



The Washington Report

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

March 6, 2026

NAPO Backed Bill to Improve PSOB Program Introduced

NAPO has been frustrated with the deficiencies in the Public Safety Officer's Benefits (PSOB) Program for far too long. Over nearly the past 10 years, we worked with Congress to enact four laws to improve the transparency and accountability of the PSOB Program and expand eligibility for PSOB death and disability benefits: Public Safety Officers' Benefits Improvement Act of 2017, Safeguarding America's First Responders Act of 2020, Protecting America's First Responders Act of 2021, and the Public Safety Officer Support Act of 2022. While PSOB has worked to implement the provisions expanding eligibility for benefits, it has failed to execute many of the transparency and accountability provisions that were included in these Acts, making it difficult for it to efficiently and effectively help claimants and determine claims.

PSOB claimants – both officers catastrophically injured in the line of duty and the families of officers who died in the line of duty – continually reach out to NAPO asking for help with their claims that have been dragging on for three or four years, some even up to twelve years with no understanding why PSOB is taking so long to determine their claim. It is unacceptable that these brave men and women and their families are being treated in such an abhorrent manner.

NAPO worked with Senators Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Ted Cruz (R-TX) on the **Officer John Barnes and Chief Michael Ansbro Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program Expansion Act**, which would:

- Extend PSOB eligibility and partial benefits to officers who are permanently, but not totally, disabled and are unable to perform any gainful work as a public safety officer as a direct result of the injury;
- Require the PSOB Office to complete a death or disability determination within 270 days of receiving a complete claim;
- Expedite claims processing for officers already certified for benefits through the World Trade Center Health Program (WTCHP) or the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund (VCF); and
- Direct BJA to implement September 2024 Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommendations to establish updated program processes and administrative procedures to improve transparency and accountability within the program.

Upon its introduction, NAPO Executive Director Bill Johnson stated:

"The Public Safety Officer's Benefits Program is a vital lifeline for officers and families who have just experienced a horrible tragedy, providing much-needed death, disability, and

education benefits. Unfortunately, the current state of the Program does little to instill confidence in officers and their families that the federal government will do its part to take care of them. The Officer John Barnes and Chief Michael Ansbro Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program Expansion Act of 2026 would make vital improvements to the program and ensure that the survivors of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty and officers catastrophically injured in the line of duty are provided every available resource and benefit in a timely and transparent manner. NAPO stands with Senators Gillibrand and Cruz in support of this important bill and thanks them for their efforts on behalf of our nation's law enforcement community."

There must be transparency and accountability in the PSOB Program to make certain that it is being implemented as Congress intended – to unequivocally honor and support officers and their families who have sacrificed so much in service to their communities. The Officer John Barnes and Chief Michael Ansbro Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program Expansion Act would make the vital changes needed to ensure the program honors those sacrifices.

We thank Senators Gillibrand and Cruz for their support and leadership in our efforts to improve the PSOB Program for our nation's public safety officers.

NAPO Pushes for Inclusion of HELPER Act in Senate Affordable Housing Package

As the Senate was preparing to consider a major affordable housing package, the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act, NAPO made a push to Senate leadership and the Administration to support our efforts to include the Homes for Every Local Protector, Educator, and Responder (HELPER) Act in the legislation. NAPO sent [a letter](#) to Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Chairman Tim Scott (R-SC) and Ranking Member Elizabeth Warren urging the inclusion of this important bill to not only help address housing affordability issues, but also the recruitment and retention crisis the law enforcement profession is currently facing.

The Senate began debate on the housing package on March 4. As the HELPER Act was not integrated into the base bill, we are actively supporting Senator Ashley Moody's (R-FL) efforts to add it as an amendment to the ROAD to Housing Act, reaching out to every Senator urging their support. Votes on amendments are expected early next week.

Like many public servants, law enforcement officers serve and protect our nation and our communities for modest wages, and they often face financial obstacles when buying a home in today's competitive housing market. Especially with interest rates rising, many officers and their families have found it difficult to afford to purchase homes, making it harder for them to stay and live in the communities they serve.

[Police1](#) conducted a survey in 2021 of 319 police departments where it was found that a staggering 68% of reporting departments stated that high housing costs are hindering their hiring process. By creating a new first time homebuyer loan program through the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) that aims to remove the biggest financial barriers for buying a house – the down payment requirement and a monthly insurance premium requirement – the HELPER Act would provide public safety officers with access to affordable homeownership. The Program created by this bill would help the men and women who have chosen to serve their communities buy homes which might otherwise not been possible.

