

PATHWAYS TO EXCELLENCE A SUCCESS // P. 40

# FOP

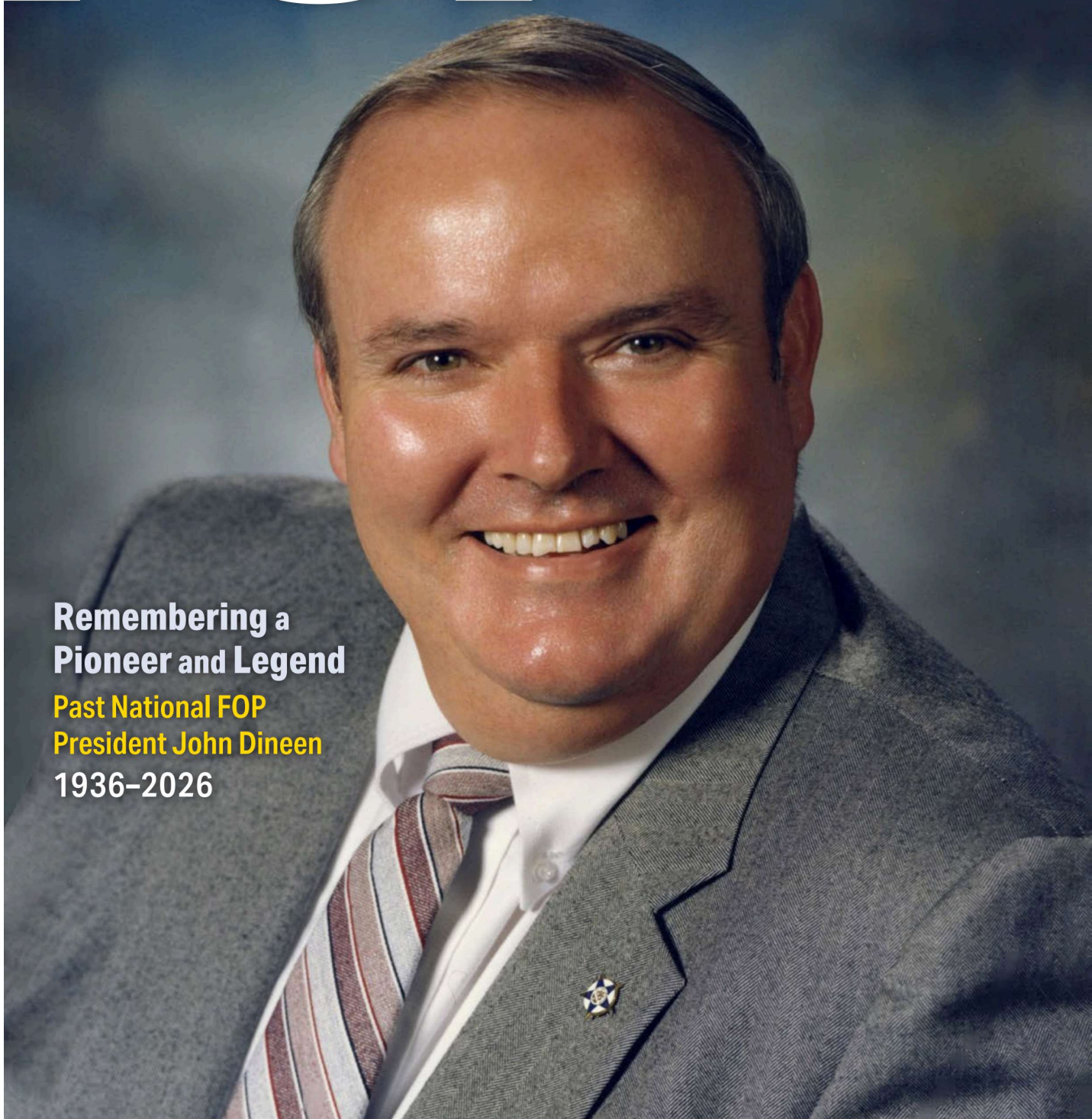


# JOURNAL

THE VOICE OF OUR NATION'S  
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## Remembering a Pioneer and Legend

Past National FOP  
President John Dineen

1936–2026



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Published by 911MEDIA®  
911MEDIA® is a division of Trade News International, Inc.  
For advertising call 877-DIAL-911 (342-5911) | [911MEDIA.com](http://911MEDIA.com)

For editorial submissions, send inquiries to [fopjournal@fop.net](mailto:fopjournal@fop.net).

For product guide submissions, email your press release and hi-res digital image to [news@911media.com](mailto:news@911media.com).



**THE FOP JOURNAL** is published monthly by the National Fraternal Order of Police, 701 Marriott Drive, Nashville, TN 37214 – 1-800-451-2711. Presort Non-Profit Standard, U.S. Postage Paid in Bolingbrook, IL, Permit No 1309. FOP membership includes a subscription to THE FOP JOURNAL. Subscriptions accepted from recognized law enforcement agencies, government officials and libraries. Non-member subscriptions \$32 a year; single copies \$8.

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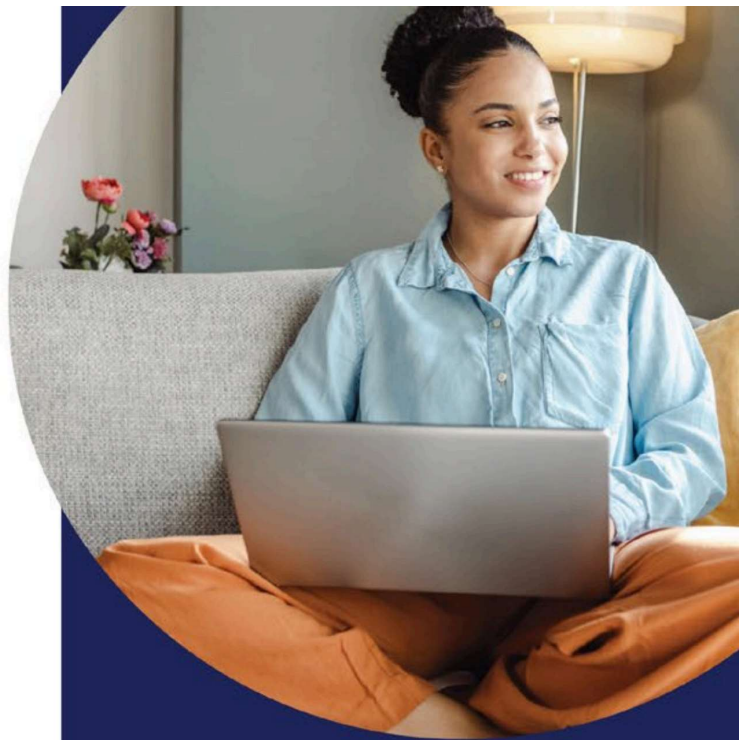
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# Federal Partnerships Deliver Results: A Renewed Focus on Safer Communities



// **WRITE TO US!** If you have further questions, contact Patrick Yoes at (504) 234-4300, or [pyoes@nationalfop.org](mailto:pyoes@nationalfop.org).

