



The Washington Report

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

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HALT Fentanyl Act Passes House

In a victory for NAPPO, the House passed the Halt All Lethal Trafficking of (HALT) Fentanyl Act (H.R. 27) by a vote of 312-108 on February 6. This bill is a NAPPO priority as it would make permanent the current classwide scheduling of all fentanyl-related substances as Schedule 1 drugs under the Controlled Substances Act, giving law enforcement the tools and resources necessary to combat and deter fentanyl in our nation's communities.

The spread of fentanyl in our communities is devastating. It is being mixed with already deadly illicit drugs, hidden in counterfeit drugs, and being peddled at alarmingly high rates to our nation's youth. 5 out of 10 counterfeit prescription drugs seized by law enforcement in 2024 were laced with a deadly dose of fentanyl. Fentanyl is now the drug most associated with overdoses in the United States. The amount of fentanyl the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) seized in 2024 – nearly 8,000 pounds of fentanyl – represents over 367 million deadly doses.

The Senate Judiciary Committee began its markup of the Senate version of the bill (S. 331), sponsored by Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA) on February 20, and will continue consideration and final markup of the bill on February 27. NAPPO sent **a letter** to the Committee urging swift consideration of the bill and requesting every member of the Committee vote to advance the bill without amendment to the full Senate for consideration.

NAPPO has long fought for resources to support law enforcement's efforts to combat fentanyl, its analogues, and similar opioids and the permanent scheduling of fentanyl-related substances as Schedule 1 drugs is essential to those efforts.

Senate Confirms Kash Patel as FBI Director

The Senate confirmed Kash Patel to be the next Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) by a vote of 51-49 on February 20. NAPPO supported Mr. Patel's nomination as we believe his distinguished career in public service gives him a unique perspective that will only benefit him as FBI Director. From being a public defender to a federal prosecutor to his extensive experience in the realm of counterintelligence, he intimately understands the various aspects of the FBI's broad mission to keep our nation safe.

Throughout his career, Mr. Patel has a proven history of working well with all different components of law enforcement, specifically, from our point of view, with state and local law enforcement agencies and officers. In a conversation with NAPO's leadership, he indicated his commitment to repairing and maintaining an excellent and open line of communication, which will be vital to ensuring that federal, state, and local law enforcement have a strong partnership and work together effectively.

We look forward to working with Director Patel in the fight to keep our communities safe.

Senate Passes Bill to Criminalize Deepfake Explicit Images

The Senate passed the NAPO-backed TAKE IT DOWN Act, sponsored by Senators Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), by voice vote on February 13. This bill would establish federal liability for those who generate and distribute deepfake intimate and explicit images, giving law enforcement needed tools to bring justice to the victims of these crimes.

In a world where generative AI is increasingly being used to create deepfakes, it is vital that federal laws be updated to protect individuals against the creation and nonconsensual sharing of these images. These deepfake images, which disproportionately target women and minors, must be recognized as the severe privacy violations that they are.

Congresswomen Maria Elvira Salazar (R-FL) and Madeleine Dean (D-PA) are the sponsors of the House version, H.R. 633. NAPO looks forward to working with Congresswomen Salazar and Dean to move this bill through the House.

LEOSA Reform Act Reintroduced

Senator John Kennedy (R-LA) reintroduced the LEOSA Reform Act, a top priority for NAPO. We are proud to have worked with members of Congress to enact the Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act (LEOSA) in 2004 to allow well-qualified off-duty and retired officers to carry their firearms for the protection of themselves, their families and our nation's communities. However, today, qualified off-duty, and retired officers continue to encounter unnecessary roadblocks when exercising their legal right to carry a firearm.

The LEOSA Reform Act would address specific issues that well-qualified active and retired law enforcement officers are facing when exercising their right to protect themselves and others under the law. This important bill would expand the areas qualified current or retired officers are allowed to carry a firearm, including on a Gun Free School Zone; on state, local and private property otherwise open to the public; and in certain federal facilities, amongst other provisions. Importantly, it will reform qualifications standards to alleviate undue burdens for those carrying under LEOSA.

