



# The Washington Report

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

*Representing America's Finest*

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**March 6, 2017**

## **NAPO Meets with Attorney General Sessions**

On February 23, NAPO Executive Director Bill Johnson joined representatives of the other major national law enforcement organizations for an intimate lunch with the new Attorney General, Jeff Sessions. Over lunch, participants frankly discussed law enforcement's top criminal justice priorities for the Trump Administration. There was great support among the participants on issues ranging from the repeal of President Obama's executive order curtailing state and local law enforcement's access to surplus military equipment to criminal justice reform to federal support for law enforcement through funding, resources and general support for the officers on the street.

Johnson thanked Attorney General Sessions and the President for the Executive Order issued on February 9 on preventing violence against federal, state and local law enforcement officers. The Executive Order reflects NAPO's position in making the case for existing constitutional bases for federal protections of state and local officers, including enacting new federal criminal provisions to address the assault and murder of federally-funded local law enforcement officers, such as those officers whose agencies receive aid from the federal DOJ or DHS. NAPO shared our position with the Presidential Transition Team in a meeting on December 1, 2016, and we are grateful that the President and Attorney General moved forward with our recommendations.

Johnson extended our thanks for another of the President's executive orders, this one directing the Attorney General to establish a [task force on crime reduction and public safety](#) and indicated that NAPO would be an asset as a member of the task force. He also reiterated our request that the Attorney General choose someone to lead the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division who will work collaboratively with law enforcement and ensure federal prosecution, where applicable, of those who commit crimes against officers. Appointments such as these will make the difference in framing the relationship between the DOJ and state and local law enforcement.

This meeting increased NAPO's confidence that the Justice Department under Attorney General Sessions' leadership has law enforcement's back and that we will see many changes within the DOJ that will better support the officers on the street. We look forward to continue working with the Attorney General on the issues facing law enforcement officers today. If you have any questions about the meeting, please contact Bill Johnson at [bjohnson@napo.org](mailto:bjohnson@napo.org).

## **NAPO Participates in Blue Alert Advisory Group Convening**

Executive Director Bill Johnson represented NAPO on the Blue Alert Advisory Group conference call on February 22. NAPO is a member of the Advisory Group, whose job it is to assist with the initiation, facilitation and promotion of blue alert plans. The National Blue Alert Advisory Group is established pursuant to the Rafael

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE ORGANIZATIONS

317 S. Patrick Street ~ Alexandria, VA 22314 ~ (703) 549-0775 ~ (800) 322-NAPO ~ Fax: (703) 684-0515

[www.napo.org](http://www.napo.org) ~ Email: [info@napo.org](mailto:info@napo.org)

Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act, which was passed into law in 2015 to create a nationwide alert system to quickly identify and apprehend suspects when a law enforcement officer is killed or seriously injured, missing in connection with official duties, or if there is an imminent/credible threat related to an attack on law enforcement. The Act is named after New York City Police Department detectives and NAPO members Ramos and Liu, who were assassinated while serving their communities.

The purpose of the call was to update the Advisory Group on the progress the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office has made in establishing a national Blue Alert Network and the work going forward. The COPS Office is currently:

- Working with the Federal Communications Commission to get a dedicated Emergency Alert System event code for Blue Alert, which is crucial for long-term national coordination and consistency;
- Leveraging their partnership with FEMA to gain access to, and collaborate with, all state and territorial designated alert authorizing officials;
- Establishing a central repository for Blue Alert plans, guidance, forms, templates, and contact information, amongst other things, which will be accessible to law enforcement and other Blue Alert practitioners; and
- Creating a guidance and recommendations document to be a resource to states seeking to establish Blue Alert plans and to current plans looking to adopt national best practices.

The COPS Office has set April 1 as the date it will be operationally ready to start reaching out to states to assist with the developing or updating of Blue Alert plans, which is almost two years since the passage of the Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act. This is far from where we need to be in the establishment of a national system, particularly in this time when we are seeing an alarming increase in the numbers of ambush attacks on law enforcement officers.

The ultimate goal is to create a National Blue Alert System that will be an integrated system of Blue Alert plans throughout the nation into one national system. The lives of law enforcement officers across the country depend on a fully functioning system being up and running as soon as possible. NAPO will continue working with the DOJ as part of the Advisory Group and with our state and local government partners to have Blue Alert systems established in all 50 states so that the National Blue Alert System will truly be a national system.

