



# The Washington Report

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

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March 26, 2020

## Congress Passes Major Stimulus Bill in Response to COVID-19

Today, by a vote of 96-0, the Senate passed a massive \$2 trillion stimulus package (S. 3548) to help in the fight against the coronavirus at the federal, state and local levels and boost the economy. In addition to billions of dollars in funding to aid hospitals, businesses and bolster state unemployment benefits, the stimulus includes much needed funding for federal, state and local first responders:

- \$850 million through the Department of Justice's Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne-JAG) Program to assist state, local, and tribal officers in responding to coronavirus. These funds will go directly to state and local governments, *with no match required*, and will support criminal justice needs related to coronavirus, including overtime for state, local, and tribal officers; personal protective equipment (PPE) and supplies; and medical needs and other supplies for inmates in state, local, and tribal prisons, jails, and detention centers. The funding would not be subject to DOJ "sanctuary city" rules, so every state and locality is eligible whether or not they fully cooperate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Current Byrne-JAG grantees will not have to apply for a new grant to receive additional funding from this supplemental amount. Non-grantees can ask their state's Byrne-JAG grantee to request and repurpose funding for their needs. Byrne-JAG funding goes through the state.

- \$45 billion for FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund. The bill specifies that PPE is a reimbursable cost for states.
- \$178 million for FEMA for the purchase of PPE and sanitization materials for front line workers and first responders.
- \$150 billion to assist states, tribes and localities cover new expenses related to the coronavirus.

The stimulus package also includes direct payments to individuals: \$1,200 plus \$500 per child for individuals making up to \$75,000 and \$2,400 for married couples who file jointly making up to \$150,000. The payments start to phase out after those thresholds and individuals making over \$99,000 and couples making \$198,000 will not receive any payments. The payments are not expected to reach individuals and households until May.

The House is expected to pass the stimulus package by voice vote on Friday (March 27) and the President said he will sign it immediately. There is already talk of another stimulus to bolster the economy down the road. The Senate has adjourned through April 20 but will remain flexible if they need to come back to continue to address the economic fallout of the coronavirus.

NAPO has heard from members across the country that their officers do not have access to adequate PPE or any PPE at all. We have been and will continue to advise our member groups every time we learn of new or potential availability of PPE in an effort to make certain all of our front-line officers are able to protect themselves and stay healthy. We cannot protect the public safety if officers continue to get sick with the coronavirus and we no longer have enough officers to serve our communities.

## **NAPO in the News: Coronavirus Edition**

On March 19, 2020, NAPO Executive Director Bill Johnson was quoted in a *Washington Times* article entitled, “Police Groups Slam Efforts to Mass Release Low-Level Offenders to Fight Virus”. Many liberal cities and states are considering – and some have already begun – releasing low-level offenders from their jails and correctional facilities to prevent an outbreak of the coronavirus. Since the coronavirus pandemic began, 600 inmates were released early in Los Angeles County and more than 200 were released in Cleveland, Ohio. New York City Mayor Bill De Blasio authorized the release of inmates over the age of 70 with certain pre-existing conditions. Baltimore City State’s Attorney Marilyn Mosby is urging Maryland Governor Larry Hogan to approve the release of all prisoners age 60 and older or who have weakened immune systems and have less than 5 years left in their prison sentence. All of this is being done in the name of curbing the spread of the coronavirus.

In response to the mass release of certain non-violent inmates, Johnson responded, “the idea of releasing individuals, who by definition are not safe to be among the public, in the name of improving public welfare is nonsensical.” He continued by arguing that keeping low-level offenders incarcerated and off the streets frees the police to focus on violent crimes, particularly when police resources are already being stressed due to the coronavirus.

Johnson pointed to New York City’s approach to policing under the administration of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, in which police did not ignore lesser offenses, creating an atmosphere that prevented more serious crime. “New York City is a great example where you used to have the ‘broken windows’ model of policing where you went after the low-level stuff and improved the overall quality of life for the entire city.”

The full article can be viewed here: <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/mar/19/police-groups-slam-efforts-to-mass-release-low-lev/>

Several other news outlets picked up Johnson’s comments regarding the early release of inmates to decrease the chance of a coronavirus outbreak in jails and correctional facilities:

*The Crime Report*, March 23,2020: “Virus-Related Prisoner Releases Could ‘Get Out of Control,’ Warns Barr”

<https://thecrimereport.org/2020/03/23/virus-related-prisoner-releases-could-be-dangerous-police-warn/>

This article refers to Attorney General William Barr’s interview with the Wall Street Journal in which echoes the concerns of NAPO that the release of state and county inmates to protect them from the coronavirus will lead to an increase in crime in our nation’s communities.