Please monitor NAPO's website and social media for updates on the bill. Join our efforts and [reach out to your Senators](#) to urge them to support Senator Moody's amendment to include the HELPER Act in the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act.

Congress Tackles Sanctuary City Policies

The fight against "sanctuary city" policies is gaining steam in Congress, with the House Judiciary Committee marking up the Shut Down Sanctuary Cities Act on March 5, and the Senate Budget Committee looking to hold a hearing on "Sanctuary Cities: The Cost of Undermining Law and Order" focused on Chairman Lindsey Graham's (R-SC) End Sanctuary Cities Act.

NAPO supports the elimination of sanctuary jurisdictions. Sanctuary policies make it difficult for law enforcement to effectively protect communities from violent criminal aliens. The country's immigration system relies on local law enforcement complying with immigration detainer requests from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to give federal law enforcement an opportunity to take the individual into custody. However, we oppose penalizing state and local law enforcement agencies for policies they did not enact. The Shut Down Sanctuary Cities Act would make sanctuary cities ineligible for certain grants through the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, including the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne-JAG) program and Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grants.

In addition to ensuring that state and local law enforcement continue to have access to vital federal grant programs, NAPO strongly believes that any legislation ending sanctuary policies must provide legal protections for law enforcement officers who comply with an immigration detainer. Several courts have ruled that local law enforcement officers may be sued for violating the Fourth Amendment if they comply with an immigration detainer, even if the detainer was lawfully issued and the detention would have been legal if carried out by DHS.

The NAPO-backed Stop Dangerous Sanctuary Cities Act and the Shut Down Sanctuary Cities Act both state that local law enforcement officers have legal authority to comply with immigration detainers and will be held harmless for their compliance. NAPO is working with Senator Graham's staff to include similar language in the End Sanctuary Cities Act.

While there is an appetite from Republicans in Congress to address the issue of sanctuary cities, they are facing near unified opposition from Democrats, making it unlikely these bills will be enacted. NAPO will continue to monitor these bills and work to ensure state and local officers are legally protected.

NAPO on the Hill: Law Enforcement Grants; FirstNet Reauthorization

FY 27 COPS and Byrne JAG Grant Funding

As Congressional appropriators are preparing to start tackling the Fiscal Year 2027 spending bills, NAPO is supporting the efforts of House Law Enforcement Caucus Co-Chairs John Rutherford (R-FL) and Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ) to garner cosigners for their letter to the House Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee asking for the highest possible funding for the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program and Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Hiring Program.

In Fiscal 2026, the COPS Program was appropriated \$800 million with the COPS Hiring Program receiving just over \$253 million of that funding, and Byrne JAG was allocated \$964 million. Given that this year marks the United States' 250th birthday and FIFA World Cup games are being played in major cities across the country, state and local law enforcement will need every resource and funding available to support their efforts to keep our communities safe. We are working to ensure that vital state and local law enforcement assistance programs remain sufficiently funded to meet their needs.

FirstNet Reauthorization

NAPO sent **a letter** to the leadership of the House Energy and Commerce Committee expressing our priorities for reauthorizing the First Responder Network (FirstNet) Authority and met with staff of Congresswoman Jennifer McClellan (D-VA), who is championing FirstNet reauthorization, to discuss our primary concerns.

FirstNet is a nationwide broadband network dedicated to emergency responders and the public safety community. We are urging lawmakers to maintain it as an independent agency within the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and clearly codify that the FirstNet Authority Board, not the NTIA, sets network strategy, approves and executes investments, directs public safety engagement, and evaluates the FirstNet Chief Executive Officer. We also support the expansion of the FirstNet Authority Board to ensure public safety professionals have a stronger voice and representation.

It is vital that the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network maintains the ability to provide ruthless preemption services for public safety, which enables public safety officers on FirstNet to communicate and coordinate during emergencies, large events, or other situations where commercial networks can become congested. This is a mission-critical service that ensures first responders can effectively protect the public in any situation.

NAPO is calling for the reauthorization of the FirstNet Authority to continue the expansion of the public safety network coverage into rural and underserved areas. Revenues and sustainability fees must be reinvested back into FirstNet for coverage, capacity, resiliency, cybersecurity, and innovation, and not be allowed to be diverted for NTIA or other Department of Commerce expenditures or programs. Further, the FirstNet Authority Board must be allowed to make such reinvestment decisions in a transparent and accountable manner without additional bureaucratic hurdles.

