



# The Washington Report

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

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May 17, 2024

## **NAPO Victory! Recruit & Retain Act Heads to President's Desk**

In honor of National Police Week, the House passed the Recruit and Retain Act, S. 546, with a strong bipartisan [370 – 18 vote](#), sending it to the President's desk to be signed into law. The bill passed the Senate back in July 2023. NAPO worked closely with Senator Deb Fischer (R-NE) in drafting this important bill and we are thankful to her and the House sponsor, Congressman Wesley Hunt (R-TX), for their leadership and efforts to move the Recruit and Retain Act through Committee, both chambers of Congress, and now to the President's desk.

Law Enforcement agencies across the country serving urban, rural, big, and small communities are struggling to enlist qualified candidates to help alleviate staffing shortages. A 2019 survey from the International Association of Chiefs of Police on the recruitment and retention of law enforcement officers shows 78% of agencies are having difficulty recruiting qualified candidates, 65% are having too few candidates applying, and 75% are stating that recruiting is more difficult today than it was five years ago. 25% of responding agencies have eliminated agency services, units, and positions because of staffing difficulties. These issues have only been exacerbated since 2019.

The Recruit and Retain Act will boost recruitment opportunities for state and local law enforcement agencies by expanding the Department of Justice's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Program to help agencies that are both understaffed and struggling to attract new applicants:

- It will allow law enforcement agencies experiencing recruitment difficulties to use COPS Hiring funds to help reduce or pay for application-related fees, such as background checks, psychological evaluations, and testing, which have proved to be obstacles for candidates.
- It will allow for COPS Hiring funds to be used to help law enforcement agencies establish a Pipeline Partnership with primary schools, secondary schools, community colleges, and universities to cultivate relationships that are designed to increase recruitment and interest in the profession.

Through these important changes to the COPS Program, the Recruit and Retain Act will help remove financial obstacles to the law enforcement application process and aid in the recruitment of community police officers through the creation of a Pipeline Partnership Program. It also takes steps towards understanding how the profession found itself in this recruitment and retention crisis so we can get the tools and support we need to reverse it. The Recruit and Retain Act will play a vital role in helping states and localities hire and retain community police officers to ensure they can protect and serve America's communities efficiently and effectively.

## **In a Big Win for NAPO, House Passes LEOSA Reform**

In a significant victory for NAPO, the House passed the LEOSA Reform Act, H.R. 354, with a bipartisan vote of 221-185 on May 16.

NAPO is 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. Since its enactment, we have pushed for and supported several amendments to improve the law to ensure that it is easily, fairly, and broadly implemented across the country. However, today, qualified off-duty, and retired officers continue to encounter unnecessary roadblocks when exercising their legal right to carry a firearm.

We worked with Congressman Don Bacon (R-NE) to introduce the LEOSA Reform Act in the 116th Congress to 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. The 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. It will allow qualified officers and retired officers to carry an ammunition magazine of any capacity that is not prohibited by federal law. 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.

NAPO thanks Congressman Bacon for his steadfast support and tireless efforts to get this legislation across the finish line in the House. We now turn to the Senate, where we will work with the Senate sponsor, Senator John Kennedy (R-LA), to move the bill through that chamber.

## **NAPO Victory! House Passes Bill to Require DOJ to Track Violent Assaults on Officers**

On May 15, the House passed the Improving Law Enforcement Officer Safety and Wellness Through Data Act (H.R. 7581), sponsored by Congressman Dan Bishop (R-NC), by an overwhelming bipartisan [vote of 356 - 55](#). NAPO supports this bill as it would build on existing reporting requirements and fill data gaps to increase our understanding of the circumstances precipitating and involving ambush-style attacks against law enforcement.

Assaults on law enforcement have increased dramatically. NAPO has long advocated that data must be collected on the actual and threatened use of force against officers, and not only in situations involving firearms, to get the greater picture of the threat our officers face. Physical assaults on officers occur daily across the country and they are not treated as the serious crimes that they are.

The Improving Law Enforcement Officer Safety and Wellness Through Data Act also requires a report on the stresses and mental health toll these assaults have on officers and the extent to which mental health and wellness programs provided are meeting the needs of officers. This bill will be an important first step to

ensuring we are collecting the data necessary to fully understand assaults against officers and getting agencies the support and resources necessary to protect the health and safety of the men and women who so valiantly serve and protect our communities.

