



The Washington Report

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

June 13, 2016

Senate Judiciary Committee Approves PSOB Reform Bill

In a victory for NAPO, the Senate Judiciary Committee amended and approved the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Improvement Act of 2016 (S. 2944) on June 9th. The bill, introduced by Senators Charles Grassley (R-IA) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), would tackle the issues of transparency and the timeliness of case determinations within the PSOB program. Importantly, it would restore the "substantial weight" standard that requires PSOB to give substantial weight to the findings of federal, state, and local agencies as to the cause of the public safety officer's death or disability and it would require weekly and biannual public reports on the status of claims.

During Committee consideration of the PSOB Improvement Act, NAPO pushed for and supported four amendments to the bill, all of which were unanimously adopted by the Committee. NAPO felt strongly that these amendments were necessary to more fully address our concerns with the PSOB program.

Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) offered an amendment that was a top priority for NAPO because it would return the PSOB program to a presumptive benefit, putting the onus on the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that an officer's death or disability was not in the line of duty or was due to gross negligence. Currently, that onus is on the disabled officer or grieving loved ones, which is unacceptable and goes against the original intent of the program.

The other three NAPO endorsed amendments were offered by Ranking Member Patrick Leahy (D-VT), two of which address concerns NAPO has with current PSOB policy regarding the education benefit age limitation and the program's new abandonment policy. The third amendment would ensure that the provisions of the bill would be applied retroactively.

The first amendment offered by Senator Leahy would extend the current age limitation for children to receive the PSOB education benefits when the underlying benefit claim or education application is approved more than one year after it was filed. This would ensure that children of fallen or disabled public safety officers would still be eligible for education benefits if an adjudication delay causes them to age out of benefit eligibility before their claim is approved.

The second amendment would ensure that the BJA uses all of its authorities – including its existing subpoena authority – to obtain necessary documentation from third parties before considering a claim abandoned. Under current policy, the BJA seems too willing to consider a claim abandoned after one year of inactivity without putting in the effort necessary to finalize the claim.

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Finally, the third amendment aims to ensure that all of these provisions, which aim to ensure that the families and survivors of public safety officers receive the benefits they deserve, will apply retroactively to those claimants who are currently waiting – some for years – to have their cases determined. With a backlog of over 1,000 cases within the PSOB program, it is essential that the provisions of the PSOB Improvement Act apply to both claims that are currently pending as well as future claims.

NAPO thanks Senators Grassley, Gillibrand, Leahy and Cornyn for their leadership on this important issue and we look forward to working with them to move this bill through the Senate.

In addition to working to move the PSOB Improvement Act and the HERO Benefits Reform Act (H.R. 5123), NAPO will continue our discussions with the Administration and PSOB leadership to find a way to ensure the PSOB program is processing and deciding claims in a timely manner and that the process is transparent and straightforward for those who have lost their loved ones or have become seriously disabled in the line of duty.

We will keep our members up to date on the status of the legislation. If you have any questions about the PSOB Program or the PSOB Improvement Act please contact Andy Edmiston at aedmiston@napo.org.

NAPO in the News

On May 26th, NAPO's Executive Director Bill Johnson was quoted in a *LifeZette.com* article, "Media Perplexed by Cities' Violent Crime Wave: Blind to link between anti-cop rhetoric, de-policing, and spike in criminal activity". The article focuses on the notion that the reason for the rise in violent crimes cities like Chicago are currently facing is that police are no longer actively policing for fear of becoming the next viral video in this time of heightened anti-law enforcement sentiment.

"It has been labeled the Ferguson effect," said Bill Johnson, executive director of the National Association of Police Organizations. "I think it's real ... There's a sense of second thoughts. Some are thinking, 'Do I really want to do this if I don't have to?'"

The article goes on to place full blame on the Obama Administration for fostering the toxic environment for police by its reactions to Ferguson and Baltimore and by not standing up and speaking out in support of America's law enforcement.

The full article is available at: <https://www.lifezette.com/polizette/media-perplexed-cities-violent-crime-rise/>

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.

