



The Washington Report

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

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NAPO Victory! House Passes Permanent Reauthorization of 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund

On July 12, in a significant victory for NAPO and law enforcement across the country, the House passed the Never Forget the Heroes: James Zadroga, Ray Pfeifer, and Luis Alvarez Permanent Reauthorization of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund Act (H.R. 1327) by an overwhelming vote of 402-12. Both James Zadroga and Luis Alvarez were NYPD detectives and NAPO members and Ray Pfeifer was a firefighter with the FDNY. All three responded on to the attacks on September 11, 2001 and in the days and months after, and all died from 9/11-related illnesses.

This year will mark the 18th anniversary of the deadliest terrorist attack on our nation's soil. As we remember those who died on September 11, 2001, we also must recognize those we continue to lose as the lasting effects of that day make themselves known. We have lost more federal, state and local law enforcement officers from 9/11-related illnesses over the past 18 years than we lost on September 11, 2001. 9/11 responders and survivors are still battling serious health crises resulting from exposure to the toxins at Ground Zero.

NAPO fought hard for the passage of the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act in 2010 and its reauthorization in 2015 to ensure our nation took care of the victims and first responders who are coping with 9/11-related chronic health conditions. James Zadroga, a New York City Police Department Detective and member of NAPO, died of respiratory disease caused by his exposure to toxic chemicals during rescue and recovery efforts at Ground Zero.

In 2015, Congress, recognizing the importance of these programs, reauthorized the World Trade Center Health Program until 2090 and reauthorized and fully-funded the 9/11 Victims Compensation Fund (VCF) at \$7.3 billion for 5 years. Unfortunately, this has proven to not be enough. Due to the significant increase in claims, the VCF does not have enough funds fully compensate all claims and thus, as of February 25, all pending and newly submitted claims will see their award amount cut by *50 to 70 percent*.

While this announcement by the Special Master is alarming, the Never Forget the Heroes: Permanent Authorization of the September 11th Victims Compensation Fund Act was drafted to address this possibility. There is language in the bill to require the Special Master to pay out the difference between the amount that the claimant would have received if sufficient funding was available at the time the award was calculated and the amount they ultimately received as a result of the reductions. That being said, the VCF award is often a lifeline for survivors and families struggling with loss and we cannot let this bill linger longer just because the families will be made whole eventually. It is imperative that the VCF is permanently reauthorized as soon as possible.

NAPO members are leading lobby days on July 16 and 17 to pressure the Senate to act on the permanent reauthorization of the 9/11 VCF. Majority Leader McConnell has stated that he will act on the House-passed bill

prior to the August recess, which is slated to start August 2. The Senate bill, S. 546, has an astounding 71 cosponsors. We will keep our members updated on the bill's status as we move towards August recess.

NAPO Victory! Congress Passes Supporting and Treating Officers in Crisis (STOIC) Act

In another victory for NAPO, on July 10, the House passed the Supporting and Treating Officers in Crisis (STOIC) Act (S. 998). The Senate passed the STOIC Act during National Police Week, so the bill is on its way to the President's desk to be signed into law. Passage of this bill was a priority for NAPO as it will 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.

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 Representatives Guy Reschenthaler (R-PA) and Madeleine Dean (D-PA) and Senators Josh Hawley (R-MO) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) for their leadership and support on this bill.

House to Vote on Cadillac Tax Repeal July 17

The House plans to vote on the Middle Class Health Benefits Tax Repeal Act (H.R. 748) on July 17. This is an incredible step forward for our efforts to repeal the 40 percent excise tax ("Cadillac Tax") on employer-sponsored health plans. Two-thirds of lawmakers will need to vote for the bill, which will be considered under a floor process that limits debate, for it to pass. The bill has 359 co-sponsors, which is well over the two-thirds necessary.

Representative Joe Courtney (D-CT), the bill's sponsor, filed a motion in May to add the bill to the consensus calendar, which requires that Speaker Pelosi bring the bill up for a vote as-is after 25 legislative days. The consensus calendar is new this Congress and was established in response to rank-and-file members' frustration that legislation with significant, broad bipartisan support could languish in Committee without any action. In order to get on the consensus calendar, the bill must have 290 cosponsors and must not have been reported by the Committee of jurisdiction (in this case, the Ways and Means Committee).