If you have any questions about the work of the Advisory Committee or the meeting, please contact Bill Johnson at [bjohnson@napo.org](mailto:bjohnson@napo.org).

## **NAPO on the Hill: Meetings with House and Senate Majority Leaders' Staff**

On March 2, NAPO, together with other law enforcement organizations, met with House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy's (R-CA) staff and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's (R-KY) staff to discuss our priority legislation for this Congress, in particular, pro-law enforcement legislation we want to see moved leading up to or during National Police Week. Given the timeframe, the legislation we want to move during Police Week are those bills that are bipartisan and have the support of the Judiciary Committee so that they can move quickly to the House and Senate floors.

Specifically, we discussed the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Improvement Act, the Back the Blue Act, the Children of Fallen Heroes Scholarship Act, the Protecting Lives Using Surplus (PLUS) Equipment Act, and the Honoring Hometown Heroes Act:

**The Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Improvement Act** would return the PSOB Program to a presumptive benefit and 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. It 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. It would increase transparency through weekly and biannual public reports on the status of claims.

**The Back the Blue Act** would help stop senseless violence against our nation's law enforcement community by adding new criminal provisions to address the assault and murder of federal and federally-funded law enforcement officers and those who flee to avoid prosecution for such crimes. It would increase penalties on those who harm or target for harm public safety officers by making the murder or attempted murder of a local police officer, firefighter, or first responder an aggravating factor in death penalty determinations. Increased penalties make important differences in the attitudes of criminals toward public safety officers, and ensure protection for the community.

**The Children of Fallen Heroes Scholarship Act** would eliminate the expected family contribution (EFC) used to determine financial need in the case of a Pell Grant-eligible student whose parent or guardian died in the line of duty. Additionally, children of public safety officers who died in the line of duty would qualify for the maximum Pell Grant award (\$5,815 for FY16-17) if he or she was less than 24 years old or enrolled at an institution of higher education at the time of the parent or guardian's death.

**The PLUS Equipment Act** would nullify President Obama's Executive Order 13688 that restricted state and local law enforcement's access to surplus military equipment through the Department of Defense 1033 Program and other equipment acquisition programs through the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security. This lifesaving equipment used in search and rescue operations, disaster response, and active shooter situations that they otherwise would not be able to afford. NAPO believes that President Trump will rescind this executive order and we support the PLUW Equipment Act to ensure that no future president can again prohibit state and local law enforcement from accessing such equipment.

**The Honoring Hometown Heroes Act** would authorize the governors or the Mayor of the District of Columbia to proclaim that the U.S. flag shall be flown at half-staff in the event of the death of a first responder (public safety officer) working in such jurisdiction who dies while serving in the line of duty. Currently, governors and the Mayor of D.C. are only authorized to lower the flag to half-staff for the active duty death of a member of our nation's armed forces.

Both House Majority Leader McCarthy's staff and Senate Majority Leader McConnell's staff seemed supportive of our efforts to move this package of priority bills. They had some concerns about the feasibility of moving the PLUS Equipment Act on a fast track given the wide range of opinions on the bill within Congress. We believe that if the President signs an executive order restoring state and local law enforcement's access to surplus military equipment, it may be easier to pass that bill. We have a lot of work to do to ensure these bills have significant bipartisan support and move through Committee in the next couple of months, but we are confident we will have leaderships' support when they reach the House and Senate floors for a vote.

NAPO continues to meet with House and Senate leadership and Committee leadership staff to ensure our ability to move these bills in the run up to National Police Week. If you have any questions about NAPO's meetings on the Hill or the issues addressed, please contact Andy Edmiston at [aedmiston@napo.org](mailto:aedmiston@napo.org).

# NAPO's Sponsor/Cosponsor Spreadsheet and Legislative Update

NAPO's updated "Sponsor/Cosponsor" [spreadsheet](#) is available on our web site, along with the latest "[Legislative Positions](#)" document.

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 updates this spreadsheet regularly, and continues 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](mailto:aedmiston@napo.org).

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.

★ **SAVE THE DATE** ★

## NAPO'S ANNUAL FALL SEMINAR "Navigating the New Union Environment"

**November 5 – 7, 2017**

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Elizabeth Loranger: [eloranger@napo.org](mailto:eloranger@napo.org) or 800-322-6267