



The Washington Report

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

May 23, 2019

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NAPO Victory: Congress Passes Permanent BVP Reauthorization

In a victory for NAPO and the law enforcement community, Congress just passed the legislation (H.R. 2379) that will *permanently* reauthorize the Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP) Grant Program at \$30 million per year. The bill was presented to the President on May 20 to be signed into law. We will never again have to come to Congress and fight to get this vital program reauthorized.

With NAPO's support, Congress enacted legislation in 1998 that created the Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP) Grant Program within the Department of Justice to help fund state and local law enforcement efforts to purchase bullet resistant vests for their officers. The BVP Grant Program has proven to be a critical resource for state and local jurisdictions that saves lives. To date, more than 3,000 law enforcement officers have survived shootings thanks to their bullet resistant vests. Those officers are only a fraction of the over 900,000 law enforcement officers who put their lives at risk every day to protect our nation's communities.

While many officers are protected by bullet-resistant armor, an alarming number of officers, many in small departments across the nation, are not afforded this same protection due to local budget constraints. The BVP Grant Program has enabled small and large, rural and urban law enforcement departments alike to obtain protective equipment to safeguard their officers who risk their lives each and every day to keep our communities safe. These brave men and women must be protected with the proper equipment.

NAPO strongly believes that permanently reauthorizing the BVP Grant Program will ensure that all of America's law enforcement officers are provided with the life-saving protection they need. We thank Senators Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Representatives Bill Pascrell Jr. (D-NJ) and Peter King (R-NY) for championing this legislation and for being long-time partners and friends in our work to ensure every officer has access to life-saving body armor.

NAPO Victory! Senate Passes Bill Expanding PSOB Disability

In another significant victory for NAPO during National Police Week, the Senate passed the Protecting America's First Responders Act (S. 1208) by voice vote on May 16. This important legislation would make it easier for public safety officers disabled in the line of duty to qualify for the Public Safety Officer's Benefits (PSOB) Program's disability benefits, in addition to several other important programmatic changes.

The program's "very stringent requirements" for officers disabled in the line of duty have been applied unfairly and inconsistently. These requirements make it extremely difficult for officers to qualify for PSOB disability benefits, and the PSOB regulations regarding disability benefits do not match up with what Congress intended when it created the disability benefit in 1990.

The Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program 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 current state of the PSOB Program, however, does little to instill confidence in officers that the federal government will do its part to take care of them should they become disabled in the line of duty, which is why the Protecting America's First Responders Act is so important.

This legislation will ease the strict requirements for disabled officers to qualify for PSOB disability benefits, ensuring that officers who are catastrophically injured in the line of duty, but can perform some level of meaningful work, would still qualify for the much-needed benefit. To start, officers who become quadriplegic, paraplegic, or blind due to the line of duty injury will automatically qualify for the PSOB disability benefit. The bill would also make the PSOB work restrictions more in line with those of Social Security Disability. Disabled officers have been left behind and this bill will ensure they are not forgotten.

Additionally, the Protecting America's First Responders Act will also help protect the ability of survivors, disabled officers and their families to get the benefits they so rightly deserve. It will ensure that beneficiaries receive the highest award amount possible and it will make certain that all children of public safety officers disabled or killed in the line of duty are able to benefit from the Public Safety Officers' Education Assistance program.

NAPO is working with Representatives Bill Pascrell (D-NJ) and John Rutherford (R-FL), who introduced the House companion bill (H.R. 2812), and the House Judiciary Committee to move it through the House and get it enacted into law. We will keep our members up-to-date on the status of the bill.

We thank Senators Grassley and Gillibrand and Representatives Pascrell and Rutherford for their continued support of the law enforcement community, and we look forward to seeing the Protecting America's First Responders Act become law.

NAPO Victory! Senate Passes Supporting & Treating Officers in Crisis Act

In our third National Police Week win, the Senate passed the Supporting and Treating Officers in Crisis (STOIC) Act (S. 998) on May 16. NAPO worked closely with Senators Josh Hawley (R-MO) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) on this legislation, which would reauthorize and revitalize a Department of Justice (DOJ) grant program for law enforcement officer family-support services that expired in 2000 and was last funded in 2005. In addition to the family-support services available under the grant, the STOIC Act will expand the grant program's eligible uses to better address the mental-health and support needs of law enforcement officers, especially as it relates to suicide prevention. The bill would specifically allow grant recipients to use funds to establish suicide-prevention programs and to support officers suffering stress and mental-health issues.

