



The Washington Report

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Representing America's Finest

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NAPO WASHINGTON REPORT

NAPO Participates in Meeting with DOJ Leadership and Law Enforcement Stakeholders to Discuss Comprehensive Law Enforcement Review Project

On July 30, 2014, NAPO's Executive Director, Bill Johnson, participated in a stakeholder meeting at the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to discuss a comprehensive law enforcement review project. The meeting was scheduled in response to a proposal recommending a criminal justice review, which NAPO drafted with fellow law enforcement stakeholders. The Attorney General requested the COPS Office, in collaboration with the Office of Justice Programs, to convene the stakeholder groups in order to move forward with the comprehensive review process.

The meeting included remarks by Attorney General Eric Holder, the Director of the COPS Office, Ronald Davis, and the Assistant Attorney General for DOJ's Office of Justice Programs, Karol Mason. NAPO joined a diverse group of law enforcement stakeholders in the discussion.

The meeting included an in-depth discussion on the project's topics, methodology, and timeline. Proposed topics include: effective crime-reduction strategies; the role of law enforcement in fighting terrorism; technology in policing; alternatives to incarceration and strategies for re-entry; police legitimacy and public trust; officer safety and wellness; future policing; and policy reform.

NAPO looks forward to continuing to work with DOJ leadership and fellow law enforcement stakeholders on this important project. We will keep our members updated on the status of this initiative.

If you have any questions about NAPO's efforts on the criminal justice review project, please contact Bill Johnson at: bjohnson@napo.org.

NAPO Victory!

House Passes Victims of Child Abuse Act Reauthorization Act

On July 28, 2014, the House of Representatives unanimously approved the Victims of Child Abuse Act (VOCAA) Reauthorization Act of 2013 by voice vote. This bill reauthorizes the VOCAA, which provides funding for Children's Advocacy Centers that serve child victims of violent crimes and help law enforcement hold perpetrators accountable. **NAPO pledged our support for the VOCAA Reauthorization Act in December 2013, and we have expended all available efforts to ensure the bill was passed.**

Congressional authorization for Children's Advocacy Centers lapsed in 2005, and the President's last three proposed budgets have either zeroed out or significantly cut federal funding. The VOCAA Reauthorization Act of 2013 reauthorizes the program through FY 2018 and enacts reforms to strengthen accountability provisions and improve oversight.

"We have no greater obligation than to protect our children from trauma and abuse," **Senator Coons** (the bill's sponsor) said. "When the unthinkable happens, Children's Advocacy Centers are there to help families heal and obtain justice for victims. These centers have transformed our nation's response to child abuse by giving law enforcement the tools to secure critical evidence without re-traumatizing child victims. The unanimous passage of this bill by both houses is a victory for Delaware's three Children's Advocacy Centers and a testament to the important role these centers play in communities all across the country. Our children's needs transcend party politics, and I'm grateful to my partners on both sides of the aisle for working with me to pass this vital bill."

The legislation adopted by the House on July 28th passed the Senate unanimously last month. The bill authorizes funding for the program at \$20 million per year, consistent with the most recent authorization level, and \$1 million above the current fiscal year's appropriation. The reauthorization bill will also strengthen Victims of Child Abuse Act programs through enhanced accountability provisions, non-profit requirements, and limitations on conference expenditures.

Children's Advocacy Centers employ a multi-disciplinary team of trained professionals to conduct forensic interviews of children who have been victims of abuse. These interviews are designed to be admissible in court, preventing children from being re-traumatized by having to tell their stories multiple times. In 2013 alone, nearly 300,000 children were served at over 800 Children's Advocacy Centers across the United States, with over 200,000 cases reporting sexual abuse. Their use in child abuse cases saved, on average, more than \$1,000 per case in court, child protection, and investigative fees.

NAPO is pleased to report this hard-earned victory. If you have any questions about this legislation, please contact Melissa Nee at: mnee@napo.org.

Source:

"U.S. Senator Chris Coons of Delaware." *US Senator Christopher Coons*. N.p., 28 July 2014. Web. 04 Aug. 2014. <<http://www.coons.senate.gov/newsroom/releases/release/senator-coons-wins-fight-to-save-advocacy-centers-for-victims-of-child-abuse>>.

NAPO Meetings on Capitol Hill

Over the past week, NAPO has met with staffers for the following members of Congress: **Congressman John Carter (R-TX)**, **Congressman Pete Gallego (D-TX)**, **Congressman Jeb Hensarling (R-TX)**, **Congressman Steve**
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Stockman (R-TX), Congressman Sam Johnson (R-TX), Congressman Filemon Vela (D-TX), Congressman Gene Green (D-TX), Congressman Al Green (D-TX), Congressman Mac Thornberry (R-TX), Congressman Bill Flores (R-TX), Congressman Henry Cuellar (D-TX), Congressman Pete Olson (R-TX), Congressman Kevin Brady (R-TX), and Congressman Beto O'Rourke (D-TX). NAPO used the meetings to outline our top legislative priorities, which include the following initiatives:

Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP) Grant Act: The BVP Grant Program provides Federal funds to state and local law enforcement departments to assist state and local law enforcement efforts to purchase bullet resistant vests. NAPO continues to expend all available efforts to garner additional cosponsors for the House and Senate versions of this bill.

Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Improvement and Reauthorization Act: This bill would reauthorize the COPS Program for five years and raise the current hiring cap from \$75,000 to \$125,000. The COPS Office has been extremely successful in implementing and carrying out its designated objectives. Since its creation, the COPS Office has assisted over 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 jurisdictions with over \$14 billion in funding to hire more than 125,000 additional officers. Reauthorizing this program will allow for the continuation of a highly successful program that keeps our communities safe.

Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Act (JMHCA): The Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act (MIOTCRA) created the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program (JMHCP) to help states and counties design and implement collaborative efforts between criminal justice and mental health systems. The JMHCA reauthorizes the successful MIOTCRA and extends the JMHCP for five years. The JMHCP can help law enforcement agencies across the United States in their responsibilities in assisting citizens with mental health issues.

Social Security Fairness Act: This bill would strike the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) formulas currently used to calculate Social Security benefits. Both formulas were enacted in the 1980s because Congress was concerned Social Security paid unintended benefits to workers who had spent most of their careers in "non-covered" jobs. However, the formulas go too far and penalize workers with split careers who contributed a great deal to Social Security, but retire under their "non-covered" pensions. By significantly scaling back and reducing Social Security benefits for law enforcement officers and their survivors, as GPO and WEP do, officers and their families are provided much less protection against financial difficulties.

Driver's Privacy Protection Act Amendment: NAPO has proposed modifications to the most recent amendment to the Driver's Privacy Protection Act (DPPA). The DPPA requires state motor vehicle departments to receive permission from individuals before their personal motor vehicle record may be sold or released. The most recent DPPA amendment authorizes a private right of action for knowing violations, and a court may award damages in the amount of \$2,500 for each time a record was accessed, as well as attorney fees and other litigation costs. Law enforcement officers are subject to these stringent punishments, even if they did not review files with criminal intent.

NAPO's proposed language modifications to the DPPA amendment include adding a clause that explains that penalties will be applied only if persons access information with the specific intent to secure an economic benefit. NAPO also proposes removing the \$2,500 penalty for a violation of this act, as well as adding a statement that explains there must be repeated disregard of this law for action to be taken. If the language is not modified, law enforcement officers will be subject to large fines, and even the loss of their licenses for *de minimus* actions.

NAPO appreciated the opportunity to meet with each of the staffers, and looks forward to continuing to work with each of the offices in the future. If you have any questions about any of the issues summarized above, please contact Melissa Nee at: mnee@napo.org

NAPO Attends Senate Law Enforcement Caucus Briefing

On July 30, 2014, NAPO attended a Senate Law Enforcement Caucus Briefing hosted by **Senators Chris Coons (D-DE)** and **Roy Blunt (R-MO)**, Co-Chairs of the Senate Law Enforcement Caucus. The briefing included a presentation of information on Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS). Modern policing requires modern tools, including access to law enforcement databases across jurisdictional boundaries. Through RISS, state and local law enforcement are able to connect the dots to advance public safety, maximize efficiency, and avoid unintentional harm to fellow officers. RISS also provides specialized equipment and training otherwise inaccessible for smaller police departments in a time of tight budgets.

In addition to Senators Coons and Blunt, the following individuals provided information on RISS: National Coordinator Matthew McDonald, Regional Information Sharing Systems; Chief of Police Gary Morris, Seaford Police Department, Seaford, Delaware; and Executive Director Michael Snavely, Mid-States Organized Crime Information Center (MOCIC).

NAPO appreciated the opportunity to attend this Law Enforcement Caucus briefing, and we will keep our members updated on future initiatives regarding RISS. If you have any questions about RISS, please contact Melissa Nee at: mnee@napo.org.

Cell Phone Bills Advanced by House Panel

A pair of bills that would alter the laws governing the use of cell phones was approved by a House panel on July 30, 2014. The measures would expand prohibitions on faking caller identification information and allow police to more easily track the location of a cell phone in an emergency.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee backed by voice vote a bill (H.R. 3670) that would thwart caller-ID “spoofing,” in which fraudsters alter their caller-ID information (often posing as financial or government officials) to obtain sensitive personal and accounting information from their targets.

The panel also advanced by voice vote a bill (H.R. 1575) that would allow police departments to quickly access a cell phone’s physical location data in emergencies.

The measure was drafted in response to the case of a young woman, Kelsey Smith, who was kidnapped and killed, and wasn’t found until her cell phone location data was released four days after her abduction. Supporters of the bill said the legislation would allow the police to easily track people in similar emergency situations and potentially save lives.

Currently, cell phone providers can decide to provide cell phone location data to the police, but the measure would give police departments the ultimate authority to make those decisions. The bill would speed up the information release process and provide liability protections for the cell phone companies.

Lawmakers agreed by voice vote to a Greg Walden (R-OR) substitute amendment that would specify what constitutes as an “emergency” and require police officers to submit sworn written statements to prevent misuse of the law.

NAPO will keep our members updated on the status of these bills.

Source:

Zanona, Melanie. "CQ.com - Login." *CQ.com*. Congressional Quarterly, 30 July 2014. Web. 04 Aug. 2014. <<http://www.cq.com/doc/4527219?5>>.

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