I recently had the honor of representing the FOP in Memphis at the “Making America Safe” roundtable, where President Donald Trump joined leaders of the Memphis Safe Task Force to highlight real progress in reducing violent crime through strong collaboration. I was proud to be joined by 21 FOP members, all of whom share a deep commitment to advancing public safety in their communities.

The roundtable brought together law enforcement leaders from across multiple jurisdictions, as well as federal partners, to discuss what is working — and just as importantly — how we can build on that success. The Memphis Safe Task Force stands as a powerful example of what can be achieved when agencies at every level of government align their efforts, share intelligence and operate with a unified purpose.

During the discussion, President Trump reaffirmed his strong support for the FOP and for the men and women who wear the badge. That recognition matters. It sends a clear message that those on the front lines of public safety are valued, supported and understood at the highest levels of leadership.

But beyond the words of support, what stood out most during this event was the results. Violent crime reduction is not an abstract goal — it is measurable, it is tangible and it is being achieved in places where law enforcement is empowered to do its job and provided with the tools necessary to succeed. The Memphis Safe Task Force is delivering those results through a coordinated, intelligence-driven approach that leverages local knowledge and federal resources.

This aligns directly with what we have emphasized in our National Board report: success in combating crime does not happen in isolation. It is the product of strong, sustained partnerships between local, state and federal agencies. When these partnerships are functioning effectively, they create a force multiplier — allowing agencies to do more together than any one entity could accomplish alone.

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**Keeping America safe is a shared responsibility. It requires coordination, commitment and leadership.**

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The FOP has been actively engaged at the national level to strengthen these partnerships. We have worked closely with the White House, federal agencies and congressional leaders to ensure that the voices of rank-and-file officers are heard. We have shared real-world examples from our members, highlighted the challenges they face and advocated for policies that support effective law enforcement operations.

Equally important, we have collaborated with other national law enforcement organizations to present a

united front on the issues that matter most. Our collective message has been consistent: public safety must remain a priority, and law enforcement must be given the resources, training and support necessary to protect our communities.

The work being done in Memphis demonstrates what is possible when that message is heard and acted upon. By combining targeted enforcement strategies with real-time intelligence sharing and coordinated operational planning, the Memphis Safe Task Force is addressing violent crime at its root. This is not just about enforcement — it is about prevention, disruption and long-term impact.

These efforts also underscore another critical point: law enforcement cannot succeed without trust and support. Officers must know that their leaders — at every level of government — stand behind them. They must have confidence that their work is valued and that their sacrifices are recognized.

As we look ahead, the FOP remains committed to strengthening these partnerships and expanding successful models like the Memphis Safe Task Force across the country. We will continue to advocate for policies that prioritize public safety, support our officers and foster collaboration among all levels of law enforcement.

Keeping America safe is a shared responsibility. It requires coordination, commitment and leadership. The progress we are seeing today is proof that when we work together — when we align our efforts and stay focused on the mission — we can make our communities safer. And that is a goal worth fighting for! **FOP**

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# Recognizing True Leadership

// **WRITE TO US!** If you have further questions, contact Jimmy Holderfield at (904) 813-0067, or [jholderfield@nationalfop.org](mailto:jholderfield@nationalfop.org).

**G**reetings, my brothers and sisters. I hope this April edition of the *Journal* finds you and your family well. I am glad to see spring is finally here and that we have returned to daylight saving time. Spring is also a time when things start ramping up for state lodges, with most holding board meetings or conferences. It's also a time when your National Executive Board stays busy attending those many meetings.

We just finished our inaugural Pathways to Excellence in Las Vegas, Nevada. It was a tremendous event, featuring six days of intense training. Whether your interest was in wellness, chaplaincy, labor, legal or lodge administration, there was a program block to fit your needs. Your National Executive Board made themselves available for "after-class" discussions on specific questions or issues. This outstanding training event would not have been the success it was without the behind-the-scenes work of Seminar Coordinator Stephanie Simpson, National Education Director Keith Turney and Director of Labor Services Roger Mayberry, who planned housing and meeting locations. We are excited to return to this wonderful venue next year at the South Point Hotel and Casino. If you missed this year's training, plan now for 2027.

Since we just finished this excellent leadership training, I want to share some thoughts. I am proud and honored that during my 35 years of service with the Jacksonville, Florida, Sheriff's Office, I rose through the ranks — starting as a line correctional officer, transitioning to patrol officer and ultimately retiring as a police director, the third-ranking administrator. During my tenure, I was promoted via assessment interviews, promotional exams or political appointments.

Prior to serving in appointed ranks, I held many FOP leadership positions,



Past National President John Dineen, National President Pat Yoes and National Secretary Jimmy Holderfield at the dedication ceremony renaming the Chicago FOP Lodge as the Chicago "John Dineen" Lodge #7 on November 15, 2023

including local lodge secretary, vice president and president, state vice president and president, and National sergeant at arms. The success I enjoyed in my agency was due largely to the leadership traits I learned from the FOP. This is not to say that I didn't receive extensive leadership training from the JSO, which I did, but the core of my leadership foundation came from the various training offered by my local and state lodges, as well as the National FOP lodge.

Take a close look at your own lodge officer duties and perform a self-assessment. If you are a lodge officer:

- Are you fulfilling your obligations?
- Are you attending meetings and participating in decision-making discussions?

- Are you attending to your office's duties?
- Do you help resolve conflicts, or do you stealthily fan the flames, creating chaos?
- Are you known to keep a sister's or brother's conversations confidential when asked?
- Do you demonstrate genuine care for your fellow members?
- Do you seek guidance from past or other leaders on how to best perform your duties?
- Are you condescending with your remarks, or do you listen attentively and respectfully, even when you don't agree?

Continued on page 12 >

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## SECRETARY'S MESSAGE

Continued from page 10 >

- Can you compromise?
- Do you wait until the last minute to raise concerns/objections after committees are ready for action?

When I was president of Jacksonville Lodge #5-30, I was meeting with the undersheriff to negotiate a disciplinary

action involving one of my members. During the discussion, Undersheriff Miley said to me, "Jimmy, you are an administrator just like us here on the command staff — with one big difference." I immediately became defensive and said, "No, sir, I am not like the command staff." He said, "Yes you are. You oversee the FOP budget. You enforce your constitution and bylaws. You interact with the community. You do news conferences, negotiate contracts, advocate for legislation benefiting your members and come to your members and their families' aid in times of need. The only difference between you and me..." — he pointed at his four gold stars on his epaulettes — "... is that I can tell an officer to do something and they will do it. You, on the other hand, don't have that power. You are a leader because your members follow your direction. You don't have the power to order them to do something, but they will do something for you, even if they don't want to, because they trust and believe in you. That's true leadership."

Speaking of leaders, it saddens me to report the loss of one of our beloved past National presidents, worthy President John Dineen. President Dineen served as our

National president from 1979–1981 while also serving the brothers and sisters of Chicago Lodge #7 as president. He served only one term as National president — not due to a challenged election, but because of his devotion to his local lodge. He performed the most noble act a member can do: he chose to apply his talents and energy to his members in Chicago.

As a young National FOP Executive Board member on President Dewey Stokes' team (1993–1995), I had the pleasure of receiving mentorship from Brother John. I asked him one day, "President John, why did you step away from being president?" He responded, "Jim, Chicago needed me more than the National." That is true leadership, and President Dineen didn't just talk it — he lived it.