An April 2018 white paper by the Ruderman Family Foundation found that first responders are more likely to die from suicide than in the line of duty. In 2018, there were at least 159 police officer suicides compared to 145 line of duty deaths. Additionally, according to the National Study of Police Suicides, officers are 2.5 times more likely to die from suicides than from homicides, a much more sobering statistic.

State and local law enforcement officers are our nation's first responders. They respond to our country's greatest tragedies as well as violent and abhorrent crimes that unfortunately occur with some frequency in our neighborhoods. They have seen and experienced horrors that they cannot forget, yet they still put their lives on the line every day to protect and serve our communities.

The stresses and strains of the job not only affect officers' mental and physical wellbeing, but also the wellbeing of their family life. It is vital that we recognize the stress factors of the job and give officers and their families the resources they need to address their emotional and mental wellbeing. The STOIC Act will help ensure important support services are available for officers and their families.

We thank Senators Hawley and Whitehouse for their leadership on this important issue and we are working with the House sponsors, Representatives Guy Reschenthaler (R-PA) and Madeleine Dean (D-PA), to get this to the House floor as soon as possible. We will keep our members updated on the bill.

NAPO Attends Democratic Steering & Outreach Committee Law Enforcement Roundtable



On May 15, NAPO President Mick McHale participated in an intimate roundtable discussion on the issues facing state and local law enforcement hosted by the Senate Democratic Steering and Outreach Committee. **Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Chris Coons (D-DE), Bob Casey (D-PA), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Richard Durbin (D-IL), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Tim Kaine (D-VA)** participated in the roundtable with McHale.

McHale called on the Senate to build on the passage of the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act and appropriate significant, dedicated funding for the peer mentoring pilot program grant established under the Act. Appropriate funding for this vital grant is necessary to adequately meet the demand for officer peer mentoring programs in cities and states across the country. McHale urged the Senators present to support officer safety and wellness programs.

He also spoke on the need for increased protections for law enforcement officers given the rise in violent attacks on officers and urged the Senate to pass the Protect and Serve Act. As part of providing increased protections for officers, he mentioned the need to extradite cop-killers like Joanne Chesimard from the countries harboring them. Stricter penalties do not mean much if violent criminals know they can escape justice by fleeing to countries like Cuba or Mexico.

The difficulty agencies are having with recruiting officers and the rigid and inflexible application of standards such as requiring a two- or four-year college degree was also touched on in McHale's remarks. NAPO has long urged that other avenues of satisfying these types of requirements be used, such as military experience, Police Explorer programs, and apprenticeship-type training. He rounded out his comments mentioning the importance of unions and the need for public safety officers to be able to collectively bargain. Unions positively impact officer safety and wellness, can help with recruiting and are sources of support for officers and families who are struggling.

NAPO appreciates the opportunity to participate in these important discussions and we look forward to working with Senate Democratic leadership to continue advancing the priority issues facing rank-and-file officers today.

NAPO Recognizes Congressional Champions During Annual Lobby Day

NAPO held its Annual Legislative Luncheon and Lobby Day on May 14, during which we recognized members of Congress and their staff for their outstanding support for law enforcement. NAPO's President Mick McHale, and Executive Director Bill Johnson were joined by NAPO members in thanking **Senator Tom Cotton (R-AR) and his general counsel Brian Colas, Congressman Joe Courtney (D-CT), Congressman John Rutherford (R-FL) and the Office of Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH)** for their work on behalf of NAPO and the law enforcement community.

NAPO recognized **Senator Cotton** and his staff for their incredible efforts in opposition to the FIRST STEP Act. Senator Cotton recognized the dangers of the legislation and understood how it would negatively impact public safety. While we were not victorious, he remained a steadfast partner and advocate in NAPO's efforts to ensure the safety of our nation's officers and communities as the bill moved forward. He not only spoke out against the legislation and its most dangerous provisions, he also worked with us on amendments that would ensure the most dangerous felons remained in prison.

Senator Cotton's general counsel, Brian Colas, worked tirelessly with us and a coalition of law enforcement partners as well as with other Senate offices in opposition to the reckless changes included in the FIRST STEP Act.

NAPO also recognized **Congressman Courtney**, whose efforts to repeal the "Cadillac Tax" – the 40% excise tax on employer-sponsored health plans – including his continued sponsorship of the Middle Class Health Benefits Tax Repeal Act, have been instrumental in the tax being delayed until 2022. Through the Congressman's leadership on this issue, the current bill has an impressive 320 bipartisan cosponsors. Last year, the bill had 304 bipartisan cosponsors. He has also galvanized dozens of diverse organizations to stand together in fighting for full repeal of the Cadillac Tax.