NAPO Presses President and AG Again to Prioritize Extradition of Cop-Killers from Cuba

On June 9th, NAPO Executive Director Bill Johnson sent a letter to President Barack Obama and Attorney General Loretta Lynch regarding the urgent need to include the extradition of violent criminals as part of the United States reopening of diplomatic relations with Cuba.

We received a reply to our original March 22nd letter on April 26th from the Vaughn Ary, the Director of the Office of International Affairs within the Department of Justice (DOJ), who is responsible for international extradition matters. In his letter, Mr. Ary states that the apprehension of fugitives located abroad is a high priority for the DOJ and at every opportunity the Department is working to engage with Cuban authorities regarding the return of fugitives.

Since then, there have been several news articles regarding efforts of the United States government to extradite Joanne Chesimard from Cuba. Joanne Chesimard is the only woman 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. NAPO felt strongly that we must once again weigh in to ensure that the return of Joanne Chesimard – and other violent fugitives like her – from Cuba is prioritized as part of the reestablishment of diplomatic ties between our two countries.

The fact that Chesimard – 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 is encouraged to hear that the apprehension of fugitives, including Chesimard, located in Cuba is a top priority for the DOJ. The U.S. Government should do everything in its power to ensure the extradition of violent criminals and cop-killers from Cuba so that justice may be served. As diplomatic relations between the two countries are being restored, the Administration must continue to address this issue to ensure that these felons face justice and peace is brought to the families of those who lost their lives.

[NAPO's June 9th Letter to the President and Attorney General](#)

House Appropriations Subcommittee Approves Homeland Security Spending Bill

On June 9th, the House Appropriations Homeland Security subcommittee approved the fiscal 2017 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, which among other things, funds FEMA and law enforcement anti-terrorism grants. The measure includes \$467 million for the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP) and \$600 million for the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), which is on par with what the programs were funded at in fiscal 2016. These are the same funding levels the programs received in the measure that passed the Senate Appropriations Committee at the end of May.

These grants help state and local law enforcement support the Department of Homeland Security's mission to secure America by preventing and deterring terrorist attacks, and protecting against, and responding to threats and hazards to the nation.

NAPO will continue to work with House and Senate appropriators to ensure that our priority grant programs are supported and 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.

NAPO's Sponsor/Cosponsor Spreadsheet

NAPO's updated "Sponsor/Cosponsor" spreadsheet is available at the following link:

<http://www.napo.org/washington-report/sponsor-cosponsor-spreadsheet/>. The spreadsheet accompanies the latest "Legislative Positions" document, which is available at the following link:

<http://www.napo.org/washington-report/legislative-priorities/>

The "Sponsor/Cosponsor" spreadsheet is a useful tool to check if your members of Congress have supported pieces of legislation that will impact our members. NAPO will update this spreadsheet regularly, and continue to ensure our voice is heard on Capitol Hill.

If you have any questions about any of the legislation that NAPO is currently working, please contact Andrea Edmiston at: aedmiston@napo.org.

Join NAPO for Our 38th Annual Convention!

Please join NAPO for our 38th Annual Convention July 23- July 27, 2016, in Palm Beach Florida. Participate in setting NAPO's legislative priorities for the second half of the 114th Congress and issuing NAPO's endorsements for the President and Vice President of the United States. Learn from presentations by prominent law enforcement figures about the latest developments in police policies and services.

When not attending NAPO business sessions, Palm Beach offers something for everyone. Soak up sunshine on pristine beaches, shop trendy Worth Avenue or explore the Flager Museum. Enjoy the afternoon at the famous Eau Spa or relax poolside at one of the beautiful Eau Resort pools. Looking for a little more adventure? The Eau Resort offers a host of recreational activities from catamarans, water skiing and waverunners to bike rentals. Whether you seek adventure or relaxation you will find it at this year's convention in Palm Beach, Florida.

Please complete the [registration form](#) and mail it with payment to the NAPO office or fax it to the NAPO office at (703) 684-0515. Be sure to register by July 5th! Registrations received on or after July 6th will be charged a late registration fee of \$50. Registration fees include the cost of convention materials, special events and food functions. Only individuals registered may attend convention events. Spouses, guests, and children must register if they wish to attend any convention events.

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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