



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE ORGANIZATIONS, INC.**

*Representing America's Finest*

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## **NAPO Victory! Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act Passes Senate**

On December 10, 2015, the Senate passed the Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act (S. 993). This bill, introduced by Senator Al Franken (D-MN), would make our communities safer by improving access to mental health services for people in the criminal justice system who need treatment. This would also help reduce the rates of repeat offenders and increase safety for law enforcement officers. NAPO has worked hard to get this important bill passed the Senate and we are thrilled to report this victory to our members.

With decreasing mental health supports and services, an increasing number of people with mental illnesses are coming into contact with the criminal justice system, which puts incredible strain on the system as well as public safety, state and local budgets, and people's lives. Throughout the criminal justice system, people with mental illnesses are overrepresented—in contact with law enforcement, in the courts, in jails and prisons, and in parole and probation caseloads across the country. According to a U.S. Department of Justice report, approximately 45 percent of people in federal prisons, 56 percent of people in state prisons, and 64 percent of people in jails displayed symptoms of a mental health condition.

The Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act would improve outcomes for the criminal justice system, the mental health system, and for those with mental health conditions by doing the following, among other things:

- Extending the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act (MIOTCRA), and continuing support for mental health courts and crisis intervention teams;
- Authorizing investments in veterans treatment courts, which serve arrested veterans who suffer from PTSD, substance addiction, and other mental health conditions;
- Supporting state and local efforts to identify people with mental health conditions at each point in the criminal justice system in order to appropriately direct them to mental health services;
- Increasing focus on corrections-based programs, such as transitional services that reduce recidivism rates and screening practices that identify inmates with mental health conditions;
- Supporting the development of curricula for police academies and orientations; and
- Developing programs to train federal law enforcement officers in how to respond appropriately to incidents involving a person with a mental health condition.

NAPO has spent countless hours meeting and talking with staffers for key members of the Senate to garner support for this bill. We are thrilled that our efforts were successful, and we are now turning our efforts to get this important bill passed by the House.

If you have any questions about the Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act, please contact Andy Edmiston at [aedmiston@napo.org](mailto:aedmiston@napo.org).