



## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE ORGANIZATIONS, INC.

*Representing America's Finest*

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### NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

WILLIAM J. JOHNSON

Executive Director

May 9, 2008

The United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: *The Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act, H.R. 980*

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO) representing more than 238,000 law enforcement officers throughout the United States, I am writing to urge you to vote in favor of the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act, H.R. 980, when it comes up for a vote on the Senate floor. This important legislation will extend the basic American right of collective bargaining for wages, hours, and safe working conditions to all public safety officers.

The Administration has issued a letter signed by Attorney General Michael Mukasey, Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao and Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff raising their concerns regarding the bill. While we have carefully their arguments regarding federalism and the merits of granting state and local public safety officers the basic right to join a union and bargain collectively, we respectfully disagree. The Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act is a bipartisan bill that will guarantee that law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical service workers in all 50 states have the right to discuss workplace issues with their employers. The bill only provides a basic framework for such discussions, while respecting the right and flexibility of states to write their own laws for public sector workers. Importantly, the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act prohibits strikes and does not call for mandatory arbitration. States that offer equal or greater collective bargaining rights will be exempt from this federal statute. This legislation will not overturn current right-to-work or collective bargaining laws – it will only provide basic right to collective bargaining to those who currently do not have it.

In regard to the Administration's concerns that this bill could "upset our nation's carefully developed emergency-response functions," these objections are offensive to the public safety community. Compare the performance and devotion to duty of the union members of the New York City Police and Fire Departments and the Port Authority Police Department on September 11, 2001, to that of Secretary Chertoff's non-union Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) after Hurricane Katrina. The men and women who become law enforcement officers, fire fighters and emergency medical personnel do so because they have a strong sense of civic duty and they take their duty to serve and protect very seriously. As public safety officers working on the front lines to enforce the law and protect our communities, they have a right, a need, really, to have the trust and support of their government.

In their letter, Attorney General Mukasey and Secretaries Chao and Chertoff seem to

ignore the facts surrounding the response to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. Every New York City police officer who charged into the World Trade Center that day was a union member of the New York City Police Benevolent Association. Every Port Authority officer who risked and ultimately gave his life in the line of duty was a union member of the Port Authority Police Benevolent Association. All of these officers were members of NAPO. Additionally, every New York City fire fighter who responded the World Trade Center and stood their ground to the death was a union member. Not one of them stopped to consider whether this risk was written in their contract before sacrificing their lives to save the lives of others. Those heroes, whom this nation rightly continues to honor, did not hesitate to do their duty because they knew that, God forbid, if they should die, their wives, husbands and children would be taken care of by their union.

Unionized officers will do their duty, without as much as a second thought, to protect our nation's security. It is an insult to those who gave their lives to think that their union contracts would have gotten in the way of their doing their jobs.

The public safety is best protected through effective partnerships between first responders on the front lines and the agencies that employ them. This legislation will ensure that all public safety officers have the opportunity to meet with local officials to discuss how they do their jobs and how best to protect the public. Therefore, NAPO urges you to not be misled by chimerical concerns, and to support the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act and give your public safety employees the voice they deserve. If you have any questions or need further information, please feel free to contact me, or NAPO's Government Affairs Director, Andy Mournighan, 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