We thank Congressman Bishop for his leadership, and we look forward to working with him and Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA), the sponsor of the Senate version (S. 3522), to move this bill in the Senate.

## **Senate Judiciary Committee Approves Two NAPO Priority Bills in Honor of National Police Week**

On May 16, in honor of National Police Week, the Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously approved two NAPO priority bills: S. 930, the Honoring Our Fallen Heroes Act, and S. 4235, the Reauthorizing Support and Treatment for Officers in Crisis (STOIC) Act of 2024.

### **Honoring Our Fallen Heroes Act**

This bill, sponsored by Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Kevin Cramer (R-ND), recognizes exposure-related cancers as line of duty injuries under the Department of Justice Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program.

The PSOB Program was designed to offer peace of mind to men and women seeking careers in public safety and to make a strong statement about the value that American Society places on the contributions of those who serve their communities in potentially dangerous circumstances. To truly fulfill this intent, it is vital the PSOB Program recognizes all injuries sustained in the line of duty, including exposure-related cancers.

Our nation's public safety officers put their lives at risk every day. Sometimes unnoticed are the officers pulling families from burning cars or saving children from house fires or those responding to chemical fires or train wrecks like the one in East Palestine, Ohio. These acts of heroism often have long-term consequences for the officers, including exposure-related cancers. The Honoring Our Fallen Heroes Act will ensure that officers suffering from these cancers and their families get the benefits they have earned.

### **Reauthorizing Support and Treatment for Officers in Crisis (STOIC) Act of 2024**

This important bill, sponsored by Senators Josh Hawley (R-MO) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), 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., 167 current or active-duty officers died by suicide in 2023. In 2022, there were 219 officer suicides. 45 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. 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 health. The reauthorization of this important program will help ensure important support services are available for officers and their families.

NAPO is working with Committee staff and Senators Klobuchar, Cramer, Hawley, and Whitehouse to move the Honoring Our Fallen Heroes Act and the Reauthorizing STOIC Act to the Senate floor for a vote as soon as practicable.

## **NAPO Leadership Meets with Speaker Johnson**

NAPO President Mick McHale, Executive Director Bill Johnson, and Governmental Affairs Director Andy Edmiston met with House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) during an event he held at the U.S. Capitol on May 16. The Speaker spoke to the solemnity of National Police Week and the importance of honoring the officers who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty and the need to continue to support and stand with their families and brother and sister officers. President McHale took the opportunity to thank the Speaker for his support of America's law enforcement and for the legislative successes we had this week due to his leadership.

## **NAPO Meets with Attorney General, DOJ Leadership**

On May 16, NAPO Executive Director Bill Johnson met with Attorney General Merrick Garland, Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco, and Acting Associate Attorney General Benjamin C. Mizer as well as the leaders of other major national law enforcement organizations for a standing quarterly meeting between the DOJ and national law enforcement leadership. FBI Director Christopher Wray, DEA Administrator Anne Milgram, USMS Director Ron Davis, and ATF Director Steve Dettelbach also participated in the meeting. These meetings have been set to discuss relevant issues facing officers in the streets and how the DOJ can best assist its state and local law enforcement partners.

The focus of this meeting was on the latest [violent crime report](#) from the Major Cities Chiefs Association, which compares the preliminary first quarter of 2024 data to that of 2023. Overall, violent crime in the United States is down, including homicide rates, robberies, aggravated assaults, and rapes. However, there are cities across the country bucking the downward trend and experiencing an increase in violent crimes. While the data is encouraging, one quarter does not equate to an end in the spike in violent crime our cities and communities have faced over the past several years. We must continue to ensure our police departments are supported and given the staff and resources necessary to keep our communities safe.

Johnson continued to emphasize the need for rank-and-file to have a seat at the table and for our input to be considered at the highest levels.

NAPO appreciates the opportunity to participate in these leadership meetings as we believe they are important to DOJ's efforts to maintain better relationships with state and local law enforcement.

## **NAPO Participates in House Bipartisan Working Group Meeting**

NAPO's Director of Governmental Affairs, Andy Edmiston, was an invited to participate as a guest speaker in the House Bipartisan Working Group (BPWG) meeting on May 7<sup>th</sup> to discuss law enforcement priorities

and the current challenges facing our officers ahead of National Police Week. The BPWG is group of Democrats and Republicans who meet monthly to find common ground, build consensus around good ideas, and solve problems. House Law Enforcement Caucus Co-Chairs Congressmen John Rutherford (R-FL) and Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ) hosted this meeting of the Working Group.

