



# The Washington Report

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

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September 6, 2024

## Discharge Petition for Social Security Fairness Act Goes Live on September 10<sup>th</sup>

The discharge petition for H.R. 82, the Social Security Fairness Act, filed by Representatives Garret Graves (R-LA) and Abigail Spanberger (D-VA) will be available for signatures on Tuesday, September 10. The discharge petition needs 218 signatures to successfully move the bill to the House floor for a vote and we are working to secure as many signatures on September 10 as possible.

H.R. 82 currently has [326 bipartisan cosponsors](#) and the Senate companion, S. 597, has [62 cosponsors](#). The Social Security Fairness Act has the support necessary to pass Congress by a vast majority. It is time to put words into action and finally pass this vital legislation.

NAPO and our members have been making a full court press on all the current cosponsors to urge them to sign the discharge petition on September 10 and act on their support for repealing the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO). We have run into some hesitation by cosponsors who state that the bill is too expensive and must be paid for in order for them to sign the discharge petition. Our response to those lawmakers is that as a cosponsor of H.R. 82, they understand the detrimental impact the WEP and GPO have on public servants' Social Security retirement benefits, otherwise they would not have signed on in support of the bill. For over 40 years, the GPO and WEP have been harming the retirement security of our nation's public safety officers simply because they chose a public service profession by taking away hard-earned and much needed benefits. We ask that these Members of Congress do not turn their backs on these public servants now under the veil of "cost concerns".

While initially meant as a "leveling" response, in recent years the GPO and WEP have been used to prolong the life of the Social Security Trust Fund on the backs of our nation's public servants, who are seeing cuts across the board to their hard-earned retirement benefits. By totally repealing both the GPO and WEP, the Social Security Fairness Act will preserve the retirement security of those who selflessly serve and protect our communities. One cannot put a price on that security.

Please continue to reach out to your Congressional Representative(s) and request that they sign the discharge petition. This link ([Cosponsors - H.R.82 - 118th Congress \(2023-2024\): Social Security Fairness Act of 2023 | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#)) is a searchable list of cosponsors of H.R. 82 by state and each name is linked to the website and contact information. **You can also find the contact information for staff for every office [here](#) and a one-pager on the Social Security Fairness Act [here](#).**

We will keep you updated on the status of the discharge petition and who has signed it. Please contact Andy Edmiston, NAPO's Director of Governmental Affairs, at [aedmiston@napo.org](mailto:aedmiston@napo.org) or (703) 549-0775 if you have any questions. Thank you in advance for your efforts to make this discharge petition a success!

## **Register Today for NAPO's 2024 Fall Seminar**

**October 20 – 22, 2024**  
**Omni Hotel ~ Corpus Christi, Texas**

[www.napo.org/fall24](http://www.napo.org/fall24)

[Register now](#) for NAPO's 2024 Fall Seminar in Corpus Christi, Texas, which will focus on media relations and officer mental health and wellness. Special thanks to Scott Leeton and the Corpus Christi Police Officers Association for hosting NAPO!

This important Seminar will focus on:

- How to effectively communicate with the press when responding to use of force and controversial issues. Participate in mock interviews and press conferences with media experts from television, print and public relations personal. Immediate feedback from the experts will help NAPO members be better prepared to deal with the media in future controversial cases.
- Officer Health & Wellness

Participants will also hear from retired Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) Special Agents in Charge Steve Murphy and Javier Peña, who were sent to dismantle the cartels and take down Pablo Escobar and are the inspiration for the hit TV show *Narcos*.

The Omni Hotel, located on the Corpus Christi Bay, offers spectacular views of the Bay, a fitness center with an outdoor pool, and the famous rooftop Republic of Texas Bar & Grill. The Hotel is two blocks from downtown's shopping, restaurants & bars and just 15 minutes to the Airport. The Hotel offers complimentary airport shuttle service.

**Please register by October 4!** Both [online](#) and [mail-in](#) registration are available. Information regarding hotel reservations, airline discounts and the agenda are also included [here](#).

### **NAPO on the Hill: HELPER Act**

On August 29, NAPO led a [joint law enforcement letter](#) to the leadership of the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee, Chairman Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Ranking Member Tim Scott (R-SC), urging them to support the inclusion of the HELPER Act (S. 1514) as an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). NAPO was joined on the letter by the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association (FLEOA), Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCCA), Major County Sheriffs of America (MCSA), National Narcotics Officers' Associations' Coalition (NNOAC), National Troopers Coalition (NTC), and the Sergeants Benevolent Association NYPD.

The HELPER Act, sponsored by Senators Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Jon Ossoff (D-GA), creates a first-time homebuyer loan program for law enforcement, firefighters, and teachers that removes the biggest financial barriers for buying a house – the down payment requirement and a monthly insurance premium requirement.

