



### Senate Begins Debate on Public Safety Collective Bargaining Bill



Former PBA attorney Bill Johnson is the Executive Director of NAPO.

The National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO) is a coalition of law enforcement unions and associations from across the United States that serves to advance the interests of America's law enforcement and corrections officers through legislative and legal advocacy, political action and education. Founded in 1978, NAPO now represents more than 2,000 police unions and associations, 236,000 sworn law enforcement officers, 11,000 retired officers and more than 100,000 citizens who share a common dedication to fair and effective crime control and law enforcement. Florida PBA, Palm Beach County PBA, Dade County PBA, and Coastal Florida PBA are members of NAPO.

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On Tuesday, May 13, the Senate began what looked like a promising debate of the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act (H.R. 980), a bipartisan bill that will guarantee that law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical service workers in all 50 states have the right to discuss workplace issues with their employers. The bill provides a framework for such discussions, while respecting the right and flexibility of states to write their own laws for public sector workers. Importantly, H.R. 980 prohibits strikes and does not call for mandatory arbitration. States that offer equal or greater collective bargaining rights will be exempt from this federal statute. This legislation will not overturn current collective bargaining laws – it will only provide basic collective bargaining rights to those who currently do not have them.

During the debate of H.R. 980, however, the bill was unfortunately caught up in partisan politics. The Republicans pushed their minority right to amend the bill, but took incredible steps to do so by offering non-germane amendments – specifically a veteran's benefits proposal – and poison pill amendments to the bill. **Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid** (D-NV) became furious with these tactics and on Wednesday evening, May 14, he made a motion to end debate on H.R. 980.

Upon hearing this, NAPO took action. We knew we did not have enough votes to win cloture and that the vote would mean the defeat of H.R. 980. NAPO reached out to both Majority Leader Reid and **Minority Leader Mitch McConnell** (R-KY) to urge them to come to an agreement so that debate could continue on the bill in a fair and timely manner. On Thursday night, May 15, Senators McConnell and Reid had a colloquy on the Senate floor regarding the need to come to an agreement and move forward with debate on the Collective Bargaining bill. Consequently, Senator Reid cancelled the cloture vote that was scheduled for May 16.

However, **Senator Michael Enzi** of Wyoming is proving to be a much more difficult hurdle to get over. He has offered several amendments, all of them poison pills aimed at killing the bill, and he has not been willing to come to an agreement or compromise on the number of amendments to be debated. Nonetheless, after the dialogue between Senators Reid and McConnell on the Senate floor, we are very hopeful that we will reach a deal with Senator Enzi.

NAPO expects debate to continue on H.R. 980 the week of May 19, after the Senate works on the emergency war supplemental bill, which has legislative priority over H.R. 980 under Senate rules. If we do not hit any more obstacles in the road, it could be possible that we have a final vote on H.R. 980 before Congress leaves for Memorial Day Recess. If we are able to pass the bill, the next hurdle will be overcoming a Presidential Veto.

NAPO firmly believes that the public safety is best protected through effective partnerships between first responders on the front lines and the agencies that employ them. H.R. 980 will ensure that all public safety officers have the opportunity to meet with local officials to discuss how they do their jobs and how best to protect the public. In July of last year, NAPO finally got the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act passed by the House – the first time in the 13 years we've been fighting for its passage that the House has passed the bill. As the fight continues in the Senate, NAPO is doing everything in its power to ensure passage of this important bill in order that all public safety officers are granted the right to collectively bargain.

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact **Andy Mournighan**, NAPO's Government Affairs Director, at (703) 549-0775. With your help, we can give all public safety officers the right to collectively bargain and end this 13-year fight.

### NAPO Urges Appropriators to Restore Funding to Byrne-Jag for Fiscal 2008

As Congress prepares to take up an emergency supplemental bill to fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, NAPO is calling on lawmakers to include in that bill funding for domestic efforts in the war on crime and terrorism. NAPO is urging Senate and House appropriators to provide approximately a half million dollars for the Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne-JAG) program. This additional funding would restore the program to the level previously approved by the House and Senate of approximately \$600 million in the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations bill for fiscal 2008.

The Byrne-JAG program is the only comprehensive federal crime-fighting program. It allows for a true system-wide approach, enabling communities to target resources to their most pressing local needs. This important program funds state and local law enforcement, including multi-jurisdictional drug and gang task forces, information sharing and technology, county jails, prosecutors, drug courts, juvenile delinquency and drug treatment programs. In fact, it is the only source of federal funding for multi-jurisdictional task forces and prosecutors.

NAPO is exceedingly concerned about the consequences being faced by America's law enforcement and the communities they serve due to the steep cut in funding to the Byrne-JAG program in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008. The \$170 million appropriated by Congress for fiscal year 2008 is insufficient to meet the growing needs of our nation's law enforcement. This deep cut in funding has resulted in the closing of drug and gang task forces in California, Nevada, and Texas and throughout the Mid-West, at a time when those forces were making tremendous strides in the fight against crime. States and municipalities

are being forced to contemplate laying-off law enforcement officers because of tightened budgets due to the lack of Byrne-JAG money. Additionally, cold case units, identity theft investigations, school violence prevention programs, and victims and witness protection services are all now feeling the strain of this cut.

However, this is not only a law enforcement issue; it is also a homeland security issue. Since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks law enforcement officers have taken on additional duties to protect our nation from another attack. As a result, today, local police departments, already understaffed due to the lack of resources to hire new officers, must place officers into Drug, Gang and Terrorism Task Forces, as well as protect critical infrastructure during periods of heightened national threat advisory levels, often at the expense of street patrols. Additionally, many cities and municipalities, because of tight budget constraints, are forcing officers to take on counterterrorism duties on top of their community policing duties, adding to their responsibilities while patrolling the streets.

Over the past 15 years, state and local law enforcement officers and the agencies they serve have made tremendous strides in reducing the level of crime and violence in our communities with the aid of federal assistance and support given to them through the Byrne-JAG program. Additionally, NAPO is proud to report that there has not been a major attack on our homeland since September 11, 2001. This is due in no small part to the tools given to state and local law enforcement through this program. These resources have improved information sharing, cooperation between departments and agencies, equipment, and training, which, in turn, has led to more effective and

### Missing Person Report

A woman reported the disappearance of her husband to the police.

The officer in charge looked at the photograph she handed him, questioned her, and then asked if she wished to give her husband any message if they found him.

"Yes," she replied readily. "Tell him, Mother didn't come after all."