Many of NAPO's member groups have already heard from their employers that they are looking to redesign their health benefit plans - to lower benefits - in order to avoid being hit with the tax. While they have been mostly able to avoid those changes, the uncertainty of the tax's outcome still hanging over our heads does not help. It is essential that we continue to fight to repeal the Cadillac Tax and not settle for kicking the can down the road, so NAPO stands with Congressman Courtney in his efforts to repeal this tax.

NAPO recognized **Congressman Rutherford** for his long-standing partnership and commitment to supporting the law enforcement community. From sponsoring vital legislation such as the Protect and Serve Act to speaking out in support of law enforcement as the profession continuously gets beat upon, Congressman Rutherford has proven to be a champion for officers and the profession.

Additionally, he took on the role of Co-Chair of the House Law Enforcement Caucus and he has been a constant supporter of NAPO's priority legislation, whether it be COPS funding, improving the PSOB Program, stopping school violence or ensuring officers have the resources and equipment necessary to safely and effectively do their jobs.

Lastly, in a first for NAPO, we recognized the entire **office of Senator Sherrod Brown**. Senator Brown has an able and dedicated staff who have worked closely with NAPO on issues ranging from Social Security, pensions, and healthcare to the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program, the opioid epidemic and the dangers of fentanyl to officers.

Each Congress, Senator Brown's staff work to secure full funding for the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program. They worked with NAPO to pass our priority legislation such as the Children of Fallen Heroes Scholarship Act and the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act last Congress. And they have been aggressively working to ensure officers have the resources and protections necessary to keep them safe in the fight against fentanyl through the POWER Act.

NAPO gives a heartfelt thanks to all our Legislative Award winners for their work in support of law enforcement and for being true champions of NAPO's legislative priorities.

Attorney General Announces New State & Local Law Enforcement Coordination Section for Legislative Affairs

Attorney General Barr announced the creation of the State and Local Law Enforcement Coordination Section (SLEC-S) within the Office of Legislative Affairs. The SLEC-S will be responsible for ensuring that Department of Justice (DOJ) leadership is informed of state and local law enforcement's top priorities and ensure that the Department has an impactful presence within the law enforcement community.

In announcing the SLEC-S, Attorney General Barr said "[s]tate, local, and federal law enforcement officers are all part of the same team. The events of Police Week serve as a powerful reminder that the vast majority of this team serves on the front lines – at the state and local levels." This new section of the Office of Legislative Affairs will serve as the primary liaison with state and local law enforcement and make certain that DOJ leadership maintains an active and ongoing dialogue with the Department's law enforcement partners.

In addition to supporting state and local law enforcement partners in their work, the SLEC-S will support DOJ components on relevant legislative and police issues affecting the state and local law enforcement community.

NAPO welcomes the creation of the SLEC-S as we push to move our legislative priorities through Congress and we thank the Attorney General for the Department's growing and continued support of state and local law enforcement in our efforts to keep our country, our communities and our officers safe and secure.

You can find the announcement here: <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/attorney-general-william-p-barr-announces-creation-state-and-local-law-enforcement>

Jeffrey Rosen Sworn-In as Deputy Attorney General

On May 22, Jeffrey Rosen was sworn-in as Deputy Attorney General (DAG), replacing Rod Rosenstein who resigned on May 11. NAPO endorsed Mr. Rosen for DAG after our President Mick McHale and Executive Director Bill Johnson had a long conversation with him. Not only does Mr. Rosen have the experience necessary to lead and manage the various aspects and components of the Department of Justice that fall under the DAG's purview, he strongly believes in the role state and local law enforcement play in our nation's fights against violent crime.

Through his extensive career in the federal government, Mr. Rosen has served as General Counsel to the Department of Transportation and later as General Counsel of the Office of Management and Budget under President George W. Bush. Since May 2017, he has honorably served as the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Transportation. His understanding of law and the inner workings of a federal department will be key to overseeing the day-to-day operations and policies of the entire DOJ.

Importantly for NAPO, he understands that border control, transnational crime and the opioid epidemic impact the work of state and local law enforcement as much as federal law enforcement and that the partnership and support of the DOJ is vital to our efforts to keep our communities and officers safe.

NAPO looks forward to working with Deputy Attorney General Rosen and believes he will be a true partner to state and local law enforcement and will serve our nation well in his new position.

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.