The Program created by this bill will provide the men and women who have chosen to serve their communities with access to affordable homeownership.

To follow-up our letter, NAPO met with Chairman Brown's and Rankin Member Scott's Committee staff in separate meetings on September 4 to press the Committee to support our efforts to incorporate the HELPER Act into the FY 2025 NDAA. Ranking Member Scott's staff indicated he is supportive of the Committee having a hearing and marking up the bill, but there is very little legislative time left this Congress to get the bill through both the Senate and the House in regular order. Chairman Brown is supportive of our efforts, and we continue to work with Committee staff and our law enforcement partners to get full Committee support for the inclusion of the HELPER Act in the NDAA.

The House passed its version of the FY 25 NDAA on June 14 and our ability to get amendments into the Senate NDAA is up against the clock as Congress is back for three weeks until it leaves again in October for the final stretch of campaigning before Election Day. We continue to press for the inclusion of the HELPER Act and our other priority amendments while time is on our side.

## September Congressional Outlook

The House and Senate come back next week after a 6-week August recess with just three weeks to go before the federal government runs out of funding on September 30. Congress then adjourns again October 1 for another 6-week recess to campaign. It is widely anticipated that Congress will take up and pass a continuing resolution (a short-term spending bill) to fund the government either through to December or March of next year.

The House is expected to vote on a continuing resolution as soon as next week. Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) is purportedly considering including the SAVE Act, which requires proof of citizenship to register to vote in a federal election, to a continuing resolution that would fund the government into March 2025. With Democrats and the White House strongly opposing the SAVE Act, the bill will be dead as soon as it passes the House, if the House is even able to pass it. There is some question as to whether the continuing resolution will have enough Republican votes to pass, given the opposition by conservative hardliners to voting for continuing resolutions in general.

With House Republicans likely moving their partisan continuing resolution next week, that only gives Congress two weeks to hammer a deal on a short-term spending measure that can pass both the House and Senate and be signed into law by the President. The Senate will take the House-passed bill, cut out the SAVE Act, and most likely send back a shorter continuing resolution that runs only into December. Leadership of both chambers have said that they want to avoid a government shutdown.

While it was looking like the NDAA may be on the Senate's docket for September, disagreements over amendments, the short three-week work period, and the need to pass a continuing resolution, seem to have pushed NDAA from floor consideration. It is now expected that the Senate will take the NDAA approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee back in June, include a block of agreed upon amendments, and use it for informal negotiations with the House. The goal is to have a final bill for both chambers to vote on in the lame duck session after the November election.

While government spending will take up much of the time during the September work period, the House indicated it will take up the NAPO-backed DETECT Fentanyl and Xylazine Act (H.R. 8663) next week under suspension of the rules. This bipartisan bill, sponsored by Representative Nick LaLota (R-NY), would authorize the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to conduct research and development, testing, and

evaluation on equipment that would help law enforcement better detect fentanyl, xylazine, and other illicit drugs.

During the September work period, NAPO will be focusing our efforts on getting our priority amendments included in the Senate NDAA package as well as continue working to garner the 218 signatures necessary for the H.R. 82 discharge petition to be successful. There are also several Senate-passed bills that we are pushing House leadership to take up under suspension of the rules so we can finally get them across the finish line. These include:

- **Fighting PTSD Act:** Would require the Attorney General to propose a program, based on best practices, for treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder and acute stress disorder available to public safety officers.
- **Project Safe Neighborhoods Reauthorization Act:** Would reauthorize the Project Safe Neighborhood (PSN) Program for five years and expand the allowable uses of the grant funding to include overtime costs for officers and the hiring of crime analysts and law enforcement assistants to aid agencies participating in the program.
- **Strong Communities Act:** 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 live in the communities in which they serve.
- **American Law Enforcement SAVER Act:** Would establish baseline standards for trauma kits purchased through the DOJ's Byrne JAG Program, helping to ensure all officers have access to effective trauma kits that can save lives.
- **Project Safe Childhood Act:** Would reauthorize and update the Project Safe Childhood initiative to modernize how online child exploitation crimes are investigated and prosecuted and it would make improvements to how federal prosecutors and federal, state, and local law enforcement work together and use new technology to go after predators. It would reauthorize the program for five years at \$62 million per year.
- **SHIELD Act:** Would establish federal criminal liability for individuals who share private, explicit images without consent.

## NAPO Endorses First Responders Wellness Act

NAPO supports the First Responders Wellness Act (S. 4892), which was introduced 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 the culturally competent and accessible mental health and wellness services necessary for their wellbeing and that of their families.