While the bill is more than likely to pass the House due to the large number of cosponsors, the repeal of the "Cadillac Tax" has a \$193 billion 10-year price tag attached to it that will make its passage an uphill battle in the Senate. This price tag is based on the revenue the tax is estimated to bring in through an increase in federal payroll taxes due to employers using the health care savings gained from offering cheaper plans to increase worker wages. NAPO believes this number is highly inaccurate as studies have shown that a majority of employers planning to reduce their plan values have indicated they most likely would not provide a corresponding wage increase.

Further, there is little evidence that employer who have already reduced their plan values have used those savings to provide higher wages. Without wage increases, there is no revenue to lose.

NAPO will keep our members updated on the House's vote on the Middle Class Health Benefits Tax Repeal Act. We stand with and thank Rep. Courtney for his steadfast efforts to repeal the Cadillac Tax. We look forward to seeing it pass the House.

Please Help Sponsor an Event at the NAPO Convention

NAPO's 41st Annual Convention at the Skamania Lodge, in Stevenson, Washington in the Portland, Oregon area is quickly approaching. We are busy planning what is sure to be a fantastic convention. We would like to ask member organizations to please consider contributing \$500 - \$1000 towards the cost of the convention. Signs will be displayed at the events to recognize our generous sponsors. It would be incredibly helpful to NAPO if all of us pitch in as we are able. If your organization would like to help sponsor an event, please return the **attached form** and payment to NAPO by **July 9, 2019**. Thank you in advance for helping to make NAPO's 41st Annual Convention a success!

Sincerely,



Michael McHale, President



Bill Johnson, Executive Director

House Committee Approves Bill to Bolster Multiemployer Pensions

On July 10, the House Ways and Means Committee approved H.R. 397, the Rehabilitation for Multiemployer Pensions Act, by a 25-17 party-line vote. This bill, introduced by House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard Neal (D-MA), would help our fellow workers in the private sector who are facing the nightmare of having their hard-earned pensions possibly taken from them.

NAPO considers protecting and preserving public pension plans one of our top priorities. While we do not support federal interference into state and local public pension plans, which are already subject to substantial regulation and transparency requirements, we believe federal intervention is necessary to boost financially troubled multiemployer private pensions so they do not fail.

Nearly 300 multiemployer plans across the country are in danger of failing, which would impact millions of American workers and retirees who have worked their entire lives earning their pensions. They do not deserve to have their retirements ripped out from underneath them. This would not only impact their lives, but the wellbeing of the community around them.

NAPO supports the Rehabilitation of Multiemployer Pensions Act as way for multiemployer pension plans to remain solvent and ensure that retirees receive 100 percent of their earned benefits. Without the financial assistance provided through this legislation, millions of Americans will find themselves struggling, relying on Social Security and federal and state welfare programs to survive. We believe it is incumbent upon Congress to step up and protect the earned pensions of the millions of retirees and workers in these failing multiemployer pension plans.

We look forward to working with Chairman Neal to move this important bill to the House floor for a vote.

NAPO Supports Law Enforcement Suicide Data Collection Act

NAPO pledged its support for the Law Enforcement Suicide Data Collection Act (H.R. 3735), introduced on July 12 by Representatives Mike Quigley (D-IL), Madeleine Dean (D-PA) and Greg Steube (R-FL). This important bill would require the Department of Justice to establish a program to collect data on law enforcement suicides and attempted suicides.

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. Yet, despite officer suicides being a growing issue of concern, there is no accurate collection of data to help us better understand why they are occurring and how to prevent them.

Through the Law Enforcement Suicide Data Collection Act, the Department of Justice would track officer suicides and attempted suicides as well as the stresses and strains of the job and other factors that might impact officers' mental wellbeing. It is vital that we get a true picture of the crisis and recognize and understand the stress factors that lead to officers committing or attempting to commit suicide so that we can prevent such tragic outcomes.

NAPO looks forward to working with Representatives Quigley, Dean and Steube to pass this important legislation.

