



# The Washington Report

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

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May 6, 2022

## NAPO on the Hill: National Police Week Priorities

NAPO, working in conjunction with other national law enforcement organizations, continues to advocate for our priority bills to move during National Police Week. We have spent the past couple of months meeting with Democratic and Republican leadership of the House and Senate as well as the House and Senate Judiciary Committees to discuss the pro-law enforcement legislation we want to see moved during National Police Week.

We discussed the need for legislation to enhance officer safety by increasing penalties for the murder, attempted murder, or assault of federal, state, and local law enforcement officers, legislation to qualify post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and PTSD-related suicides under the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program for death and disability benefits, the LEOSA Reform Act, and training on responding to individuals suffering from traumatic brain injury (TBI) and PTSD.

Both the House and Senate Judiciary Committees have indicated they will hold markups on two or more of our bipartisan bills, with the Public Safety Officer Support Act and the TBI/PTSD Law Enforcement Training Act leading the way, with other bills under consideration. Both Committees expect to markup the bills by the week of May 16.

The **Public Safety Officer Support Act** recognizes post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a line of duty injury for purposes of the PSOB Program and ensures that officers who suffer from PTSD and those who take or attempt to take their own life as a result of that diagnosis will be covered under the program.

The **TBI/PTSD Law Enforcement Training Act** would make training and guidance available that departments can use as a basis to support improved responses and outcomes to interactions between officers and persons affected by TBI and PTSD. It also recognizes that law enforcement and first responders are among those in our communities who suffer from these afflictions and requires the CDC to do a study on the prevalence TBI and PTSD in the profession.

We are working with both the House and Senate Judiciary Committees to finalize the list of bills that will be marked up in honor of National Police Week. We are currently garnering the support of members of both the House and Senate Judiciary Committees to ensure we have the support to get these important bills passed.

## **Senate Judiciary to take up Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program**

The Senate Judiciary Committee is scheduled to markup the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Reauthorization Act (S. 3846) during National Police Week, adding another of NAPO's priority bills to the agenda. The JMCHP Reauthorization Act is a bipartisan bill sponsored by Senators John Cornyn (R-TX) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), together with their colleagues Senators Jerry Moran (R-KS), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Thom Tillis (R-NC), Richard Durbin (D-IL), Charles Grassley (R-IA), Susan Collins (R-ME), and Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV).

NAPO is a long-time supporter of the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program (JMCHP), which grew out of the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act (MIOTCRA), and worked closely with Senator Cornyn and stakeholder organizations on this reauthorization bill. It is a top priority for us, as it supports crisis intervention teams and training programs for law enforcement and corrections personnel to identify and respond to incidents involving individuals with mental health conditions.

The Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Reauthorization Act reauthorizes the program for the next five years at \$50 million annually and makes important improvements, including:

- Strengthening support for mental health courts and crisis intervention teams;
- Supporting diversion programming and training for state and local prosecutors;
- Strengthening support for co-responder teams;
- Supporting the integration of 988 into the existing public safety system;
- Amending allowable uses to include suicide prevention in jails and information sharing between mental health systems and jails/prisons;
- Amending allowable uses to include case management services and supports; and
- Clarifying that crisis intervention teams can be placed in 911 call centers.

The JMCHP must be reauthorized to ensure law enforcement continues to have access to these vital resources and training programs. We thank Senators Cornyn and Klobuchar for their steadfast support and leadership on this issue.

We will turn our efforts to the House once the Senate Judiciary Committee approves this important bill. Congressman Bobby Scott (D-VA) is the lead sponsor of this bill in the House. Although this program has strong bipartisan support in the House, we have our work cut out for us to get the JMCHP reauthorized this year.

## **NAPO Endorses Fighting PTSD Act**

NAPO pledged its support for the Fighting Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Act, S. 4007, a bipartisan bill introduced by Senate Judiciary Committee Ranking Member Charles Grassley (R-IA).

According to [Blue H.E.L.P.](#), 157 current or active duty officers died by suicide in 2021. In 2020, there were 176 officer suicides. 46 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. These stresses and strains of the job have a direct impact on an officers' mental wellbeing, and agencies are only now working to ensure officers have access to the resources they need to address their emotional and mental health.

The Fighting PTSD Act recognizes the prevalence of PTSD within the public safety profession and the need to address PTSD and acute stress disorder among officers to make certain they get the treatment and help they need. This legislation is an important first step to giving all officers access to confidential, state-of-the-art treatments for PTSD and acute stress disorder. By acknowledging the instances of these disorders within the profession and guaranteeing treatments and resource are widely available, we can work to ensure that suicide will no longer be one of the top killers of public safety officers.

