



The Washington Report

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

September 30, 2013

NAPO WASHINGTON REPORT FLASH

NAPO Supports the Justice for All Reauthorization Act

On September 30, 2013, NAPO sent the attached letter of support for the Justice for All Act of 2013 (S.822) to the bill's sponsor, Senate Judiciary Chairman Patrick Leahy (S.822). The bipartisan Justice for All Act of 2004 increased resources devoted to DNA and other forensic technology, established safeguards to prevent wrongful convictions, and enhanced protections for crime victims. The Justice for All Reauthorization Act of 2013 reauthorizes and improves the programs created by this historic legislation, while remaining at current authorization levels. This reauthorization builds on the steps the Justice for All Act took to improve the criminal justice system and ensure public confidence in the system.

This reauthorization strengthens key rights for crime victims.

- Too often, victims are unaware of their rights and how to obtain services to which they are entitled. This bill establishes an affirmative right for crime victims to be informed of their rights as established in the Crime Victims' Rights Act and other key laws.
- The bill makes it easier for crime victims to assert their legal rights in court and maintains funding for programs that notify victims of their rights and provide assistance.

The bill reauthorizes the Debbie Smith DNA Backlog Grant Program.

- The Justice for All Act created the Debbie Smith DNA Backlog Grant Program to reduce evidence backlogs in crime labs, particularly in sexual assault cases. This bill reauthorizes that important program to ensure that its success continues.

The bill improves access to post-conviction DNA testing to protect the innocent.

- The original Justice for All Act created the Kirk Bloodsworth Post Conviction DNA Testing Grant Program, which provides funding to states to test DNA evidence in serious criminal cases in which there was key DNA evidence that had never been tested. Post-conviction DNA testing strengthens our criminal justice system by helping to ensure that those who have been wrongly convicted are exonerated and the guilty are punished.
- This bill expands state access to post-conviction DNA testing funds by narrowing the evidence preservation requirement to serious felony cases, a more attainable goal for states.
- The bill allows federal post-conviction DNA testing even for people who waived their right to such testing, given that nineteen of the first 250 individuals exonerated by DNA evidence waived their rights and pleaded guilty despite their innocence. It also gives federal judges more flexibility to grant a new trial or sentence when exculpatory DNA evidence is discovered.

This reauthorization includes new measures to help ensure the effective administration of criminal justice in the states.

- The bill contains provisions to increase accountability for federal funds spent by state and local governments on criminal justice and to ensure that resources are distributed in ways that allow the justice system to operate effectively as a whole.
- The bill reinstates a previous requirement that states receiving funds under the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program develop a strategic plan detailing how the funds will improve the administration of justice. It provides for input from all segments of the criminal justice system and assistance from the Justice Department to ensure the effective use of criminal justice resources.
- The legislation requires the Justice Department to assist states and local governments wanting help improving their system for providing indigent defense.

If you have any questions about this legislation, please contact Melissa Nee at: mnee@napo.org.

Source

United States. Senate Judiciary Committee. *The Justice for All Reauthorization Act of 2013*. 113th Cong. Cong S.822.

Print.

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.

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WILLIAM J. JOHNSON
Executive Director

September 30, 2013

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
Senate Judiciary Committee
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy:

On behalf of the National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO), representing 241,000 rank-and-file officers from across the United States, I am writing to you to express full support for the Justice for All Reauthorization Act of 2013 (S.822).

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 Justice for All Reauthorization Act of 2013 improves and ensures public confidence in the criminal justice system. This legislation reauthorizes the bipartisan Justice for All Act of 2004, which increased resources devoted to DNA and other forensic technology, established safeguards to prevent wrongful convictions, and enhanced protections for crime victims. The Justice for All Act of 2013 reauthorizes and improves the programs created by this historic bill. The bill improves services for crime victims and provides support to state and local governments to use DNA evidence to convict guilty offenders and exonerate the innocent.

NAPO stands ready to support with any efforts necessary to pass this important legislation. If you have any questions, or if we can be of further assistance, please feel free to contact me at: (703) 549-0775.

Sincerely,

William J. Johnson
Executive Director