



# The Washington Report

**The Newsletter of the National Association of Police Organizations**

*Representing America's Finest*

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**May 9, 2016**

## **NAPO Meets with Vice President**

On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, NAPO's President Michael McHale and Executive Director Bill Johnson had a face-to-face meeting with Vice President Joe Biden at the White House to discuss the Violence Against Women law, open police data, criminal justice reform, and the Supreme Court.

The Vice President spent the majority of the meeting discussing the need for criminal justice reform, supporting the efforts currently being made in Congress to pass sentencing and correctional reform. NAPO has concerns with the legislation Congress is considering as we feel it tries to do too much at once, and as a consequence, will negatively impact public safety.

NAPO took the opportunity to raise to the Vice President the issue of the extradition of violent criminals from Cuba. NAPO strongly believes that as part of the reestablishment of diplomatic ties to Cuba, the Administration must work on bringing back violent criminals who fled to Cuba, such as cop-killer Joanne Chesimard, so that they can be brought to justice. Chesimard is on the FBI's most wanted terrorist list for her role in the cold-blooded killing of New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster in 1973. The fact that she – and violent felons like her – are living free in Cuba is an affront to the men and women who have dedicated their lives to protecting our communities as law enforcement officers – above all to the family and friends of police officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

NAPO raised this issue at a White House meeting on March 10, 2016, and reiterated this point in a letter to the President and Attorney General on March 22, 2015. The Vice President was very clear that the establishment of diplomatic relations with Cuba would be contingent upon the return of Chesimard and criminals like her to the United States. He indicated it was a top priority for the Administration.

The extradition of cop-killers from countries such as Cuba and Mexico is a top priority for NAPO and we will continue to work with the Administration and Congress to address the growing issue of the U.S. Government's inability to extradite violent criminals who flee to other countries.

## **NAPO on the Hill: Meeting with Rep. Culberson**

On May 6<sup>th</sup>, NAPO met with staff of Representative John Culberson (R-TX), who is the chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS). This subcommittee determines how much money to appropriate to state and local law enforcement grant programs through the Department of Justice (DOJ), including the COPS Hiring Program and the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) Program.

NAPO met with Rep. Culberson's staff regarding our funding priorities for the fiscal 2017 CJS appropriations bill: the COPS Hiring Program, the Byrne JAG program, the Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP) Grant Program, and the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act (MIOTCRA). Rep. Culberson is hoping that the House will be able to move forward on approving fiscal 2017 appropriations measures soon and his priority is making sure that the CJS spending measure is one of the first to be considered. (*For more information about NAPO's funding priorities, please see our Legislative Priorities booklet for the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress:* [http://www.napo.org/files/8614/2652/0101/Legislative\\_Priorities\\_Booklet\\_-\\_114th\\_Congress\\_-\\_Website.pdf](http://www.napo.org/files/8614/2652/0101/Legislative_Priorities_Booklet_-_114th_Congress_-_Website.pdf))

The Senate took the lead this year on the appropriations process due to a stalemate in the House regarding what the overall budget levels would be for fiscal 2017. On April 21<sup>st</sup>, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved its version of the fiscal 2017 CJS appropriations bill, which funded NAPO's priority grant programs at similar levels to those in fiscal 2016. The Byrne J JAG Program is authorized at \$384 million, the COPS Hiring Program at \$187 million, the BVP Grant Program at \$22.5 million, and the MIOTCRA at \$11 million.

The Senate version of the spending bill also included a provision in the section appropriating funding to the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program that encourages the Program to have transparency and greater efficiency in the claims review process to "reduce the burden on injured officers or surviving families". It also calls for the PSOB office to report to the Committee 90 days after the enactment of the appropriations bill regarding the steps it will take to increase transparency and efficiency.

NAPO urged Rep. Culberson's staff to also include this language in the House version. As part of the PSOB stakeholder advisory committee, NAPO has urged the PSOB leadership to increase transparency and efficiency in determining claims and we have shared our concerns about the program with members of Congress. While this language is non-binding, should it pass in to law, it will put the PSOB Program on notice that Congress is watching and is not content with how the program is currently being run.

While having our priority grant programs funded at their authorized level is a main concern for NAPO, we understand that there are currently fiscal constraints standing in the way of fully funding these important programs. We let Rep. Culberson's staff know that we want the grant programs funded at least at the level they were in fiscal 2016. Funding for state and local law enforcement grant programs is at a low and it is unacceptable for them to get cut any further. To do so would put officers' lives at stake and have grave consequences on law enforcement's efforts to keep our communities safe.

NAPO will continue to work with House and Senate appropriators to ensure our priority programs are supported and get adequately funded. We will keep our members up to date as Congress moves through the appropriations process. If you have any questions, please contact Andy Edmiston at [aedmiston@napo.org](mailto:aedmiston@napo.org).

## **NAPO in the News**

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, NAPO's Executive Director Bill Johnson was quoted in a *Wall Street Journal* article, "Police Shooting Convictions Rise: Guilty verdict for volunteer sheriff's deputy is latest conviction in on-duty shootings, a departure from past years". The article focused on the recent conviction of volunteer deputy sheriff Robert Bates, who unintentionally shot and killed a man who deputies were trying to subdue, mistaking his gun for his stun gun. The article used this case as one example of several convictions in state courts of officers involved in on-duty shootings, noting that the conviction rate in 2016 is higher than it has been in the past several years.

In the article, Johnson "said 'anti-police' sentiment is driving prosecutors to charge more officers, but added he doesn't believe the outcome of cases has been affected.

“There is a concerted effort on the part of politicians to pander to a very vocal constituency that’s clearly anti-police,” said Johnson. “I don’t think that has drifted down into anti-police animus among jurors.”

The full article is available at the following site: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/police-shooting-convictions-rise-1462146300>

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).

## **NAPO Endorses Rapid DNA Act**

NAPO pledged its support for the Rapid DNA Act (S. 2348), sponsored by Senator Orrin Hatch, a bill which would give law enforcement agencies greater ability to use technology to process DNA evidence in the field.

Science and technology has allowed state and local law enforcement to use DNA evidence to convict guilty offenders and exonerate the innocent. However, the processing of DNA evidence under current law can take weeks or even months due to backlogs at crime labs. This significantly delays a perpetrator being brought to justice or an innocent victim being safe-guarded from further harm. Rapid DNA technologies allow an officer to know within hours whether an individual is wanted for an outstanding crime or has a connection to evidence from a crime scene.

The Rapid DNA Act of 2015 will ensure that law enforcement agencies that use rapid DNA technology can upload profiles generated by those instruments into the FBI’s Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) in the field, following standards and procedures to be issued by the FBI, rather than having to go through an accredited crime lab. With science and technology evolving, this legislation allows law enforcement to keep pace, strengthening our ability to safeguard our communities.

The Senate Judiciary Committee is scheduled to mark up this legislation on May 12<sup>th</sup> and we expect it to be approved by the Committee. NAPO will continue to work with Senator Hatch and his staff to pass this important legislation. If you have any questions, please contact Andy Edmiston at [aedmiston@napo.org](mailto:aedmiston@napo.org).

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