



The Washington Report

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

July 17, 2017

NAPO on the Hill: DOJ Law Enforcement Grant Funding

As the House continues to move through the appropriations bills, NAPO is meeting with key Republican and Democratic staff of the House and Senate Judiciary and CJS Appropriations Committees to discuss our top funding priorities and the need to protect vital Department of Justice (DOJ) state and local law enforcement grant programs – specifically the importance of the COPS Hiring program and the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne-JAG) program. We have met with Senate Appropriations Committee staff and the offices of **Congressmen John Ratcliffe (R-TX), Derek Kilmer (D-WA), Ted Deutch (D-FL), Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI) and Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Joe Manchin (D-WV), John Cornyn (R-TX), and Richard Durbin (D-IL).**

The Senate has consistently been supportive of the COPS Hiring Program and has funded the program in every recent fiscal year despite the House's efforts to eliminate the program. In our Senate meetings, the staff stated that the COPS Hiring Program and the Byrne-JAG) Program are top priorities for their bosses and that they are dedicated to see those programs adequately funded in fiscal 2018. We appreciate the Senate's bipartisan support of these key programs.

Our house meetings have been generally supportive of the Byrne-JAG Grants, but the support for the COPS Hiring Program is split down party lines. Democratic members support the COPS Hiring Program and those on the Appropriations Committee spoke up during markup against the elimination of this important program. Republican members are less supportive of the COPS Hiring Program for various reasons. Some support appropriating funding for the hiring of officers, but believe the COPS Program is duplicative since agencies can use Byrne-JAG funding to hire officers. For others, it is a federalism issue. The federal government should not be paying the salary of state and local law enforcement officers. In these meetings, we educated the staff on the importance of having the COPS Hiring Program as a standalone program and on all the resources and tools that are only available through the COPS Program, which has been a dedicated resource for police since its inception in 1994.

Departments across the nation are understaffed and do not have the number of officers necessary to efficiently and effectively serve our communities. As major cities across the country are facing an increase in violent crime for the first time in years and community-police relations are strained, now is not the time to put additional stresses on state and local police forces by leaving them short-handed.

The House Appropriations Committee approved the Fiscal 2018 CJS Appropriations bill on July 13. Amendments to fund the COPS Hiring Program were voted down on party line. NAPO is working with Congressmen Bill Pascrell (D-NJ) and David Reichert (R-WA), co-chairs of the House Law Enforcement Caucus,

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE ORGANIZATIONS

317 S. Patrick Street ~ Alexandria, VA 22314 ~ (703) 549-0775 ~ (800) 322-NAPO ~ Fax: (703) 684-0515

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on an amendment to the CJS Appropriations bill to sufficiently fund the COPS Hiring Program. Congressmen Pascrell and Reichert will offer the amendment when the House takes up the Appropriations measure for a vote. We were successful last year in passing an amendment to add \$100 million for the hiring of cops and we believe that if we have the chance to offer this amendment, we will be successful once again.

We will continue meeting with key members of both the House and Senate Judiciary and Appropriations Committees to shore up support for our priority grant programs, particularly the COPS Hiring Program, as the appropriations process moves forward.

House Appropriations Committee Approves CJS Spending Measure

The House Appropriations Committee approved the Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) Appropriations bill on July 13th. Despite the President including \$207 million for the COPS Hiring Program, and increase over the fiscal 2017 funding level, House Appropriators continue their efforts to eliminate the program in the spending measure. Amendments to include funding for the COPS Hiring Program were voted down on party line. However, the CJS appropriations bill was strong on other law enforcement grant programs, including NAPO's other priority grant programs: Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) Program, the Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP) Grant Program, and the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act (MIOTCRA).

The bill would fund Byrne JAG at \$500 million, which is almost double the President's proposal and \$24 million more than fiscal 2017. The BVP Program remains steady at \$22.5 million as does MIOTCRA at \$12 million. The spending measure also includes \$20 million for the Adam Walsh Act, \$103 million to fight opioids, \$11 million for anti-meth programs through the COPS Office and \$10 million for active shooter police training.

It is uncertain how and when Congress will pass appropriations measures for fiscal 2018, given that the appropriations process started so late this year. Given the time crunch, House Republicans have been discussing the idea of passing an Omnibus Appropriations bill, one bill that includes all 12 of the appropriations measures, rather than trying to pass each bill individually. By the end of this week, the House Appropriations Committee will have approved all 12 bills, giving the House the ability to take up an omnibus measure before leaving at the end of July for August recess.

However, Congress first needs to negotiate a budget agreement in order to set spending levels and avoid returning to the spending cuts imposed by the Budget Control Act in 2013. Those cuts, also referred to as "sequestration", would mandate automatic across-the-board cuts to all departments and agencies to meet the budget levels set in the Act. A budget proposal supported by only Republicans can pass the House, but it is almost certain to fall flat in the Senate where bipartisan agreement is necessary.