As a side note, in 2023, Chicago President John Catanzara and the membership changed the name of the lodge to Chicago "John Dineen" Lodge #7. President Yoes, Second Vice President Hoyt and I attended the renaming ceremony. God bless the Dineen family and everything President John did for the Order.

Be safe, my sisters and brothers, and I look forward to seeing you soon. **FOP**

## UPCOMING EVENTS



### SPRING BOARD MEETING

APRIL 23–25, 2026

State Presidents Meeting – April 23  
National Board Meeting – April 24-25  
Anaheim Marriott Suites | Anaheim, CA  
Hotel Registration

State Presidents Meeting Registration

National Board & Committee Meeting Registration

## Support the NFOP PAC!

We need your support of the National Fraternal Order of Police Political Action Committee (NFOP PAC), which, like our grassroots activism, is an essential part of our National Legislative Program. The NFOP PAC allows us to support candidates who support our members and our profession. As the oldest and largest law enforcement labor organization in the United States, it is crucial we keep our PAC strong, so we can help the candidates who not only support our members but the entire law enforcement community. It is up to us to ensure that they get elected!

We need to increase member participation in our payroll deduction and monthly recurring credit card programs. Please help us advocate on your behalf and do so with the resources needed to be effective. Help us grow our PAC and amplify our voice in the nation's capital.



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# IN MEMORY OF A PIONEER AND LEGEND

John Dineen, retired Chicago Police Department, born on July 4, 1936, on the West Side of Chicago to the late Tom and Dorothy Dineen, passed away on March 25, 2026.

Beloved husband of Marilyn Dineen, née Callahan, for 68 years. Loving father to Karen (John) Kissane, Susan Dineen, Cindy (Norb) Sliwa, John Michael Dineen and Timothy (ret. CPD) (Sue) Dineen. Adored and devoted grandfather to AJ (CPD), Johnathan, Beth, Dave, Kyle, Kevin, Megan, Rose, Maggie and Maddie, and great-grandfather to 11. Fond brother of Tom (the late Jean) and Patricia Hennessy, and a revered uncle to many nieces and nephews.

John was a proud St. Mel's alumnus, an Army veteran and a devoted member of the Knights of Columbus. He was a longtime member of the Chicago P.D. and served for more than 20 years as the dedicated president of the Chicago Fraternal Order of Police, as well as a two-year term as president of the National Fraternal Order of Police. He was a champion for labor rights and officer benefits, whose decades of service and visionary leadership left a lasting impact on the department and all those he represented.

John served as National FOP president while also leading Lodge #7 in 1980. When Chicago police officers voted to unionize, securing a contract became his primary focus. After the FOP won the right to represent those officers, John made one of the most selfless decisions in leadership. Rarely does a leader at the top step aside for a greater cause, yet that is exactly what he did. He left National office to lead Lodge #7 to its first collective bargaining agreement in 1981 and later worked to secure those rights permanently through the Illinois Labor Relations Act of 1983. That choice is what sets him apart as a model of selfless leadership.

Above all else, John enjoyed spending time with his family and



John Dineen in 1979

friends. The family extends their heartfelt gratitude to his caretakers — Kathy, Lynn, Maria, Alice and nurse Margaret — for their kind and gentle service in the final chapter of his life.

In lieu of flowers or donations, please consider supporting the 100 Club of Illinois or Mercy Home for Boys & Girls. **FOP**



Dineen with his son, Jim



Dineen and National President Pat Yoes



Chicago Lodge President John Catanzara, Past National President Dineen, National President Yoes, National Secretary Jimmy Holderfield and National Second Vice President John Hoyt



National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund/NLEOMF.org

# National Police Week

## **MAY 5** **Annual Blue Mass**

St. Patrick Catholic Church  
(downtown D.C.); 12:10 p.m.

## **MAY 9** **National Police Week 5K**

Arlington, VA. Registration begins at 7 a.m.; race starts at 9 a.m. [tinyurl.com/2026-NPW5K](https://tinyurl.com/2026-NPW5K).

## **MAY 11** **National Police K-9 Memorial Service**

National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial;  
1 p.m. [tinyurl.com/K-9-Memorial-Service-2026](https://tinyurl.com/K-9-Memorial-Service-2026).

## **MAY 12** **Police Unity Tour Bike Ride-In and Ceremony**

National Law Enforcement Officers  
Memorial; 2 p.m. [policeunitytour.com](https://policeunitytour.com).

## **Law Enforcement United Arrival Ceremony**

Location and time TBD. [leunited.org](https://leunited.org).

## **Honor Guard and Police Unity Tour Reception**

National Law Enforcement Museum;  
7 p.m. Registration required. [tinyurl.com/  
Honor-Guard-Reception-2026](https://tinyurl.com/Honor-Guard-Reception-2026).

## **MAY 13** **Shomrim Society Jewish Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Service**

National Law Enforcement Officers  
Memorial; 10 a.m.

## **38th Annual Candlelight Vigil**

National Mall; 8 p.m. [NLEOMF.org/  
event/38th-annual-candlelight-vigil](https://NLEOMF.org/event/38th-annual-candlelight-vigil).

## **MAY 13–15** **Police Week Tent City**

Solace Outpost & El Rey — Navy Yard. Hosted by  
D.C. FOP State Lodge. [policeweektentcity.com](https://policeweektentcity.com).

**MAY 14**  
**Annual Steve Young**  
**Honor Guard and Pipe Band Tribute**

U.S. Capitol Reflecting Pool; 9 a.m.  
[policeweekhonorguard.com](http://policeweekhonorguard.com).

**Police Vehicle Display**

U.S. Capitol Reflecting Pool; 1 p.m.  
[tinyurl.com/Police-Vehicle-Display-2026](https://tinyurl.com/Police-Vehicle-Display-2026).

**Law Enforcement Emerald Societies**  
**Annual Memorial March**

Capitol Hill; 6 p.m. [nclees.org/memorial-march-and-service](http://nclees.org/memorial-march-and-service).

**C.O.P.S. Blue Honor Gala**

Washington Hilton Hotel; 6 p.m. Ticketed event. [tinyurl.com/COPS-gala-2026](https://tinyurl.com/COPS-gala-2026).

**MAY 14 & 16**  
**C.O.P.S. National Police**  
**Survivors' Conference**

Washington Hilton Hotel; 9 a.m. Registration required. [concernsofpolicesurvivors.org/aboutnpw](http://concernsofpolicesurvivors.org/aboutnpw).

**C.O.P.S. Kids/Teens Program**

Local law enforcement facilities;  
8 a.m. Registration required.  
[concernsofpolicesurvivors.org/aboutnpw](http://concernsofpolicesurvivors.org/aboutnpw).

**MAY 15**  
**45th Annual National Peace**  
**Officers' Memorial Service**

West Front of the U.S. Capitol; 12 p.m.  
For more information, contact Chair Matt Hagen at [fopmemorial@gmail.com](mailto:fopmemorial@gmail.com).



**Wreath-Laying Ceremony**

National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial; to be held immediately following the memorial service.

**Stand Watch for the Fallen**

National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial;  
12 p.m. [tinyurl.com/NPW-stand-watch-2026](https://tinyurl.com/NPW-stand-watch-2026).