The First Responders Wellness Act has two main components: it creates the Mental Health Demonstration Program to support the provision of culturally competent, confidential, and independent mental health services and professionals specifically for law enforcement officers; and it establishes a national First Responders Mental Health Hotline.

The Mental Health Demonstration grant program will help law enforcement agencies partner with academic institutions, clinics, and other mental health service providers to ensure that officers have access to mental health services that understand the work that they do. Police departments, law enforcement unions or

associations, institutions of higher education are eligible to apply for the grant program. The bill includes a strict confidentiality requirement for all mental health services provided with funds from this demonstration program. The bill authorizes \$25 million for the demonstration for each of the next five fiscal years.

The First Responders Mental Health Hotline will be a national hotline that is intended to bridge the gap between existing regional hotlines dedicated to first responders, such as COP 2 COP and 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 peer specialist or mental health provider, provide voice and text options 24/7, and provide referral services. The bill authorizes \$10 million for each of next five fiscal years for the creation, implementation, and running of the hotline.

This bill represents what would be the most significant federal investment in mental health and wellness services for our nation's law enforcement officers. The stresses and strains of the job not only affect officers' mental and physical wellbeing, but also the wellbeing of their family life. The First Responders Wellness Act recognizes the stress factors of the job and gives officers and their families the resources they need 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.

## **NAPO Supports Bill to Reform the De Minimis Trade Loophole**

NAPO pledged its support for the bipartisan FIGHTING for America Act, sponsored by Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR), chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and Senators Cynthia Lummis (R-WY), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Susan Collins (R-ME), and Bob Casey (D-PA). This bill would help Customs and Border Protection (CBP) stop the flow of illicit goods, including fentanyl, counterfeits, and products made with forced labor, into the country by tightening import requirements for low-value packages within the de minimis environment.

The de minimis loophole allows packages valued at less than \$800 to enter the U.S. through the international mail system without facing any taxes, fees, or inspection. As a result, this cripples domestic manufacturers and workers, undermines retailers, strains law enforcement resources, and facilitates the movement of illegal and dangerous products and illicit drugs, particularly fentanyl and its precursors, into the country.

Law enforcement is battling the trafficking of illegal narcotics on multiple fronts, including the international mail system. Substantial reform or the closing of the de minimis trade loophole is necessary to remove significant fentanyl trafficking routes into this country and is essential to any national strategy to end the fentanyl crisis. NAPO supports the FIGHTING for America Act, and we look forward to working with Chairman Wyden to ensure the de minimis trade exemption will no longer be a gateway for illicit drugs and goods to cross our borders.

## **NAPO's Legislative Positions & Sponsor/Cosponsor Updates**

NAPO's updated "Sponsor/Cosponsor" spreadsheet is available on [NAPO's website](#). The spreadsheet accompanies the latest "[Legislative Positions](#)" document, which is also available on the NAPO website. 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 118th 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.

## **NAPO Endorses Two Anti-Fentanyl Bills: Stop Fentanyl at the Border Act & DISPOSE Act**

In our efforts to fight the scourge of fentanyl from all sides, NAPO is backing two bills that will provide much-needed support, funding, and resources to stop the flow of this deadly drug across our borders: the Stop Fentanyl at the Border Act and the Destruction Initiative for Stored Precursors Overseas and Safe Enforcement Act (DISPOSE) Act.

The Stop Fentanyl at the Border Act (S. 3591 / H.R. 8992), sponsored by Senator Pat Casey (D-PA) and Representative Gabe Vazquez (D-MN), provides much needed support, resources, and funding to the Southwest border to help federal, state, and local law enforcement fight the trafficking of fentanyl and other illicit drugs into the country. This bill would appropriate \$5.3 billion to hire additional U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers and Border Patrol agents, purchase and deploy scanning and detection technology at official land border crossings, and support and expand current fentanyl interdiction efforts by federal law enforcement and joint task forces. Law enforcement at all levels of government have long been asking for these resources to support their efforts to prevent and detect fentanyl coming into this country and our communities.

The DISPOSE Act (S. 4152), sponsored by Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA), establishes the Precursor Chemical Destruction Initiative to promote joint counterdrug interdiction efforts with the governments of Columbia, Mexico, and Peru. The 2022 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report identified Colombia, Mexico, and Peru as major precursor chemical source countries. Specifically, the initiative focuses on destroying seized precursor chemicals in these partner countries and providing accountability and transparency to ensure U.S.-sponsored interdiction efforts result in the destruction of the seized precursor chemicals. The DISPOSE Act helps to ensure that fentanyl precursor chemicals are seized and destroyed before they come across our borders.

*Please monitor NAPO’s website, [www.napo.org](http://www.napo.org), and Facebook page: [National Association of Police Organizations](#), and follow us on X at [NAPOpolice](#) for breaking news and updates.*