WashingtonPost.com, September 25, 2015. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/wp/2015/09/25/boehner-resigns/>

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



NAPO's Fall Seminar, *Dealing with the Hostile Media*, is quickly approaching!

October 22 – 23, 2015 ~ Grand Hyatt San Antonio  
San Antonio, Texas

Learn from experts in the field how to effectively communicate your message when responding to the media on uses of force & other controversial issues.

**DON'T FORGET TO REGISTER & MAKE HOTEL RESERVATIONS BY OCTOBER 1<sup>st</sup>!**

**[Click here for Registration information](#)**

NAPO's Annual Roundtable Discussion will be held in conjunction with the Media Seminar at the Grand Hyatt. The Roundtable will take place October 23, 1:30 – 5:30 p.m.

If you have any questions or need additional information please do not hesitate to contact NAPO's Director of Events, Elizabeth Loranger, at [eloranger@napo.org](mailto:eloranger@napo.org) or (703) 549 -0775.



## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE ORGANIZATIONS, INC.

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### EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

September 22, 2015

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of Michigan*

WILLIAM J. JOHNSON  
Executive Director and  
General Counsel

The Honorable Thomas Rooney  
United States House of Representatives  
2160 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Rooney:

On behalf of the National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO), I am writing to you to express our support of the Secure Legal Services for Veterans Act (H.R. 2863) and the Veterans Protection Enhancement Act (H.R. 2862).

NAPO is a coalition of police unions and associations from across the United States that serves to advance the interests of America's law enforcement through legislative and legal advocacy, political action, and education. Founded in 1978, NAPO now represents more than 1,000 police units and associations, 241,000 sworn law enforcement officers, and more than 100,000 citizens who share a common dedication to fair and effective crime control and law enforcement.

The increasing veteran population and the current struggles of Veterans Affairs (VA) to meet the demand of the rising number of benefit claims as led to an environment where our veterans are being defrauded under the guise of legal assistance. While it is currently illegal for anyone who is not a VA-approved agent or attorney to charge any fee for assisting a veteran in filing a claim or appeal with the VA, doing so does not carry a penalty. As a result, our veterans have become targets of financial predators who offer to help with their cases, charge thousands of dollars in fees, and then provide little or no assistance.

Our veterans sacrificed and put their lives on the line to protect us. NAPO strongly believes that anyone who deliberately targets our most vulnerable veterans for financial fraud should face harsh penalties. Therefore, NAPO supports H.R. 2863 and H.R. 2862, which, respectively, would make the illegal charging of fees a misdemeanor and increase the federal penalty for any crime that deliberately targets veterans.

Please let us know how we can be of further assistance, and feel free to contact me at (703) 549-0775. We look forward to working with you to pass this important legislation.

Sincerely,

William J. Johnson  
Executive Director