**MAY 15 & 16**  
**Washington Nationals vs. Baltimore Orioles**  
**Law Enforcement Appreciation Games**

Nationals Park. [NLEOMF.org/event/washington-nationals-national-police-week-offer-2026](http://NLEOMF.org/event/washington-nationals-national-police-week-offer-2026).

**MAY 16**  
**C.O.P.S. Blue Family Barbecue**

Washington Hilton Hotel; 6 p.m.  
[concernsofpolicesurvivors.org/aboutnpw](http://concernsofpolicesurvivors.org/aboutnpw).

Schedule is subject to change. For more information,  
go to [policeweek.org](http://policeweek.org) and [NLEOMF.org](http://NLEOMF.org).

**Fraternal Order of Police National Memorial Committee**

Matthew Hagen  
CHAIR



# The **STRENGTH** in the **PAUSE**

## MOVING FORWARD BY STEPPING BACK

SHERRI MARTIN / DIRECTOR OF WELLNESS

**T**he radio finally goes quiet. It's a rare moment — engine idling, dashboard lights steady, the hum of the cruiser filling the silence where urgency usually lives. Just minutes ago, everything demanded attention: voices layered over each other, decisions made in seconds, the body moving faster than thought. And then, as suddenly as it began, it ends. The call clears. The street empties. The officer sits still.

In that stillness, something unfamiliar creeps in — not danger, not adrenaline, but awareness.

Policing is a profession defined by motion. Forward is the only direction that seems to exist. The next call, the next report, the next shift. There is always something waiting, something unresolved, something pulling attention outward. The job teaches officers to anticipate, to react and to push

through fatigue and discomfort without hesitation. Over time, that constant forward drive becomes more than a habit — it becomes identity.

But there is a cost to never stopping. Within the culture of policing, stillness can feel ominous — like a lapse in vigilance or a luxury that cannot be afforded. Time off is often framed as something to be earned after exhaustion, rather than something necessary to prevent it. Listening — to others and to oneself — can seem secondary to action. The result is a quiet accumulation: stress layered upon stress, call upon call, moment upon moment, with no space to process what any of it means.

Burnout rarely arrives all at once. It builds gradually, disguised as professionalism. It sounds like, "I'm fine." It looks like showing up, getting through the shift and doing it again tomorrow. But beneath that surface, something begins to erode. Patience shortens. Empathy dulls. The work

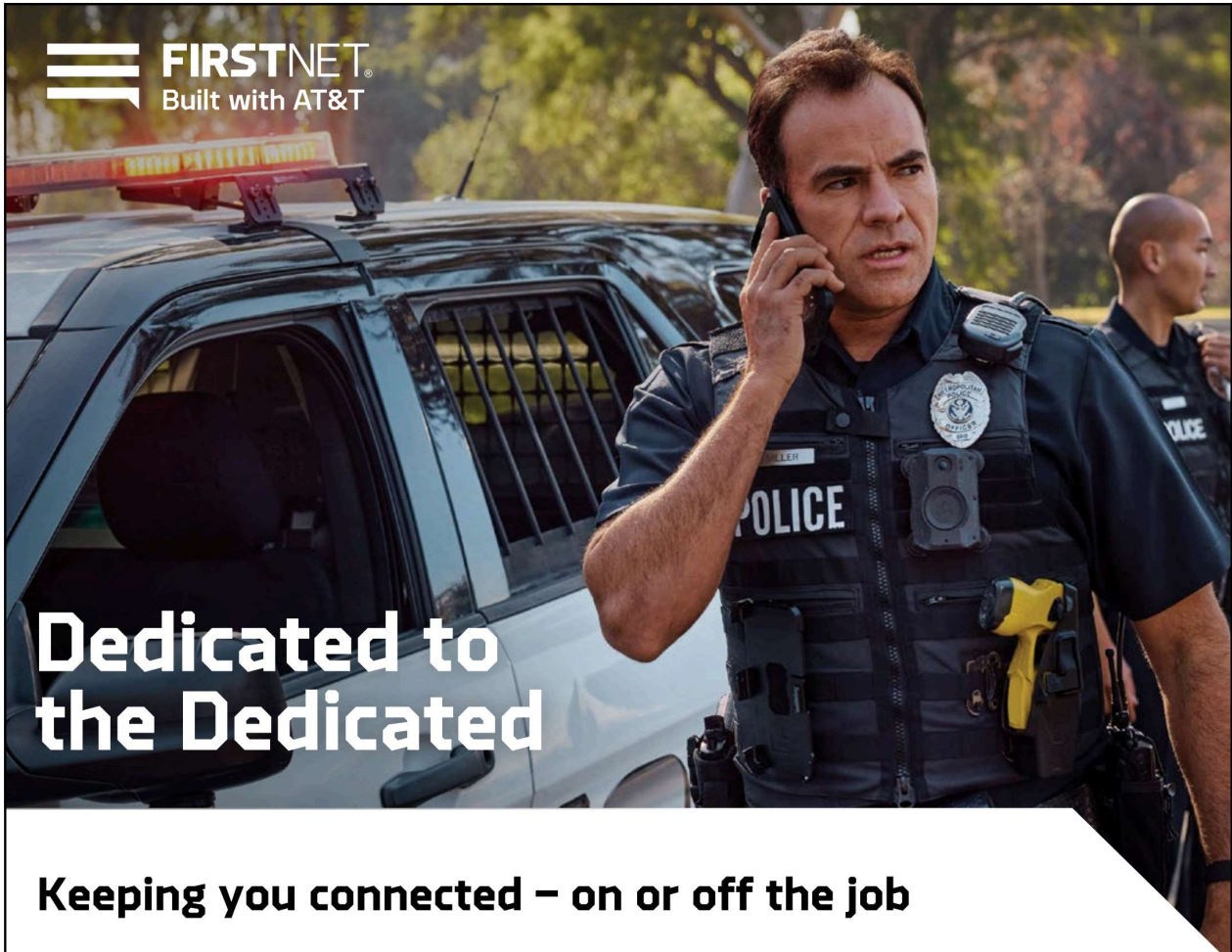
that once felt purposeful begins to feel mechanical.

And yet, the solution is not to stop moving forward. Policing, by its nature, demands progress. It requires growth, adaptation and resilience. The challenge is not choosing between pause and progress — it is understanding that one makes the other possible.

A pause is not a retreat. It is a recalibration.

Consider what happens when an officer steps away — truly away. A vacation, even a short one, creates distance not just from the job, but from the constant state of readiness the job demands. Without the radio, without the uniform and without the immediate pull of responsibility, something shifts. The mind, no longer occupied with scanning for threats or solving problems, begins to settle. Thoughts that were once pushed aside have room to surface. Emotions that

*Continued on page 18 >*



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## WELLNESS

Continued from page 16 >

were deferred have space to be felt.

This is not indulgence. It is maintenance.

The same is true in smaller, quieter ways. Listening — to a partner after a difficult call, to a spouse at the end of a long day and to the internal voice that asks difficult questions — creates a different kind of awareness. It is easy, in a profession built on command and control, to overlook the value of simply hearing and being heard. But listening is not passive. It is an active engagement with reality, one that deepens understanding and strengthens connection.