With the rise in targeted violence against law enforcement officers and violent crimes in our communities, allowing all qualified officers and retirees, who have sworn to serve and protect our communities, to be armed in accordance with LEOSA would allow them to respond more efficiently and effectively in emergencies for the safety of themselves and those around them. The LEOSA Reform Act will go a long way to ensuring all qualified off-duty and retired officers across the country can legally carry their firearm under the law.

The LEOSA Reform Act passed the House last year and we look forward to building on that momentum to get this important bill across the finish line this Congress.

NAPO Priority Legislation on Public Safety Collective Bargaining to be Reintroduced

Representative Pete Stauber (R-MN) is reintroducing NAPO priority legislation, the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act. This important legislation would 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. It will provide a framework for such discussions, while respecting the right and flexibility of states to write their own laws for public sector workers. This legislation will not overturn current collective bargaining laws – it will only provide basic collective bargaining rights to those who currently do not have them.

The Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act would allow law enforcement officers to have a say in their own working conditions to better serve and protect their families and the public. Most importantly, it will allow public safety officers to secure the necessary protections that will permit them to walk unselfishly into the line of fire to save the lives of our fellow citizens.

The public safety is best protected through effective partnerships between first responders on the front lines and the agencies that employ them. NAPO has been fighting for this bill for over 20 years, and we will continue to press for its passage until all law enforcement officers are granted the basic American rights of collective bargaining for fair compensation and safer working conditions. We thank Representative Stauber for his long-standing support of the law enforcement community and for championing this important issue.

First Responders Wellness Act Reintroduced

NAPO continues our support for the First Responders Wellness Act, which was reintroduced by Senators Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Josh Hawley (R-MO). NAPO worked closely with Senator Gillibrand's staff in developing this bill, which will help ensure state and local law enforcement have access to culturally competent mental health and wellness services necessary for their wellbeing and that of their families.

The First Responders Wellness Act establishes a national First Responders Mental Health Hotline that is intended to bridge the gap between existing regional hotlines dedicated to first responders, such as COP2COP, as well as augment international hotlines like COPLINE. The national hotline will provide mental and behavioral health and substance use disorder services to first responders and their families. Under the bill, the hotline must be staffed by a culturally competent, trained peer specialist or mental health provider, provide voice and text options 24/7, and provide referral services.

This bill is the next significant step in federal investment in mental health and wellness services for our nation's law enforcement officers. The First Responders Wellness Act recognizes the stress factors of the job and gives officers and their families additional resources to address their emotional and mental health. NAPO thanks Senators Gillibrand and Hawley for their leadership and we look forward to working with them to pass this important bill.

Bill Reauthorizing Officer Mental Health Grant Reintroduced

Senators Josh Hawley (R-MO) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) reintroduced the Reauthorizing Support and Treatment for Officers in Crisis (STOIC) Act. This important bill will reauthorize the Supporting and Treating Officers in Crisis (STOIC) Act, which provides essential grant funding for law enforcement support services, including the establishment of suicide-prevention programs and mental health services and supports for law enforcement officers and their families. NAPO proudly supported the enactment of the STOIC Act in 2019.

According to Blue H.E.L.P., 144 current or active-duty officers died by suicide in 2024. In 2023, there were 168 officer suicides. 16 officers have taken their own lives so far this year. These are just the numbers that are reported and tracked. Additionally, according to the National Study of Police Suicides, officers are 2.5 times more likely to die from suicides than from homicides, a 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. The reauthorization of this important program will help ensure important support services are available for officers and their families.

The STOIC Program and the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act (LEMHWA) Program are housed within the Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) and are currently funded at a combined \$10 million for Fiscal 2025.

