



# The Washington Report

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

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May 20, 2022

## **NAPO Victory! House Passes TBI & PTSD Law Enforcement Training Act**

In another National Police Week victory for NAPO and the law enforcement community, the House passed the bipartisan TBI and PTSD Law Enforcement Training Act (H.R. 2992) by an overwhelming vote of 400-21. This important bill, sponsored by Representatives Bill Pascrell Jr. (D-NJ), John Rutherford (R-FL), Val Demings (D-FL) and Don Bacon (R-NE), would provide for much-needed additional training opportunities for law enforcement to improve officer response to persons affected by traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 2.87 million TBI-related emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and deaths occurred in the United States in 2014. Approximately, 7 percent of Americans will experience PTSD in their lifetime.

Law enforcement officers are increasingly on the front lines in responding to and intervening in mental and behavioral health crises, including individuals with TBI or PTSD. Officers must be given the tools and training they need to identify and respond to mental health issues in the communities they serve. For these reasons, NAPO strongly supports federal funding and programs to help agencies train their officers to recognize and identify symptoms of TBI and PTSD so they can better respond to these situations. The TBI and PTSD Law Enforcement Training Act would make training and guidance available that departments can use as a basis to support improved responses and outcomes to interactions between police officers and persons affected by TBI and PTSD.

Importantly, this legislation also recognizes that law enforcement and first responders are among those in our communities who suffer from these afflictions and requires the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to do a study on the prevalence TBI and PTSD in the profession.

## **NAPO Victory! House Passes Bill to Cover PTSD Under the PSOB Program**

In a significant victory for NAPO and public safety officers across the country, the House passed the Public Safety Officer Support Act (H.R. 6943) by a significant bipartisan vote of 402-17. This legislation, sponsored by Representatives David Trone (D-MD) and Guy Reschenthaler (R-PA), would make post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) a line of duty injury under the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB)

Program and ensure that officers who suffer from PTSD and those who take or attempt to take their own life as a result of on-duty trauma will be eligible under the program. The bill would also cover officers who die by trauma-linked suicide by directing the PSOB Program to presume that suicides are a result of job duties in certain circumstances, such as a mass casualty event, where there is evidence that PTSD would be a cause of the trauma.

In most instances, an officer's survivor health care, pension benefits and life insurance become null and void if a public safety officer's death is ruled a suicide, which makes the PSOB benefit so important. This bill would alleviate the financial strains that surviving families of such tragedies often suffer due to the loss of all other benefits.

There is no doubt that the everyday stresses and strains of the job as well as the often horrific nature of the crimes officers witness lead to PTSD and acute stress disorder. It is only recently that departments are working to address the mental health needs of their officers and even now, not every officer has access to reliable, confidential mental health and wellness services. While we hope we will get to a place where PTSD and similar mental health disorders are addressed before officers reach the point where they feel suicide is their only option, we are not there yet. More officers die from suicide than they do from homicides, which is a tragic fact.

As we have so far largely failed to provide officers with the mental health services necessary to protect their mental wellbeing, it is only right that we make certain their families are taken care of after such a terrible loss.

The Senate Judiciary Committee is expected to mark up the Senate version, S. 3635, sponsored by Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and John Cornyn (R-TX), on May 26. NAPO is lobbying Committee Members and strongly urging them to support moving this important bill forward.

## **Senate Judiciary Approves NAPO Police Week Priorities**

On May 19, the Senate Judiciary Committee marked up and unanimously approved a slate of bills supported by NAPO and the law enforcement community. The bipartisan approval of S. 4007, Fighting Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Act of 2022; S. 4003, Law Enforcement De-Escalation Training Act of 2022; S. 3860, Invest to Protect Act of 2022; and S. 2151, Strong Communities Act is a strong win for NAPO.

The **Fighting PTSD Act**, sponsored by Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA), recognizes the prevalence of PTSD within the public safety profession and the need to address PTSD and acute stress disorder among officers to make certain they get the treatment and help they need. This legislation provides for data collection that is an important first step to giving all officers access to confidential, state-of-the-art treatments for PTSD and acute stress disorder. By acknowledging the instances of these disorders within the profession and guaranteeing treatments and resource are widely available, we can work to ensure that suicide will no longer be one of the top killers of public safety officers.

The **Law Enforcement De-Escalation Training Act**, sponsored by Senators John Cornyn (R-TX) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), would provide training curricula and funding to state and local law enforcement for training, including train-the-trainer models, on alternatives to use of force, de-escalation, and responding to mental and behavioral health and suicidal crises. NAPO worked closely with the Senators on this legislation to ensure that rank-and-file officers and their representatives are at the table in

developing the curricula in training topics or identifying current curricula and best practices in training on these issues.

The **Invest to Protect Act**, sponsored by Senators Catherine Cortez Masto and Charles Grassley (R-IA), would dedicate \$50 million in funding from the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office specifically for small state, local, or tribal law enforcement agencies, defined as those employing fewer than 200 officers, to help them train their officers, implement or expand body-worn camera (BWC) programs, provide mental health resources for their officers, and retain and hire officers.