Even brief pauses — a moment to breathe before responding or a few minutes of reflection after a call — can interrupt the cycle of constant motion. They create a space where experience is not just endured, but processed.

Without these pauses, the consequences extend beyond the individual officer. Decision-making becomes narrower, shaped more by fatigue than clarity. Interactions grow more transactional and less human. At home, the distance created by unprocessed stress can be just as real as any physical absence. The job, in consuming everything, begins to take more than it gives.

And yet, pausing alone is not enough.

Wellness is not found in standing still indefinitely. It is found in returning — with intention.

Forward movement in policing is essential. It is what allows officers to serve effectively, to grow in skill and judgment, and to meet the demands of an ever-changing environment. But the quality of that movement matters. Motion driven purely by habit or obligation is different from motion guided by clarity and purpose.

An officer who returns from a true pause does not simply pick up where they left off. They come back with perspective. The call that once triggered immediate frustration may now be approached with patience. The situation that once felt overwhelming may be navigated with greater control. This is not because the job has changed, but because the officer has.

Progress, in this sense, is not always dramatic. It is often quiet,



almost unnoticeable in the moment. It is choosing to take a breath before speaking. It is recognizing the early signs of stress and addressing them, rather than ignoring them. It is reaching out to a colleague, not because it is required, but because it is needed.

**An officer who returns from a true pause does not simply pick up where they left off. They come back with perspective.**

These are small steps. But they are forward steps.

There is a rhythm to sustainable wellness — one that mirrors physical training more than we might expect. No one builds strength by exertion alone. Recovery is not separate from the process; it is part of it. Muscles grow during rest. Endurance improves when effort is balanced with restoration. The same is true for the mind: engagement, pause, reflection, growth,

re-engagement. When this rhythm is respected, forward movement becomes more effective, not less. Officers are better equipped to make decisions, to connect with the communities they serve and to maintain the relationships that sustain them outside of work.

For this to take hold, however, the culture of policing must evolve. Wellness cannot remain an individual responsibility carried in isolation. It must be supported, modeled and normalized. Leadership plays a critical role here — not just in policy, but in example. When taking time off is seen as responsible rather than optional and when conversations about stress and mental health are encouraged rather than avoided, the definition of strength begins to shift.

Strength is no longer just endurance. It becomes awareness. It becomes the ability to recognize when to push forward — and when to step back.

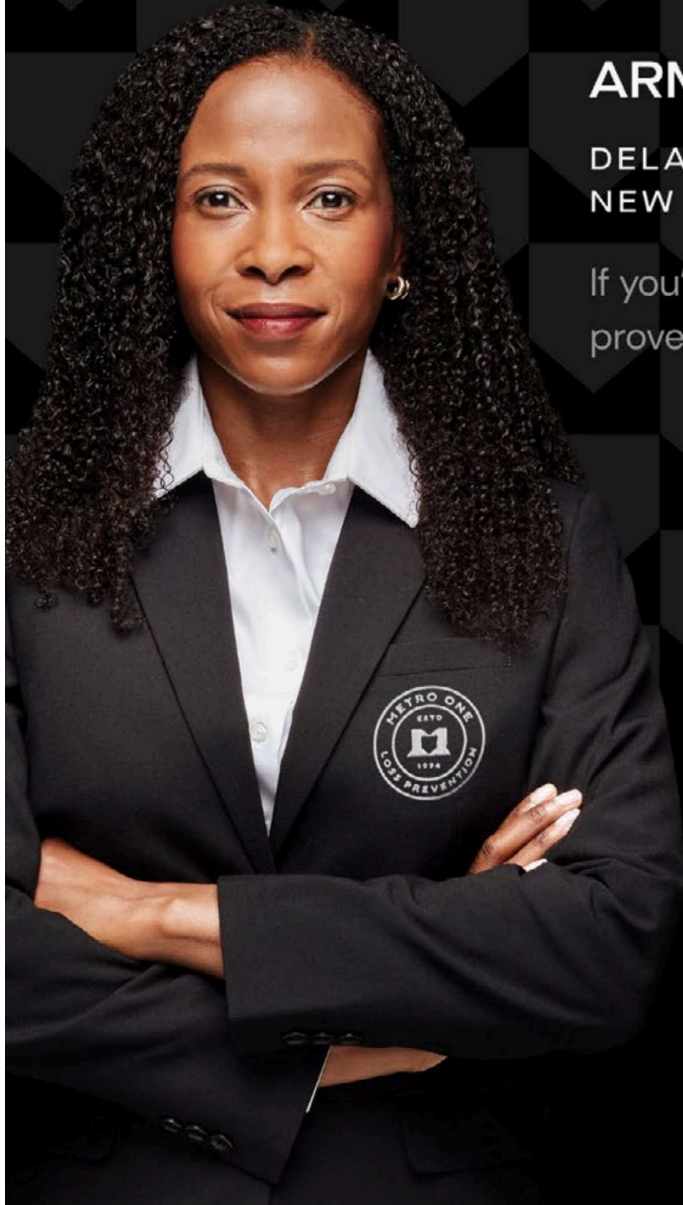
The officer in the cruiser, sitting in that brief moment of quiet, eventually reaches for the radio again. The shift is not over. There are still calls to answer, still decisions to make, still a community depending on their presence.

But something is different.

The pause, however brief, has created space. In that space, there is a clearer sense of self, a steadier mind and a renewed sense of purpose. The movement that follows is not automatic. It is chosen.

And that choice — to pause, to listen, to reflect and then to move forward — is where true wellness begins. **FOP**

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# SLEEP: A POWERFUL (AND OFTEN OVERLOOKED) PART OF HEART AND BRAIN HEALTH

**W**hen life is busy — long shifts, changing schedules and constant demands — sleep is often the first thing to get pushed aside. Many people see it as optional or something they'll “catch up on later.”

But sleep plays a meaningful role in how your heart and brain function every day.

The good news? Even small changes can make a difference, and there's no one “perfect” way to do sleep right. What matters most is finding what works for your life.

## How Sleep Supports Your Heart and Brain

While you sleep, your body gets time to reset and repair. According to the American Heart Association, sleep helps support healthy blood pressure, blood sugar levels and overall heart function. It also gives your brain time to process information, manage stress and support memory and focus.

When sleep is regularly cut short, it can make it harder for the body to recover from daily stress. Over time, that strain may affect heart and brain health. That doesn't mean one rough night puts you at risk — it simply highlights why sleep is an important part of overall well-being.

## How Much Sleep Is Enough?

Many adults feel best with **seven to nine hours of sleep per night**, but needs can vary. Shift work, stress and family responsibilities can all influence how much rest feels realistic.

If hitting that range every night isn't possible, that's OK. Paying attention to how rested you feel — and looking for ways to improve sleep when you can — is a meaningful place to start.

## Life's Essential 8™ Tips for Sleep Success

Healthy sleep doesn't have to be all-or-nothing. You might consider trying one or two of these ideas and building from there:

- **Protect a wind-down routine:** Even 15 to 30 minutes to unplug or slow down can help signal it's time to rest.
- **Create a sleep-friendly space:** Dimming lights, reducing noise or keeping the room cool may help your body relax.



