



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE ORGANIZATIONS

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NAPO Victory! Congress Passes PSOB Improvement Act

Today, in a major victory for NAPO and public safety officers across the country, Congress unanimously passed the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Improvement Act (S. 419), a bipartisan bill sponsored by Senators Charles Grassley (R-IA) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY). This Act will tackle the issues of transparency and the timeliness of case determinations within the PSOB program, and protect the ability of survivors, disabled officers and their families to get the benefits they so rightly deserve.

Importantly, this Act will return the PSOB Program to a presumptive benefit and restore the "substantial weight" standard that requires PSOB to give substantial weight to the findings of federal, state, and local agencies as to the cause of the public safety officer's death or disability. It will ensure that children of fallen or disabled public safety officers will still be eligible for education benefits if an adjudication delay causes them to age out of benefit eligibility before their claim is approved. It will increase transparency through weekly and quarterly public reports on the status of claims.

The PSOB Improvement Act will significantly improve the PSOB Program and address several concerns NAPO has had with the program since the last major rulemaking in 2006 that implemented, among other changes, the Hometown Heroes Survivors Benefits Act of 2003. NAPO worked closely with Senators Grassley and Gillibrand on the development of this legislation after the Senate Judiciary Committee held an oversight hearing on the program in May of 2015 and after a scathing Justice Department Office of Inspector General Report in July of 2015. Both the hearing and the Inspector General report revealed that the PSOB Program had no accountability or transparency and there were extreme inefficiencies in the processing of claims, leading to a backlog of over 1,000 cases.

This bill passed the Senate at the end of last Congress, but we ran out of time before we were able to move it through the House. After years of frustration with the PSOB Program, we are glad to see the enactment of this important legislation, which is a triumph for NAPO and rank-and-file officers across the nation.

It is a priority for NAPO that we ensure the PSOB Program is processing and deciding claims in a timely manner and that the process is transparent and straightforward for those who have lost their loved ones or have become seriously disabled in the line of duty. The passage of the PSOB Improvement Act is a major step in the right direction and we will continue to work as part of the PSOB stakeholder community to hold the Program accountable.

NAPO thanks Senators Grassley and Gillibrand for being our champions on this important issue.

If you have any questions about the PSOB Program or the PSOB Improvement Act please contact Andy Edmiston at aedmiston@napo.org.