Regarding the BWC programs, the Invest to Protect Act does leave it up to the DOJ to determine if agency policy meets national best practices. Importantly, [national best practices](#) currently include allowing officers to view footage prior to making a statement and the DOJ has supported that practice. However, in the field, we have found that the Department is not following this best practice, which it helped published, and is advocating for law enforcement agencies and localities to prohibit allowing officers the right to review footage prior to making a statement. NAPO will continue to work with the DOJ to ensure it continues to recognize this as a best practice consistently across the country and does not undermine the policies it helped put in place.

The **Strong Communities Act**, sponsored by Senator Gary Peters (D-MI), would allow for COPS Hiring Program funds to be used to pay for local law enforcement recruits to attend schools or academies if the recruits agree to serve in the communities in which they live.

NAPO worked closely with the sponsors of the bills, Committee staff, and our national law enforcement partners, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association (FLEOA), Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCCA), Major County Sheriffs of America (MCSA), National District Attorneys Association (NDAA), and National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) to move these bills forward. NAPO thanks Chairman Richard Durbin (D-IL), Ranking Member Grassley (R-IA), and the bill sponsors for their support and leadership and we look forward to working with them to pass these bills in the Senate.

## **Senate Judiciary Approves Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program**

In a win for NAPO and the criminal justice community, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration (JMHC) Reauthorization Act (S. 3846) on May 12. The JMHC Reauthorization Act is a bipartisan bill sponsored by Senators John Cornyn (R-TX) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), together with their colleagues Senators Jerry Moran (R-KS), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Thom Tillis (R-NC), Richard Durbin (D-IL), Charles Grassley (R-IA), Susan Collins (R-ME), and Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV).

NAPO is a long-time supporter of the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program (JMHC), which grew out of the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act (MIOTCRA), and worked closely with Senator Cornyn and stakeholder organizations on this reauthorization bill. It is a top priority for us, as it supports crisis intervention teams and training programs for law enforcement and corrections personnel to identify and respond to incidents involving individuals with mental health conditions.

The JMHC Reauthorization Act reauthorizes the program for the next five years at \$50 million annually and improves upon it by strengthening support for crisis intervention teams and co-responder teams as well

as by clarifying that such teams can be placed in 911 call centers. It also supports the integration of the new National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 988 – into the 911 system.

The JMHCP must be reauthorized to ensure law enforcement continues to have access to these vital resources and training programs. We thank Senators Cornyn and Klobuchar for their steadfast support and leadership on this issue and look forward to working with them to pass this important bill through the Senate.

## **Senate Passes Resolution Recognizing National Police Week**

This National Police Week, we acknowledge the bravery, valor and sacrifice of the men and women in law enforcement. The names of 619 officers who paid the ultimate sacrifice in service to their communities were added to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, D.C. this year.

There has never been a more challenging time in our nation's history for law enforcement officers. This past year, officers have been working in an untenable environment. They have been essential workers in the coronavirus pandemic, putting their health at risk to serve and protect their communities. They have been working double shifts and overtime on the front lines as cities and towns across the nation experience a significant increase in violent crime. They have been doing all this in the face of hatred for the uniform they wear, for the laws they are bound by duty to enforce. As a nation, we must take this opportunity to recognize the men and women who serve their communities as law enforcement officers as a valued and integral part of protecting and enhancing the health, safety and welfare of our towns, cities, and states.

The Senate, led by Senators Charles Grassley (R-IA) and Richard Durbin (D-IL), chose to join us in supporting and recognizing our nation's law enforcement officers and unanimously adopted a resolution marking National Police Week on May 18. Senators Grassley and Durbin were joined by 84 of their Senate colleagues who cosponsored the resolution. It honors the 576 law enforcement officers who were killed in the line of duty in 2021, including the nearly 400 who died from COVID-19, as well as the 92 lost to date in 2022.

We thank Senator Grassley and Durbin for leading this effort and for choosing to acknowledge the bravery and sacrifice federal, state, local and tribal officers have shown in service to their country and communities of the past year.

## **Senate Introduces NAPO-Backed Bill to Give Small, Rural Departments Greater Access to COPS Funding**

Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC), together with Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), and Chris Coons (D-DE), introduced the NAPO supported COPS on the Beat Grant Program Reauthorization and Parity Act, S. 4287. This legislation would reauthorize the COPS Grant program, expands the grant program to allow rural, low-income communities to use COPS Hiring Program (CHP) grant funding to increase law enforcement wages, and removes the preference for agencies that can afford a higher match than required. The bill would also provide for a lower match for qualifying lower-income rural communities that gradually increases over time to ensure these departments can participate in the CHP grant program. The COPS Program provides invaluable resources, training, and technical assistance to state and local law enforcement agencies, helping to keep our communities safe. However, small and rural agencies across the country find themselves getting left behind due to their size

and lack of resources. The COPS on the Beat Grant Program Reauthorization and Parity Act levels the playing field for small and rural law enforcement agencies and ensures greater access to departments in lower-income communities that otherwise would not be able to afford to participate in the grant program.

NAPO worked tirelessly with members of Congress and the Administration to enact the COPS Program in 1994. We similarly worked closely with Senator Graham and the bill's House sponsors, Representatives Tom Rice (R-SC) and Abigail Spanberger (D-VA) to ensure this reauthorization continued and enhanced the original intent of the COPS Program to support law enforcement agencies large and small, urban and rural hire and retain community police officers. We thank Senator Graham and Representatives Rice and Spanberger for their leadership and we look forward to working with them to ensure all law enforcement agencies have the support and resources necessary to serve and protect our communities.

***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.***