NAPO thanks Senator Grassley for his long-standing support for public safety officer mental health and wellness and we look forward to seeing this important bill enacted into law.

## **NAPO Backs Bill to Provide Education Benefits for Help with Recruitment and Retention**

NAPO endorsed the Strong Communities Act (S. 2151), sponsored by Senators Gary Peters (D-MI) and John Cornyn (R-TX). This bill 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 serve in precincts of law enforcement agencies in the communities in which they live.

The Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Program has assisted more than 13,000 jurisdictions with over \$14 billion in funding to hire more than 135,000 community police officers across the United States since its inception in 1994. A big part of the success of this program is its reliance on local police agencies in defining what their communities needed.

There has been a growing call from community leaders across the nation for police departments to hire more officers from the communities being served and who reflect the makeup of the communities in which they serve to increase community trust. The requirement that candidates have a four-year college degree can be a hindrance to achieving that goal. The Strong Communities Act would help agencies remove that obstacle and aid in the recruitment of much needed community police officers.

By allowing agencies to use COPS Hiring Program funds to offer education benefits for recruits who pledge to serve as officers within their communities, agencies will be providing opportunities for members of the community to not only become officers but also to promote within the department. This will improve community relations and lead to increased respect for officers on the street.

Importantly, the Strong Communities Act maintains and augments the original intent of the COPS Hiring Program, which is to help state, local, and tribal agencies hire, rehire, and retain qualified officers that meet the needs of their communities. We will work with Senators Peters and Cornyn to move this important bill through the Senate.

## **NAPO in the News**

On April 29, 2022, NAPO Executive Director Bill Johnson was interviewed for an article in the *New Jersey Monitor* entitled, “[All eyes on New Jersey as it grapples with letting cops use cannabis](#)”. The article discusses the legal implications of New Jersey’s cannabis law, which allows law enforcement officers to use marijuana off duty. Johnson touches on the murky legal ground officers stand on in this situation, with marijuana use being legal in New Jersey, but illegal federally.

Attorney William Johnson is with the National Association of Police Organizations. Johnson expects New Jersey officers who get disciplined after testing positive for cannabis will challenge their cases in arbitration, citing its legality. Still, he advises caution.

“My advice would be — here’s the law, and it’s in flux, and your jurisdiction may be different from the federal government’s treatment of cannabis. But as a lawyer, I would have to tell you it’s still illegal federally. Go out, have a beer, have a glass of wine, but until the federal law changes, don’t use cannabis if you’re going to get tested at work. The area just isn’t settled enough for there to be a clear-cut answer,” Johnson said.

He pointed to a movement in the private industry for employers to treat cannabis like alcohol.

“If you want to use cannabis and you want to get high on the weekend, if you’re an adult and it’s legal where you are, it’s not the company’s business, as long as you’re not at work under the influence or it doesn’t affect your work performance or cause a safety issue for you or someone else,” Johnson said. “But law enforcement is a little bit different, because your job is law enforcement and it’s still technically illegal.”

There is a growing call among local New Jersey officials to carve out law enforcement from the law and prohibit officers from using it recreationally or medically and Governor Phil Murphy has indicated he is open to that revision. NAPO will continue to monitor this issue in New Jersey and how it will impact not only the officers we represent in that state but across the country as well as other states where marijuana is legal tackle this issue.

NAPO will continue to ensure our members’ voices are heard loud and clear on the Hill, with the Administration, and in the media.

## **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 117th 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.

## **Deadline Quickly Approaching for BJA Body-Worn Camera Grant Applications: Due May 20**

The May 20 deadline to apply for the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs' Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) *FY 2022 Body-worn Camera Policy and Implementation Program to Support Law Enforcement Agencies* grant program is quickly approaching.

Through this opportunity, BJA is seeking applications for funding law enforcement agencies seeking to purchase body-worn cameras (BWCs) to establish or expand comprehensive BWC programs with a specific and demonstrated plan to implement this technology to maximize the benefits of BWCs.

You can download the application here: <https://bja.ojp.gov/funding/opportunities/o-bja-2022-171093>.

**Eligible Applicants:** Eligible agencies include law enforcement agencies, correctional agencies that perform law enforcement functions, prosecutors' offices, and state or regional consortia that support such agencies, including state administrative agencies. Eligibility is restricted to agencies that are publicly funded. State and regional consortia are eligible to apply, provided they are considered a public agency.

**Deadlines:** Note that there are two deadlines for this solicitation. May 20, 2022 at 8:59 PM EST for submission to Grants.Gov and May 25, 2022 at 8:59 PM EST for submission to JustGrants.

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