NAPO Calls on President Trump to Close De Minimis Loophole

NAPO supported the Coalition to Close the De Minimis Loophole and Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) in a press conference on February 11 calling on President Trump to use his executive authority to immediately close the *de minimis* loophole for all commercial packages coming from any country to the United States. We also signed on to a **Coalition letter to the President**, following up on our **January 13 letter**, making this request.

We thank the President for recognizing the role that the *de minimis* trade loophole plays in enabling the deadly flow of fentanyl and other illicit goods in our country. Among the first steps of his Administration was the Executive Order on America First Trade Policy, which took actions to strip Chinese commercial shipments of duty-free *de minimis* treatment.

We are calling for executive action to permanently end commercial *de minimis* shipments from all countries to prevent smuggling under *de minimis* from simply shifting from China to another country. We also believe that there needs to be greater accountability and increased penalties to help ensure that no packages are able to skirt the law.

Swiftly closing the *de minimis* loophole is the most efficient and effective way to shut the door on a major pathway for fentanyl and related drugs into the country and our communities. We look forward to

working with President Trump and his Administration to fight the scourge of fentanyl in our communities from every angle, including by closing the *de minimis* loophole.

Bill to Protect Public Safety Officers' Free Speech Reintroduced

NAPO once again pledged our strong support for the Public Safety Free Speech Act (H.R. 1443), reintroduced by Congressmen Jeff Van Drew (R-NJ) and Steve Cohen (D-TN). This bill would protect the First Amendment rights of public safety officers, including law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical services (EMS) personnel. It would guarantee that public safety officers will not be disciplined for making oral or written statements while off-duty about their personal opinions on job-related issues, including, but not limited to staffing, wages, and working conditions, as well as political and religious opinions.

Too often, law enforcement officers are subjected to the whim of their departments or local politics and penalized for opinions voiced while they were off duty. Under this legislation, a public safety officer may bring legal action against their employer if the employer terminates or brings any adverse employment action against the officer for expressing opinions protected by this bill.

NAPO thanks Congressmen Van Drew and Cohen for supporting the first amendment rights of our nation's public safety officers.

NAPO-Backed Bill to Protect Victims of Sexploitation Reintroduced

NAPO once again endorsed the SHIELD Act (S. 516), sponsored by Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and John Cornyn (R-TX). In a world where smart phones and devices are used to record and transmit every moment in life, it is becoming increasingly important to protect against malicious sharing of private, explicit images. These online privacy violations exponentially and disproportionately target women and minors.

The SHIELD Act would narrowly establish federal criminal liability for individuals who share private, explicit images without consent. While more than 40 states have enacted statutes in this area, federal intervention is necessary to provide complete and consistent coverage across state lines. We look forward to working with Senators Klobuchar and Cornyn to pass this important legislation.

NAPO Backs Bill to Criminalize Fleeing Law Enforcement at U.S. Border

On February 13, the House passed H.R. 35, the Agent Raul Gonzalez Officer Safety Act, by a vote of 264-155. This bill, sponsored by Congressman Juan Ciscomani (R-AZ), would establish a federal criminal penalty for individuals who intentionally evade Border Patrol agents or law enforcement officers assisting Border Patrol while operating a motor vehicle, with escalating penalties when such evasion results in serious bodily injury or death. Additionally, it would make illegal immigrants who flee Border Patrol in a motor vehicle inadmissible to and removable from the country.

The bill is named after Border Patrol Agent Raul Gonzalez, who was killed during a high-speed chase along the border in 2022. Drivers hired to transport illegal aliens and contraband for cartels and human smugglers routinely flee from Customs and Border Patrol officials, creating dangerous and potentially deadly situations for the officers and the communities along the border. State and local law enforcement know too well the dangers of a fleeing vehicle to their officers and their communities. H.R. 35 is an officer and public safety measure, and we thank Congressman Ciscomani for his support for our nation's law enforcement.

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