- **Be consistent when possible:** Going to bed and waking up around the same time — even on days off — can support better rest.
- **Notice what affects your sleep:** Caffeine, stress or screen time can impact rest differently for everyone. Awareness helps you make choices that fit your needs.
- **Give yourself grace:** Some nights will be better than others. Progress matters more than perfection.

Continued on page 22 >

FOP JOURNAL // APRIL 2026

  
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# BLUE VIEW

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Listen in every week to hear from law enforcement experts, elected officials and other notable leaders to gain insight



into the issues and current events surrounding the law enforcement community.

Available now on **FOP.net**, **FOP's YouTube channel**, **Apple**, **Google**, **Spotify** and **Amazon Music**.

## SLEEP SUPPORTS HEART AND BRAIN HEALTH

*Continued from page 20 >*

### Sleep Is Part of the Bigger Picture

Sleep is one of the American Heart Association's **Life's Essential 8™**, alongside movement, nutrition, managing stress and other habits that support heart and brain health. Each one works together — and none require doing everything “right.”

If sleep feels challenging right now, you're not alone. Exploring small changes, staying curious and choosing what works for your life can help you move forward — one night at a time. **FOP**

Check out the American Heart Association's **Life's Essential 8™** resources or scan the QR code to explore more tools that can help you track your health, set goals and stay strong — for the job and beyond.

The American Heart Association and the National Fraternal Order of Police are proud to collaborate to improve the cardiovascular health and overall well-being of law enforcement officers.



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[chateaurecovery.com/first-responders](https://chateaurecovery.com/first-responders)

## FHE Health:

### Shatterproof Program Deerfield Beach, FL

[fherehab.com/services/first-responders](https://fherehab.com/services/first-responders)

## First Responder Wellness by Simple Recovery

Costa Mesa, CA

[firstresponder-wellness.com](https://firstresponder-wellness.com)

## Harbor of Grace First Responder Program Havre de Grace, MD

[harborofgracerecovery.com/first-responders](https://harborofgracerecovery.com/first-responders)

## Throttle and Thrive Palos Verdes Estates, CA

[throttleandthrive.com](https://throttleandthrive.com)

## Warrior's Heart Bandera, TX

[warriorsheart.com](https://warriorsheart.com)

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# Columbia Southern University



### Affordability, Academic Excellence and Supportive Staff

**C**olumbia Southern University is a leading educational institution for public safety across the globe. The university offers higher education in many areas of law enforcement, homeland security and emergency management, as well as business, information technology, human resources and more. Whether you are considering extending your education for your current career or are interested in switching it up, CSU has more than 100 online degree programs in its catalog.

### Who Is Columbia Southern University?

Founded in 1993 and based in Orange Beach, Alabama, CSU offers online higher education at the associate, bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels.

Committed to the adult learning experience, CSU's courses are 100% online, and they offer LifePace Learning®, an enrollment option that combines the flexibility of online classes with a time-based structure. Whether studying between shifts or at home, students can access courses 24/7, complete classes early and can

choose from 11 start dates each year.

CSU ranks in the top 1% of colleges for affordability.\* In fact, nearly two-thirds (65%) of CSU's recent graduates finished their degrees with zero student loan debt.\*\*

### Degree Programs

CSU offers criminal justice degree programs at the associate, bachelor's and master's degree levels. In addition, CSU features concentrations in areas such as arson investigation and forensics.

CSU also provides bachelor's and master's degree programs in

homeland security, which address a wide range of course topics, including counterterrorism, border management, immigration, cybernetworks, critical infrastructure and disaster resilience.

CSU's Emergency Management bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs are designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills needed within the field of emergency management.

Aware of the growing threats from hacking, ransomware, identity theft and more, CSU offers a bachelor's degree in information technology and cybersecurity with a concentration in homeland security. This level of modern education is meant to help today's law enforcement prepare for and secure citizens from tomorrow's newest online threats.\*\*\*

### Scholarships

The university offers financial assistance for students and their spouses and family via several scholarships, including the Criminal Justice Scholarship, Learning Partner Scholarship and Hero Behind the Hero Scholarship.

Columbia Southern University is a proud member of the National Fraternal Order of Police University consortium.

CSU is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). For a complete list of degrees and more information about Columbia Southern University, visit [columbiasouthern.edu](http://columbiasouthern.edu) or call (800) 977-8449 ext. 1359. **FOP**

\*Based on tuition and fees compared to four-year U.S. colleges with largest fully-distance enrollment (IPEDS 2022 Fall Enrollment Survey).

\*\*Data calculated from internal Columbia Southern University financial data, based on 65.1% with zero student loan debt from the graduating classes of 2021–2023.

\*\*\*Multiple factors, including prior experience, geography and degree field, affect career outcomes. CSU does not guarantee a job, promotion, salary increase, eligibility for a position or other career growth. Eligibility for careers in law enforcement vary widely by jurisdiction, and the university makes no promise or guarantee that completion of its program will qualify a graduate to seek employment in law enforcement in any particular jurisdiction.

# The National Fraternal Order of Police University

The National Fraternal Order of Police University (NFOPU) has successfully paved the way for hundreds of FOP members to pursue higher or continued education. For more information on the NFOPU Consortium, go to [FOP.net/fop-university](http://FOP.net/fop-university).



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[FOP.net/fop-university](http://FOP.net/fop-university)



# Forging Ahead on Legislative Priorities



## Appropriations Update: Standoff Over DHS Funding Continues; New Secretary Sworn In

Congress remains deadlocked on legislation to provide funding for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The Senate has voted down a House-passed appropriations measure for the DHS six times now, including bills that only funded select DHS components. The operations of the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) are all impacted. Employees with TSA, who have not been paid, are calling out of work in increasing numbers, leading to extremely long lines at airport hubs.

The U.S. Secret Service and Immigration and Customs Enforcement will continue to perform their essential public safety functions, but if the shutdown persists, this may affect their paychecks as well.

Early last month, President Trump fired Kristi L. Noem as Homeland Security secretary and nominated Senator Markwayne Mullin (R-Okla.) to succeed her as leader of the Department. The Senate confirmed Senator Mullin on a 54–45 vote, and he was sworn in by President Trump.

## Legislative Update: FirstNet Reauthorization

The First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet), established in 2012 to oversee a dedicated nationwide broadband network for public safety communications, is currently authorized through February 2027. Without congressional action, its authority

## Just the Facts:

» Amid the more than five-week standoff over Department of Homeland Security funding, the FOP has continued to forge ahead on its priorities and support several new pieces of legislation. Recent activity has included engaging with House and Senate members on legislation reauthorizing FirstNet so operations can continue beyond 2027; advocating for greater support of the HELPER Act, which creates more opportunities for law enforcement officers to buy their first homes, similar to the VA's program; and supporting the Law Enforcement Officers' Equity Act, which expands the definition of "law enforcement officer" with respect to retirement benefits to include GS-0083 officers, encompassing nearly 30,000 federal law enforcement officers who are not currently eligible for this benefit.

would sunset at that time, potentially disrupting operations.

The FOP has been among the leaders in the effort to reauthorize FirstNet and has been engaged with members of the House and Senate to make sure they understand what law enforcement and other public safety officers need from this vital network.

