



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE ORGANIZATIONS, INC.

Representing America's Finest

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March 24, 2011

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The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Grassley
Ranking Member
Senate Judiciary Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Grassley:

On behalf of the National Association of Police Organizations (NAPPO), representing 241,000 rank-and-file law enforcement officers from across the United States, I would like to raise your attention to the matter of Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB). NAPPO feels that there is still work to be done in order to make certain that all public safety officers who have become permanently and completely disabled in the line of duty and can no longer hold a meaningful job are given the benefits they deserve in recognition for all they have sacrificed.

The Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Act was designed to offer peace of mind to men and women seeking careers in public safety and to make a strong statement about the value that American society places on the contributions of those who serve their communities in potentially dangerous circumstances. The families of public safety officers who have fallen or have become completely and permanently disabled in the line of duty rely on the benefits promised to them by the PSOB to continue on with their lives.

NAPPO supports legislation that makes important changes to the Public Safety Officers Benefits program that will increase or protect benefits, expedite claims and help the program with its education and outreach to the first responder community.

On October 7, 2010, Attorney General Eric Holder announced new requirements for the Bulletproof Vest Partnership program. Departments that received funds will now be required to provide mandatory wear policies. As a key contributor in the development of the Bulletproof Vest Partnership program (BVP) and the law enforcement leader on implementation and improvements, NAPPO recognizes the vital importance of modern body armor.

However, officers who are harmed in the line of duty should not be hindered by this policy when their PSOB benefits are considered and it is imperative that future legislation reflects this concern. An officer's compliance with body wear policies has too many unforeseeable circumstances to justify making payments of death benefits contingent on compliance with a blanket policy.

NAPO is appreciative of efforts to improve the PSOB program to ensure that it meets the needs of the families of officers who so selflessly gave their lives for the safety of our communities.

We look forward to working with you to improve the PSOB program and fight for the passage of this bill. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, or NAPO's Government Affairs Director, Rachel Hedge, at (703) 549-0775.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William J. Johnson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

William J. Johnson
Executive Director

CC: Attorney General, Eric Holder
Bureau of Justice Assistance Acting Director, Jim Burch
Senate Judiciary Committee
House Judiciary Committee