



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE ORGANIZATIONS, INC.

Representing America's Finest

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EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

March 31, 2020

MICHAEL McHALE

President

Florida Police Benevolent
Association

Mr. Michael Costigan

Director

Bureau of Justice Assistance

Office of Justice Programs

810 Seventh Street NW

Washington, D.C. 20531

JOHN A. FLYNN

Vice President

Police Benevolent
Association of New York City

TODD HARRISON

Recording Secretary

Combined Law Enforcement
Associations of Texas

Dear Director Costigan,

SCOTT HOVSEPIAN

Treasurer

Massachusetts Coalition
of Police

On behalf of the National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO), representing over 241,000 law enforcement officers across the United States, I am writing to you to express our concerns regarding the impact the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is having on our nation's law enforcement officers and the need to ensure that officers who die from exposure to COVID-19 in the line of duty are eligible for the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program.

MARC KOVAR

Sergeant-at-Arms

New Jersey State Policemen's
Benevolent Association

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, such as the current coronavirus pandemic. Officers have been protecting our communities with little to no personal protective equipment (PPE), putting themselves at high risk of exposure to this very communicable disease.

CRAIG D. LALLY

Executive Secretary

Los Angeles Police
Protective League

While the PSOB Program does cover line of duty deaths and disabilities due to infectious diseases, we feel strongly that COVID-19 is unique and presents its own challenges in proving line of duty exposure. While with most other infectious diseases, it is easy to pinpoint the source and details surrounding the exposure, but this situation is more difficult with the new coronavirus and its asymptomatic spread. Every day, we are learning more about COVID-19. First it was believed it could only be spread by close human contact. Now, experts think that it can also be spread through the air. Individuals can be carriers of COVID-19 without being symptomatic. Further, up until the past week, most states have not implemented stay-at-home orders and a majority of officers have been interacting with members of our communities without PPE. Many officers are continuing to work without PPE across the country.

MARK YOUNG

Vice President,

Associate Members

Detroit Police Lieutenants &
Sergeants Association

JAMES PALMER

Parliamentarian

Wisconsin Professional Police
Association

WILLIAM J. JOHNSON, CAE

Executive Director and

General Counsel

Knowing how and when an officer is exposed is proving to be difficult. While an officer can try to document and report all interactions with individuals exhibiting symptoms, it may be a person who is asymptomatic that could have infected the officer or an unclean surface the officer came into contact with while on duty. Another challenge is that testing is not widely available and it is difficult to get tested even if it is available.

Given the extraordinary situation our officers have found themselves in, NAPO urges you to issue a new policy memorandum for the PSOB Program stating that any public safety officer who perishes from COVID-19 is presumed to have contracted the virus in the course of their duties, and are thus eligible for PSOB death benefits. There is precedence for the Director of

the Bureau of Justice Assistance to issue such policy memos, with the latest being the August 15, 2016 memorandum regarding mandatory wear policies.

A Detroit Police Captain and a New York City Detective, both NAPO members, have already died from exposure to COVID-19, and unfortunately, they will not be the last. It is vital that officers' families know that they will get the benefits they deserve if their loved one succumbs to this terrible virus. By issuing a new policy memorandum stating that the PSOB Program will presume a COVID-19 exposure happened in the line of duty, you can bring peace of mind to the families of officers who gave their lives to serve and protect our communities during this time of crisis.

We appreciate your consideration of our request and stand ready to work with you to ensure that the families and loved ones of officers killed in the line of duty receive the benefits they deserve. Please feel free to contact me at (703) 549-0775.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William J. Johnson", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

William J. Johnson
Executive Director

Cc: Hope Janke, Director, Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program