In the House, Representatives Neal P. Dunn (R-Fla.) and Jennifer L. McClellan (D-Va.) have introduced H.R. 7386, the First Responder Network Authority Reauthorization Act, and the House Committee on Energy and Commerce will consider an amended version of the bill in the last week of March. The FOP has expressed concern with provisions that would change FirstNet's governance and place it under the oversight of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) within the U.S. Department of Commerce. The FOP argues that this will impose redundant governmental oversight, heighten procedural burdens and escalate expenses without tangible advantages for public safety.

For the FOP, this is a critical officer safety issue. Prior to FirstNet's creation, law enforcement officers and other emergency responders across the country operated on a patchwork of incompatible, overburdened and easily disrupted communications systems. The tragedy of September 11, 2001, showed our entire nation the devastating human cost of those failures. We should not risk the lives of our nation's law enforcement officers, firefighters and other emergency responders by replacing public safety experts with NTIA bureaucrats.

Overall, these proposed changes to the statute could hinder FirstNet's primary objectives and introduce uncertainties that jeopardize emergency operations, community protection and public safety. FirstNet, insulated from short-term commercial, bureaucratic and political pressures, is highly accountable to the public safety community it serves and, in our view, is the right structure for a network that American lives depend upon. The

Continued on page 28 >

FOP JOURNAL // APRIL 2026

# SERVING THOSE WHO SERVE

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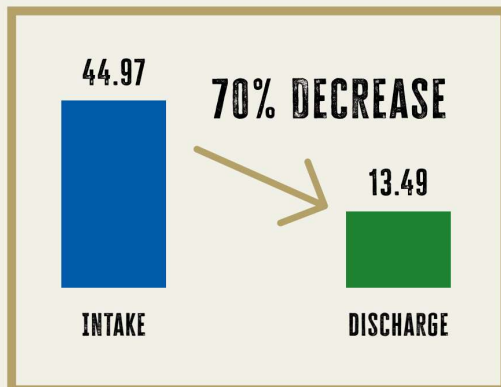
- 94% return to work rate
- We hold the title of a vetted and approved treatment program by the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP).
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**Marco Montebalco,  
Executive Director  
Washington State FOP**

To schedule a tour of our program or to get more information please reach out to Jeff McGreevy, Public Safety Advocate, Retired Sergeant and Peer Support Lead at [jeff.mcgreevy@frhealth.com](mailto:jeff.mcgreevy@frhealth.com)

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- First Responder Wellness clients see an average PCL-5 reduction of over 31 points, which is significant.



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## WASHINGTON REPORT

Continued from page 26 >

National FOP is instead calling on the committee to support a “clean” bill that would extend FirstNet’s authorization until September 30, 2037 (view the letter at [FOP.net/letter/18244](#)).

In January, the Senate Subcommittee on Communications, Media, and Broadband held an initial hearing to evaluate FirstNet’s progress and open a dialogue on reauthorization. No draft legislation has been introduced in the Senate yet, but discussions have focused on similar themes of oversight, network reliability during emergencies and incorporating emerging technologies. The FOP will continue to work with our allies on the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and urge them to advance a clean reauthorization bill.

### Legislative Update: HELPER Act

During the Senate debate on H.R. 6644, the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act, the FOP and other public safety stakeholders, such as the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), launched a campaign to support the inclusion of H.R. 2094/S. 978, the Homes for Every Local Protector, Educator, and Responder (HELPER) Act, into the base bill.

This HELPER Act creates more opportunities for law enforcement officers to buy their first homes by establishing a program similar to that administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to expand housing opportunities for service members and veterans. It would eliminate the downpayment requirement and the monthly mortgage insurance premium for first-time homebuyers — greatly expanding the affordable housing options for law enforcement officers and their families.

The law enforcement profession is facing a recruitment and retention crisis, and we as a profession are collectively searching for ways to make a career in law enforcement more attractive to potential recruits and provide veteran officers with incentives to continue their service.



Housing availability and affordability is a top concern for rookies and veteran officers alike, and we believe that benefits and programs like the one established by the HELPER Act will help agencies recruit and retain the officers they need to protect their communities.

The FOP worked very closely with staff in the offices of Senators Ashley B. Moody (R-Fla.), Jonathan Ossoff (D-Ga.) and William M. Cassidy (R-La.) to support S. Amdt. 4320, the HELPER Act amendment, to H.R. 6644. Unfortunately, the amendment was not considered and the underlying bill passed on an 89–10 vote and is now pending before the House.

### Legislative Update: Law Enforcement Officers’ Equity Act

We are pleased to announce that Senator Jon A. Husted (R-Ohio) has agreed to be the lead Republican on the Senate bill, which will once again be led by Senator Cory A. Booker (D-N.J.).

This legislation would expand the definition of “law enforcement officer” with respect to retirement benefits to include all GS-0083 officers — which will benefit the nearly 30,000 federal law enforcement officers who are not currently eligible for this benefit. This would provide these officers with 6(c) retirement benefits and the ability to retire after 20 years of service at the age of 50, or after 25 years of service at any age.

We will continue to work with Representatives Andrew R. Garbarino (R-N.Y.), James R. Walkinshaw

(D-Va.) and Brian K. Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.) to increase support for the House bill.

A report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) bolstered many of the arguments the FOP has been making in favor of the bill with respect to recruitment, retention and fairness (view the report at [gao.gov/products/gao-25-107099](#)). Keep an eye on the FOP’s website for further announcements!

### Other Legislative Activity

The FOP has supported the following legislation since the last issue of the *Journal*:

- **H.R. 503**, the Qualified Immunity Act, which would codify the existing qualified immunity doctrine
- **H.R. 7361**, the No Tax on Restored Benefits Act, which would exclude the backdated, lump-sum payments originating from the Social Security Fairness Act from federal taxes
- **H.R. 7494**, the Preventing Domestic Violence Homicides Through Lethality Assessment Training and Technical Assistance Act, which would direct the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to establish a National Lethality Assessment Program Grant Resource Center
- **H.R. 7718/S. 3897**, the Officer John Barnes and Chief Michael Ansbro Public Safety Officers’ Benefits Program Expansion

Continued on page 30 >

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SCAN TO  
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MEETING

## Top Priorities in Brief



### H.R. 3226, the Law Enforcement Officers Equity Act

House: 61 co-sponsors (17 R, 44 D)

Senate: Not yet introduced

### H.R. 1505/S. 636, the Public Safety Employer–Employee Cooperation Act

House: 59 co-sponsors (10 R, 49 D)

Senate: 1 co-sponsor (1 D)

### H.R. 2243/S. 679, the LEOSA Reform Act

House: Passed

Senate: 11 co-sponsors (11 R)

### H.R. 1551/S. 167, the Protect and Serve Act

House: 105 co-sponsors (85 R, 20 D)

Senate: 25 co-sponsors (25 R)

### H.R. 2094/S. 978, the Homes for Every Local Protector, Educator, and Responder (HELPER) Act

House: 117 co-sponsors (45 R, 72 D)

Senate: 23 co-sponsors (8 R, 15 D)

To see a full list of legislation supported by the FOP in the previous Congress, please visit [tinyurl.com/ycy5k5rv](https://tinyurl.com/ycy5k5rv). Members should continue to monitor the FOP's social media platforms and our website for the latest legislative news.



