

After months of work, it has finally become evident to a majority of lawmakers that the excise tax will adversely affect middle-class Americans far more than they originally projected. There is significant support in the Senate and House to remove the tax from the final legislation. 180 democratic members of the House signed on a letter of opposition from **Congressman Joe Courtney** (D-CT) to **Speaker Nancy Pelosi**.

NAPO, together with other organizations representing state and local government employees, is working with

lawmakers to ensure that the excise tax is not included in the final health care bill. Congress needs to recognize that this excise tax penalizes middle-class, hard working Americans, many of whom serve their country in public service, and that is unacceptable. Please visit NAPO's website, www.napo.org, to read NAPO's letters to House and Senate leadership and for updates on this and other issues.

If you have any questions or would like further information about NAPO's efforts, please contact the NAPO office at (703) 549-0775.

Congress Looks To Join NAPO's Efforts To Promote State Move Over Laws

On November 19, 2009, **Congressman Brad Ellsworth** (D-IN) introduced the "Emergency Responders Highway Safety Act of 2009," H.R. 4104, which would help increase awareness of state "Move Over" laws and how those laws help protect the law enforcement officers who risk their lives serving the public.

According to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, more than 150 law enforcement officers have been killed since 1999 after being struck by vehicles along our nation's highways and roads. In 2007, to help prevent such needless deaths, NAPO, together with the National Safety Commission and the National Sheriffs Association, founded "Move Over, America," a nationwide public awareness campaign. It was the first coordinated effort to educate Americans about Move Over laws. Forty-

seven states have now passed Move Over laws that require a motorist to change lanes or reduce speed if passing a highway emergency responder.

Despite our efforts, a large majority of Americans still have not heard of Move Over laws or the penalties associated with not complying with the laws. As a result, emergency responders continue to be killed by vehicles along our highways. NAPO believes H.R. 4104 will greatly assist our efforts by creating a grant program for nonprofits to educate the public on these important highway safety laws and help protect the lives of countless law enforcement officers and emergency responders.

For more information on state move over laws, please visit www.moveoveramerica.com.

Report States Performance Measures Would Enhance PSOB Office Claims Management

The Government Accountability Office (GAO), the investigative arm of Congress, was asked by **Senator Mary Landrieu** (D-LA) to look into the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) program's claim management process. Specifically, Senator Landrieu asked the GAO to examine a) the extent to which claimants receive PSOB program benefits, b) any issues raised by state and local agencies about the program and the claims process, and c) the degree to which the PSOB program follows recognized government standards and guidelines for effective program management.

On October 29, the GAO released the report of its findings. It found that while all education claims and over three-quarters of death claims opened between 2006 and 2008 were closed and approved as of April 2009, only about one-third of disability claims initiated during that same period had been determined. While education and death claims were processed, on average, in under a year, disability claims took between 17 and 26 months.

That is an unacceptable amount of time for an officer and his family to wait for these much-needed benefits.

Additionally, the GAO found that even as state and local agencies are aware of the PSOB death benefit for officers killed in the line of duty, a surprising majority of agencies do not know of the disability and education benefits available through the program. The GAO report also noted that most agencies face challenges in trying to establish eligibility for claimants. These challenges, in turn, equate to what the PSOB Office considers incomplete claims, which slow down the claim determination process. The lack of education and outreach from the PSOB program to its constituents in the public safety community is primarily to blame for these issues.

While the PSOB program has made significant steps

towards improving the processing of claims and communicating with claimants on the status of their claims, it does not have a system for performance measurement. The GAO concluded that this lack of performance monitoring in the areas of claims processing, outreach, and claimant assistance diminishes the PSOB Office's ability to effectively pinpoint and fix problems.

NAPO agrees with the GAO report and believes that a more focused and systematic approach to managing the PSOB program - including performance measures - will ensure that the program achieves its ultimate goal of "effectively and efficiently administering benefits that honor the work of many public officers who give up their lives or are injured in the line of duty." Furthermore, NAPO feels there is still work to be done in order to make certain that all public safety officers who have become permanently and completely disabled in the line of duty and can no longer hold a meaningful job are given the benefits they deserve in recognition for all they have sacrificed.

NAPO has been working with Senator Landrieu on legislation, the First Responders Support Act of 2009, which will improve and expand the PSOB program. The legislation will increase benefits, expedite claims and help the program with its education and outreach to the first responder community. On December 16, 2009, Senator Landrieu introduced the bill in the Senate as S. 2885, and **Congressman Charlie Melancon** (D-LA) introduced it in the House as H.R. 4338.

In addition to this legislation, NAPO continues to work to ensure that the PSOB program meets the needs of the families of officers who so selflessly gave their lives for the safety of our communities.

Justice Department Announces New Online Resource For Criminal Justice Community

The Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs (OJP) announced on December 1, the availability of a new single, searchable online document of current funding opportunities and new initiatives from OJP. The *Office of Justice Programs Fiscal Year 2010 Program Plan* features the latest and most complete information about the resources available, as well as guidance on how to apply for funding and assistance.

The Program Plan is divided into 10 thematically

organized chapters, each representing both an issue that cuts across OJP bureaus and offices and a challenge identified by the criminal and juvenile justice fields. It also contains valuable information regarding resources available to the justice community. Included is information regarding both competitive and non competitive programs, opportunities for training and technical assistance, and other resources. The program plan is available online at: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ProgramPlan. ●

ERUDITE CONCEPTS

If you're not familiar with the work of Boswell D. Rabbitsmith, he's the famous erudite scientist who once said: "I woke up one morning, and all of my stuff had been stolen and replaced by exact duplicates."

His mind sees things differently than most of us do, to our amazement and amusement. (He also makes his living as a comedian by the name of Steve Wright...) Here are some of his gems:

I'd kill for a Nobel Peace Prize.

Borrow money from pessimists — they don't expect it back.

82.7% of all statistics are made up on the spot.

A conscience is what hurts when all your other parts feel so good.

A clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory.

If you want the rainbow, you got to put up with the rain.

All those who believe in psychokinesis, raise my hand.

The early bird may get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese.

I almost had a psychic girlfriend, but she left me before we met.

OK, so what's the speed of dark?

How can you tell when you're out of invisible ink?

If everything seems to be going well, you have obviously overlooked something.

Depression is merely anger without enthusiasm.

When everything seems to be coming your way, maybe you're in the wrong lane.

If Barbie is so popular, why do you have to buy her friends?

What happens if you get scared half to death...twice?

Why do psychics have to ask you for your name?

If at first you don't succeed, destroy all evidence that you tried.

A conclusion is the place where you got tired of thinking.

Experience is something you don't get until just after you need it.

To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism; to steal from many is research.

The sooner you fall behind, the more time you'll have to catch up.

Everyone has a photographic memory; some just don't have film.

If your car could travel at the speed of light, would your headlights work?