*International Business Times*, March 24, 2020: “Baltimore State’s Attorney Wants Prisoners Over 60 Released to Avoid COVID-19”

<https://www.ibtimes.com/baltimore-states-attorney-wants-prisoners-over-60-released-avoid-covid-19-2945619>

*The Washington Examiner*, March 21, 2020: “Police Groups Slam Cities and States Releasing Jail Inmates to Mitigate Coronavirus Fears”

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/police-groups-slam-cities-and-states-releasing-jail-inmates-to-mitigate-coronavirus-fears>

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On March 20, 2020, Johnson was interviewed for a story by *Fox Business* entitled, “Social Distancing to Prevent Coronavirus is Difficult in these Professions”. The article focused on front-line workers like first responders, doctors, nurses, and retail employees who work in essential services such as hospitals, grocery stores and pharmacies and the difficulty of ensuring they are protected as they continue to interact with the public.

Police Departments across the nation are starting to tailor policing practices in an attempt to lower officers’ interaction with the public, maintain public safety and keep officers safe and healthy. However, there is only so much social distancing officers can do when it comes to protecting our communities.

“We recognize that crime, unfortunately, is not going to go away during this pandemic, and that this virus represents an actual threat to health and safety, on top of the more common risks of law enforcement in America,” Johnson said. ‘Our officers will nonetheless continue to serve and protect their communities, period.’

“NAPO represents more than 241,000 law enforcement officers from more than a thousand police agencies. The organization has been providing CDC-based guidance on best measures, the use of personal protective equipment and sources of funding from the departments of Homeland Security and Justice and FEMA to address the costs of responding to the virus.

“Johnson said NAPO has also shared ‘guidance on how the employment laws, contracts and agreements under which many officers work may be addressed or adjusted because of the pandemic.

“Our bottom-line goal is that the men and women whom we represent, and their families, stay as safe and healthy as possible under the circumstances,’ he added.”

The full article can be viewed here: <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/social-distancing-prevent-coronavirus-difficult-205610491.html>

NAPO will continue to ensure our members’ voices are heard loud and clear on the Hill, with the Administration, and in the media. If you have any questions about the publication cited above, please contact Bill Johnson at: [bjohnson@napo.org](mailto:bjohnson@napo.org).

## **NAPO Urges Congress to Repeal GPO & WEP as Part of Coronavirus Response**

NAPO is urging Senate and House Leadership to include the repeal of the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) in the emergency stimulus or supplemental appropriations legislation that Congress is currently negotiating in response to the impact of COVID-19 on our nation's health and financial security.

With the continued spread of the coronavirus, seniors and retirees are the most vulnerable population, both in regard to their health and retirement. The swift downturn of the stock market has no doubt impacted their retirement security and they need as much financial support as possible. This support can come swiftly in the form of increased Social Security benefits from a repeal of the GPO and WEP.

NAPO feels strongly that this is the time to repeal the GPO and WEP and ensure the retirement security of millions of Americans. While the stimulus package that Congress just passed did not include the repeal, Congressional leadership is already considering another bill to help the economy. We will continue to press lawmakers to include it in the next stimulus legislation.

View NAPO's letters to [House Leadership](#) and [Senate Leadership](#). Please join our efforts and urge your Senator and Representative(s) to support the repeal of the GPO and WEP as an important part of Congress's response to this crisis.

## **NAPO Postpones 27<sup>th</sup> Annual TOP COPS Awards; Annual Lobby Day and Legislative Luncheon Canceled**

In light of the current restrictions regarding the coronavirus put in place by the State of Maryland, the Washington, D.C. government, the President's Coronavirus Task Force, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), we have made the difficult decision to postpone the 2020 TOP COPS Awards® Dinner until later this year. Further, our Annual Lobby Day and Legislative Luncheon that was to be held on May 13, has been canceled.

Please know it is extremely important to us both as individuals and as an organization that we honor the men and women who were nominated by their peers and selected as this year's TOP COPS. At this time, we are diligently working to reschedule the TOP COP Awards® Dinner for the fall of 2020. Please check our [website](#) for updates throughout the spring.

Please also be aware that many National Police Week events have been postponed or canceled including the Candlelight Vigil and the Blue Mass.

If you have any questions, please contact NAPO at (703) 549-0775.

*If you have any questions about the issues or legislation discussed in this issue of the Washington Report, contact Andy Edmiston at [aedmiston@napo.org](mailto:aedmiston@napo.org) or (703) 549-0775. 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.*