It is vitally important that the FirstNet Authority remains an independent agency with a strong Board that has the authority to make decisions to protect and expand the public safety network. We thank the Committee and Congresswoman McClellan for their consideration of the needs and priorities of the practitioners on the street who rely on FirstNet and we will continue to work with them until we can fully get behind legislation to reauthorize this vital public safety communications network.

NAPO Endorses Safe Access to Cash Act

NAPO pledged our support for the Safe Access to Cash Act (S. 3798), sponsored by Senators Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Ruben Gallego (D-AZ). The bill ensures that robberies involving off-site automatic teller machines (ATMs) receive federal penalties equal to those imposed for on-site robberies of banks. The Federal Bank Robbery Act of 1934 currently only protects banks and financial institutions, not standalone ATMs in malls, convenience stores, and public locations.

ATM-related crime, including robberies, physical attacks, and "jackpotting" (using malware to force machines to dispense thousands in cash), is rising in the U.S., increasing the threat to public safety. By imposing stricter penalties for these robberies, the Safe Access to Cash Act will act as a deterrent and protect small businesses and their customers.

DHS Shutdown Continues

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has been shut down for over three weeks as Congress and the Administration are at a standstill over reforms to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) after the shootings of Alex Pretti and Renee Nicole Good by ICE agents in Minneapolis, Minnesota. On March 5, President Trump announced that DHS Secretary Kristi Noem will be stepping down from the position and he is nominating Senator Markwayne Mullin (R-OK) to replace her. Secretary Noem has been the face of the Administration's immigration enforcement efforts and has received criticism from both sides of the aisle in Congress.

The replacement of Secretary Noem does not seem to have changed Democrats stance on funding DHS as they continue to call for ICE reforms. Republicans are pushing back, stating the Department needs to be funded and fully functional after the United States and Israel began bombing Iran on February 28 to effectively protect the homeland from terrorist threats.

Although the Administration and Congressional Democratic leadership have been trading proposals, there does not seem to be an end in sight with both sides dug in. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) employees will miss their first paychecks mid-March, Secret Service agents are working without pay, and thousands of DHS employees are currently furloughed including those of the Office of State and Local Law Enforcement (OSLLE). Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) are not impacted by the shutdown as the agencies received \$75 billion in additional funds as part of the One Big Beautiful Bill last year.

NAPO continues to monitor the impact of the shutdown as well as the policies proposed to reform ICE operations as any new requirements for ICE agents could very well impact state and local law enforcement officers.

Register Today for NAPO's Annual Lobby Day & Legislative Luncheon

Don't miss the opportunity to join NAPO on May 14th for our Annual Lobby Day & Legislative Luncheon on Capitol Hill. This is a great opportunity to lobby Congressional Representatives and Senators on behalf of your members concerning the issues which affect law enforcement. Prior to lobbying Capitol Hill, plan to attend NAPO's Legislative Breakfast for an update on NAPO's legislative priorities, results to date from the 119th Congress, and to receive handouts to use during your Hill visits.

Please Register online or complete the attached registration form and return to NAPO at aedmiston@napo.org or eloranger@napo.org by MAY 1, 2026

If you want assistance setting up your Capitol Hill meetings, contact NAPO's Director of Government Affairs, Andy Edmiston, no later than May 1 at aedmiston@napo.org or (703) 549-0775.

May 14 Schedule of Events		
Registration	Omni Shoreham Hotel	8:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.
Legislative Breakfast	Omni Shoreham Hotel	8:45 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.
Capitol Hill Visits	Capitol Hill	10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
NAPO Legislative Luncheon	Capitol Hill Room TBA	12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Capitol Hill Visits	Capitol Hill	1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

The registration fee of \$150.00 per person includes the Legislative Update Breakfast, handouts for your Congressional visits, and the Legislative Luncheon. **Advanced Registration is required.** Please contact Elizabeth Loranger, NAPO's Director of Events, at (800) 322-6278 or eloranger@napo.org if you have any questions regarding registration or hotel arrangements.

May 14th will be here before you know it. Register today!

NAPO's Legislative Positions & Sponsor/Cosponsor Updates

You can now see if your U.S. Representatives and Senators support NAPO's priority legislation on our new interactive [Sponsor/Cosponsor map](#) on our website. The interactive map accompanies the latest "[Legislative Positions](#)" document, which is also available on the NAPO website under "News and Political Action". 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 119th Congress. The map and Legislative Positions document are continually updated to reflect the work we are doing on Capitol Hill.

Please monitor NAPO's website, www.napo.org, and Facebook page: [National Association of Police Organizations](#), and follow us on X at [NAPOpolice](#) for breaking news and updates.