House Ways and Means Subcommittee Holds Hearing on SALT Deduction

On June 25, the House Ways and Means Committee Select Revenue Measures Subcommittee held a hearing on "How Recent Limitations to the SALT (State and Local Tax) Deduction Harm Communities, Schools, First Responders, and Housing Values." The hearing looked into the various issues states and localities are facing due to the cap on SALT deductions passed as part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, passed by Congress in December 2017, allows taxpayers to deduct their state and local property, income and sales taxes up to a combined \$10,000 limit. The \$10,000 cap is not indexed to inflation, so it will lose its value over the years. While this is not a total elimination of the state and local tax (SALT) deduction – which NAPO strongly opposed – with the cap, citizens of states with high state and local taxes, such as New York, New Jersey, California and Illinois, may still find themselves on the wrong end of a tax hike.

Law enforcement agencies and departments receive support from the communities they serve, as public safety budgets across the United States are largely drawn from state and local property, sales, and income taxes – essential investments that give our first responders the tools they need to get the job done. The SALT deduction has helped support these vital investments at the state and local level since it was enacted in 1913. With that, first responders in communities throughout our country have known that they could count on the ability of state and local governments to support their work, while having an assurance from the federal government that their own hard-earned income wouldn't be taxed twice. With the cap on the deduction, that is no longer the case. Not only are law enforcement officers facing possibly higher taxes, they are facing a threat to their budgets and resources as communities may no longer be able to sustain the necessary tax levels to fully support public safety.

A majority of the witnesses focused on how the cap on SALT deductions is harming state and local government bottom lines and preventing them from offering necessary services. While a few Republican members of the Committee joined their Democratic colleagues in voicing concerns about the impact of the cap on SALT deductions, most Republican members favor the cap. The cap not only helps pay for the tax cuts, but they believe it is fair because it stops the tax code from “subsidizing high-tax states”.

The Committee majority pushed for the repeal of the cap and some voiced support for suggestions of increasing the cap from the current \$10,000 to \$15,000 or \$20,000. While these proposals were discussed in length, it is unlikely they will go anywhere as Senate Finance Committee Chairman Charles Grassley has stated he will not consider any changes to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

NAPO opposes the cap on SALT deductions, and we support legislation such as the SALT Deductibility Act (H.R. 188) that would repeal the cap. NAPO thanks the Chairman Neal for holding a hearing on this important issue and we will continue to work with members of the House to move repeal of the cap forward.

NAPO in the News

On July 1, 2019, NAPO Executive Director Bill Johnson was interviewed by *USA Today* for an article entitled “Axon body-camera supplier will not use facial recognition in its products – for now”. The article focused on Axon’s announcement that it will no longer sell facial-recognition technology with its products after the company’s ethics board concluded the technology was not accurate enough to be used in the field.

There is a lot of criticism and misunderstanding of law enforcement’s use of facial-recognition technology, with some states and localities banning its use outright. The underlying assumption is that law enforcement will abuse the technology and infringe on individual’s civil rights and that the use of the technology will lead to a greater persecution of minority rights.

In response, Johnson compares facial-recognition software to when law enforcement started using DNA testing as an investigative tool. “There was a lot of concern as well about ‘the government is going to have my DNA, they’re going to know all about me, how is this going to be used?’ and I think today those fears have generally gone by the wayside.”

Johnson went on to say that facial-recognition technology can be used much like DNA testing, to confirm identities, solve crimes and exonerate the innocent. “I don’t think it’s providing the government any more identification (information) than they already have. I think if people are concerned about surveillance, they’ve kind of missed the boat.”

The full article can be viewed [here](#).

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.

NAPO’s Latest Legislative Positions & Sponsor/Cosponsor Updates

NAPO’s updated “Sponsor/Cosponsor” spreadsheet is available at the following link: <http://www.napo.org/washington-report/sponsor-cosponsor-spreadsheet/>. The spreadsheet accompanies the latest “Legislative Positions” document, which is available at the following link: <http://www.napo.org/washington->

[report/legislative-priorities/](#). NAPO's Legislative Positions is a document that highlights all the legislation that we have taken an official position on or are monitoring during the 116th Congress. It is continually updated to reflect the work we are doing on Capitol Hill.

The “Sponsor/Cosponsor” spreadsheet is a useful tool to check if your members of Congress have supported pieces of legislation that will impact our members. NAPO updates this spreadsheet regularly and continues to ensure our voice is heard on Capitol Hill.

If you have any questions about any of the legislation that NAPO is currently working, please contact Andy Edmiston at: aedmiston@napo.org.

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 or (703) 549-0775. 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.