NAPO was joined by the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association (FLEOA), Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCCA), and the Major County Sheriffs of America (MCSA). Ms. Edmiston discussed the recruitment and retention issues facing law enforcement agencies across the country, the rising number of violent assaults on officers, and the need for increased federal support for mental health and wellness services for officers. She highlighted NAPO priority legislation including the Protect and Serve Act, the Recruit and Retain Act, the Providing Child Care for Police Officers Act, and the HELPER Act, which we asked the House to act on during Police Week.

NAPO appreciated the opportunity to participate in the BPWG meeting and the open discussion of how Congress can best support our nation's law enforcement officers.

## **House Homeland Security Committee Holds Hearing on Supporting State and Local Law Enforcement**

On May 15<sup>th</sup>, the House Homeland Security Committee held a hearing on "[Standing Strong on the Thin Blue Line: How Congress Can Support State and Local Law Enforcement](#)". Michael Bullock, President of the Austin (TX) Police Association, a NAPO member organization, testified at the hearing as the only rank-and-file witness. The other panelists were Gregory Mays, Deputy Commissioner of Homeland Security for the Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security, Loudon County Sheriff Michael Chapman, and Rodney Bryant, President of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE).

Mr. Bullock started his testimony stating that the law enforcement profession is in an untenable position, and something must be done to fix the criminal justice system before the "sense of lawlessness" that is being perpetuated in major cities across the country gets worse. He went on to talk about the dangerous intersection of a police department severely understaffed, the increase in violent crime that the city of Austin is facing, and the "lackadaisical attitude towards holding criminals accountable by judges and prosecutors". Austin is not alone in facing these trends as law enforcement agencies across the country are dealing with understaffed departments, a revolving door criminal justice system, and an increasingly more dangerous environment for officers.

He concluded his powerful testimony with:

"Our job is to uphold the Constitution and enforce the laws passed by yourselves as well as your state and local counterparts. This is a charge we take seriously and one we are willing to sacrifice our lives for. I sit here before you today though pleading for your help. We need help in addressing our staffing needs, support in enforcing our laws, providing better training resources, and transcending the political rhetoric to end the war on law enforcement and restore law and order in our country."

NAPO thanks the Committee for the invitation to participate and ensuring the rank-and-file perspective on the state of law enforcement today and how Congress can stand with us was heard.

# Protect & Serve Act Reintroduced in Senate

Just in time for National Police Week, Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC) reintroduced NAPO priority legislation, the Protect and Serve Act (S. 4258), on May 2. This bill is critical, as there is a serious and growing trend of attacks on law enforcement officers.

Law enforcement officers have a dangerous profession and face incredible risks when serving and protecting their communities. According to a May 2022 report from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), 346 officers were shot in the line of duty in 2021, of which 64 officers died from their injuries and 287 survived. 133 of those officers were shot and 32 died in ambushes or premeditated, calculated assaults. In 2023, 378 officers were shot in the line of duty – the highest ever recorded. To date this year, 136 officers have been shot, putting us on an unfortunate path of surpassing last year’s numbers.

Increased penalties make important differences in the attitudes of criminals towards public safety officers and can ensure protection for the community. Any persons contemplating harming an officer must know that they will face serious punishments, which is why the Protect and Serve Act is so important. It would add new federal criminal provisions to address the assault, attempted killing, or killing of law enforcement officers, giving federal prosecutors the tools they need to hold accountable those who target law enforcement for assault and attacks.

Specifically, the Protect and Serve Act would support law enforcement officers by:

- Making it a federal crime to knowingly cause, or attempt to cause, bodily injury to a law enforcement officer. Offenders are subject to imprisonment for up to 10 years.
- Imposing up to a life sentence if a death results from the offense, or the offense includes kidnapping, attempted kidnapping, or attempted murder.

The Protect and Serve Act would apply to federal law enforcement officers as well as to state and local officers in circumstances where the federal government can establish jurisdiction over the case.

NAPO strongly believes that establishing stricter penalties for those who harm or target for harm law enforcement officers will deter violent crimes and add another layer of safety for our nation’s law enforcement officers.

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