



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE ORGANIZATIONS, INC.

Representing America's Finest

317 South Patrick Street. ~ Alexandria, Virginia ~ 22314-3501
(703) 549-0775 ~ (800) 322-NAPO ~ Fax: (703) 684-0515
www.napo.org ~ Email: info@napo.org

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

June 8, 2016

MICHAEL McHALE
President

*Florida Police Benevolent
Association*

JOHN A. FLYNN
Vice President

*Patrolmen's Benevolent
Association of New York City*

TODD HARRISON
Recording Secretary

*Combined Law Enforcement
Association of Texas*

SEAN M. SMOOT
Treasurer

*Police Benevolent & Protective
Association of Illinois*

MARC KOVAR
Sergeant-at-Arms

*New Jersey State Policemen's
Benevolent Association*

CRAIG D. LALLY
Executive Secretary

*Los Angeles Police
Protective League*

RICHARD WEILER
Parliamentarian

*Police Officers Labor Council
of Michigan*

WILLIAM J. JOHNSON, CAE
Executive Director and
General Counsel

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Leahy:

On behalf of the National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO), I am writing to you to express our strong support for your amendments to the Public Safety Officers Benefits Improvement Act (S. 2944).

NAPO is a coalition of police unions and associations from across the United States that serves to advance the interests of America's law enforcement through legislative and legal advocacy, political action, and education. Founded in 1978, NAPO now represents more than 1,000 police units and associations, 241,000 sworn law enforcement officers, and more than 100,000 citizens who share a common dedication to fair and effective crime control and law enforcement.

The Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program was designed to offer peace of mind to men and women seeking careers in public safety and to make a strong statement about the value that American Society places on the contributions of those who serve their communities in potentially dangerous circumstances. The current state of the PSOB Program, however, does little to instill confidence in officers that the federal government will do its part to take care of their loved ones should something happen, which is why the Public Safety Officers Benefits Improvement Act is so important.

Your amendments are consistent with NAPO's legislative goals of fixing the PSOB program, including restoring respect for the legal presumptions of the law. They address two of the concerns NAPO has with current PSOB policy: the education benefit age limitation and the Program's new abandonment policy. The first amendment would extend the current age limitation for children to receive the PSOB education benefits when the underlying benefit claim or education application is approved more than one year after it was filed. This would ensure that children of fallen or disabled public safety officers would still be eligible for education benefits if an adjudication delay causes them to age out of benefit eligibility before their claim is approved.

The second amendment would ensure that the Bureau of Justice Assistance uses all of its authorities – including its existing subpoena authority – to obtain necessary documentation from third parties before considering a claim abandoned. Under

current policy, the BJA seems too willing to consider a claim abandoned after one year of inactivity without putting in the effort necessary to finalize the claim.

Finally, you aim to ensure that all of these provisions, which aim to ensure that the families and survivors of public safety officers receive the benefits they deserve, will apply retroactively to those claimants who are currently waiting – some for years – to have their cases determined. With a backlog of over 1,000 cases within the PSOB Program, it is essential that the provisions of the Public Safety Officers Benefits Improvement Act apply to both claims that are currently pending as well as future claims.

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.

We thank you for your leadership on this issue and for offering these important amendments. If we can provide any assistance, please feel free to contact me at (703) 549-0775.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William J. Johnson', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

William J. Johnson, Esq., CAE
Executive Director