NAPO will continue to work with lawmakers to ensure the COPS Hiring Program is funded in fiscal 2018 and that there is adequate funding provided for our priority grant programs. If you have any questions, please contact Andy Edmiston at aedmiston@napo.org.

NAPO on the Hill: Social Security Oversight

On June 29, the House Ways and Means Subcommittees on Social Security and Oversight held a joint hearing regarding the complexities and challenges of Social Security coverage and payroll compliance for state and local governments. The purpose of the hearing was to see how effectively the Social Security Administration (SSA), the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and State Social Security Administrators work together to provide Social Security coverage to public employees.

NAPO attended the hearing to ensure that mandatory coverage for all state and local public employees was not part of the discussion. The Chairman of the Subcommittee on Social Security, Sam Johnson (R-TX), stated in his opening statement that mandatory Social Security was not the intent of the hearing nor part of the discussion. While most Committee member statements and questions to witnesses that followed did not raise the issue, the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight, Vern Buchanan (R-FL), did have a line of questioning that was concerning to NAPO even though it was not specifically regarding mandatory Social Security. Chairman Buchanan had concerns regarding the financial stability of public pension plans and what, if any, is the federal government's responsibility to bail out failing and mismanaged plans or ensure that plan participants have some sort of retirement on which they can rely.

Just as NAPO opposes mandatory Social Security coverage for all state and local public employees, we also oppose federal intervention into public pension systems. Chairman Buchanan's questions did not delve too deep into what would be the federal government's role in public pensions, and when he was told by the witness for the IRS that the federal government had no liability for failing plans, he ended his questions.

NAPO met with Chairman Buchanan's committee staff following the hearing to discuss the reasoning behind his questions and ensure he understands the importance of public pensions for state and local law enforcement. His staff assured us that he has no intention of trying to move mandatory Social Security or support federal interference in state and local public pension systems. Chairman Buchanan was just trying to better understand if there was an intersection between state and local government compliance with Social Security laws and public pension systems.

After this hearing, NAPO believes that mandatory Social Security is not on the table in Congressional conversations on Social Security reform. We will continue to monitor the issue, but will focus our efforts on repealing or reforming the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP).

If you have any questions about this hearing or Social Security issues, please contact Andy Edmiston at aedmiston@napo.org.

NAPO in the News

On July 16, NAPO Executive Director Bill Johnson was quoted in a *My Statesman* (from the *Austin American-Statesman*) article entitled, "Carbon monoxide illness linked to Ford SUVs hits Austin police hardest". The article focuses on the ongoing carbon monoxide issues with the Ford Explorer Police Interceptor and how the Austin, Texas police department has the highest numbers of officers suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning in the nation. Johnson spoke on why police officers are being exposed to this deadly gas at such high rates.

"Bill Johnson, executive director for the National Association of Police Organizations in Alexandria, Va., said there are no statistics he's aware of that show which vehicles are most common among law enforcement, but departments have shifted to SUVs 'because they carry more equipment, carry more people.'

He said law enforcement officials are likely more susceptible to carbon monoxide exposure than other drivers because their vehicles are left idling while they fill out reports, talk to someone or safeguard traffic.

'Exposing the occupants and, from our point of view, police officer drivers, to poison is a grave concern of ours,' Johnson said. 'You're endangering the safety and the lives of our officers.'"

The full article is available at: <http://www.mystatesman.com/news/carbon-monoxide-illness-linked-ford-suvs-hits-austin-police-hardest/DMT9MbkXqGoVF8pKN72qYM/>

NAPO will continue to ensure our members' voices are heard loud and clear on the Hill, with the Administration, and in the media. If you have any questions about the publication cited above, please contact Bill Johnson at: bjohnson@napo.org.

NAPO Endorses Christopher Wray for FBI Director

Prior to his confirmation hearing on July 13 before the Senate Judiciary Committee, NAPO endorsed Christopher Wray to be the next Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. NAPO Executive Director Bill Johnson conducted a phone interview with Mr. Wray during which Mr. Wray spoke of his high regard for the importance of a collaborative partnership between the FBI and state and local law enforcement and ensuring the rank-and-file view gets heard.

Mr. Wray has an extensive career involving criminal litigation and investigations, including significant experiences at the Department of Justice (DOJ) as Principal Associate Deputy Attorney General and Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division. He also served several years as a United States Attorney for Northern District of Georgia.

Mr. Wray is known for being an exceptional lawyer and is considered a leading litigator in government investigation and white-collar crime by *Chambers USA*, *Best Lawyers in America*, *Who's Who* and *Legal 500*. Most importantly, he has the endorsement of the rank-and-file agents who he would be leading as FBI Director.

NAPO believes Mr. Wray has the experience and expertise necessary to serve our nation well as FBI Director and we are proud to endorse his nomination.

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