## WASHINGTON REPORT

Continued from page 28 >

Act, which would improve the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program, ensuring that the men and women who serve our communities — and their families — receive timely and meaningful support when tragedy strikes

- **H.R. 7834**, the Safe Cloud Storage Act, which establishes baseline security and data protection standards for cloud service providers that store sensitive government and law enforcement information
- **H.R. 7876**, the Secret Service–Local Law Enforcement Partnership Act, which would create an Extraordinary Protection Reimbursement Program that would authorize more than \$61 million for law enforcement agencies that collaborate with the U.S. Secret Service
- **S. 1572**, the Federal Carjacking Enforcement Act, which would update the federal statute governing carjacking offenses to make it easier for prosecutors to bring charges
- **S. 3801**, the Combating Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing, and Counterfeiting Act, which would update and enhance federal laws to combat money-laundering operations and restrict the ability of criminals to profit from their crimes

### Sign Up for the FOP's Weekly Update

The FOP's Weekly Update from Capitol Hill is distributed every week, providing our members with the latest news from Washington, D.C. If you're not getting it, go to [tinyurl.com/FOP-weekly-update](https://tinyurl.com/FOP-weekly-update) to sign up.

Also, make sure you are a regular visitor to all our social media platforms, as these frequent posts are the best way to keep up with the National FOP's daily activity. Follow the National FOP on:

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Do your part! Please **share**, **comment** and **like** our content.

### NFOP PAC Update

The PAC recently just passed a milestone — we now have over \$100,000 in the bank. While this is a good first step, it is a paltry sum compared to the amounts of our counterparts, and much work remains to be done.

We need more of our members to contribute to ensure that our PAC has the resources to support candidates who will fight for our officers and the issues that are important to them. With the next election cycle coming up fast, we have time to replenish our PAC funds — but we need to start today.

We are asking all FOP members to find a way to contribute to the National FOP PAC. Our profession depends on having well-informed lawmakers who listen to and understand the challenges facing law enforcement today.

We are urging members (and lodges) to sign up for recurring, monthly contributions using their credit card. This is the most effective and reliable way to contribute and to strengthen our PAC.

These contributions need not be for large amounts (though these are also very much appreciated) — but every dollar helps! If every FOP member gave just \$1, we could raise \$382,000! If 10% of our members gave just \$5 this year, we would raise more than \$191,100.

To donate online, please go to [nfop-pac.firstresponderprocessing.com](https://nfop-pac.firstresponderprocessing.com). If you would like to donate via check, please make it out to the National Fraternal Order of Police Political Action Committee and mail it to 328 Massachusetts Ave. NE, Washington, D.C. 20002. For inquiries about our effortless payroll deduction program or to sign up for recurring monthly donations, please contact the Steve Young Law Enforcement Legislative Advocacy Center at (202) 547-8189 or David Taboh at [dtaboh@fop.net](mailto:dtaboh@fop.net).

Thank you to all of you who have supported and continue to support our PAC with regular contributions. **FOP**

# NATIONAL FOP AUXILIARY PEACE OFFICERS' MEMORIAL SERVICE

## COMMEMORATIVE CHALLENGE COIN

### ORDER FORM

FRONT



3D antique silver



3D antique brass

BACK



The National FOP Auxiliary is selling the above pictured Memorial Challenge Coins. The proceeds from this coin will go back to the FOP Foundation to support the May 15 National Peace Officers' Memorial Service. Your support is appreciated.

To order, please email the completed form to **fopauxiliary@fop.net**. You will receive an invoice via email from the National FOP Auxiliary Square account that includes a total for coins and shipping.

Total # \_\_\_\_\_ coins @ \$20 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Shipping and handling: \_\_\_\_\_

4 coins or fewer = \$7

5 to 30 coins = \$10.85

31 to 50 coins = \$12.85

51+ will be calculated based on delivery address

Total amount for invoice to be mailed including shipping:  
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**Purchaser and shipping information:**

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# How the FOP Built the Foundation for Modern Labor Services



## From Fraternal Roots to National Labor Leader

When the FOP was founded in 1915, it was not yet a labor union. It began as a brotherhood created by two Pittsburgh officers, Martin Toole and Delbert Nagle, who wanted to improve the harsh working conditions officers faced at the time. Their early focus was on fraternity, mutual support, fair treatment, reasonable hours and basic workplace protections. That focus remains at the forefront today.

Because public-sector collective bargaining laws did not yet exist, any labor-related efforts were informal and handled locally. As states began passing laws allowing public employees to unionize, police departments started adopting formal labor contracts. The FOP adapted quickly by training local lodges in negotiation, sharing contract language and offering early forms of labor support. These efforts represented the earliest version of what would eventually become the Labor Services Division.

As more states granted collective bargaining rights to law enforcement, FOP lodges increasingly acted as bargaining agents. The National FOP expanded its capabilities by developing contract research tools, forming

### Just the Facts:

» The FOP's Labor Services Division evolved from early informal support efforts into a comprehensive national resource for law enforcement labor relations. Today, it provides lodges of all sizes with contract analysis, negotiation support, legal guidance and training to strengthen representation and improve working conditions for members nationwide.

negotiation assistance teams and providing legal support for labor disputes. These functions gradually evolved into a dedicated national labor services structure.

Over time, the National FOP professionalized and expanded its labor operations. Labor Services became a distinct division supported by national staff and infrastructure. The organization created standardized training for lodge leaders, built a national database of contracts and began offering formal labor relations consulting. It provided on-site negotiation support, strategic planning for bargaining, research on wages and benefits, and assistance for lodges seeking bargaining agent status. These services transformed Labor Services into a central resource for hundreds of lodges across the country.

Today, Labor Services operates as a full-service labor relations division of the National FOP. It supports hundreds of

lodges nationwide and provides contract analysis, labor law guidance, arbitration preparation, leadership training and data-driven bargaining strategies. It was this very network — built on decades of practical experience and knowledge-sharing — that ultimately inspired the effort to expand access to affordable labor services for smaller lodges, regardless of their size or resources. It is deeply integrated into National FOP operations and remains a core part of how the organization supports its members. **FOP**

## LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD!

The FOP constantly endeavors to hear about the experiences of our members, so that we can understand how best to serve you.



The FOP was selected to partner with the Department of Justice to build standardized training in law enforcement peer support. Share your thoughts with us on how this training can best help our profession at [surveymonkey.com/r/PowerInPeers](https://surveymonkey.com/r/PowerInPeers).



Scan the QR code for more information about NFOP Labor Services.

# NATIONAL FOP AUXILIARY ROLL CALL OF HEROES

COMMEMORATIVE  
CHALLENGE COIN

ORDER FORM

The National FOP Auxiliary is selling the above pictured Memorial Challenge Coins. This coin will contain the 2026 Roll Call of Heroes names as a reminder It's All About the White Chairs. Your support is greatly appreciated.

To order, please email the completed form to [fopauxiliary@fop.net](mailto:fopauxiliary@fop.net). You will receive an invoice via email from the National FOP Auxiliary Square account that includes a total for coins and shipping.

Total # \_\_\_\_\_ coins @ \$20 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_



FRONT

Size: 78.7(w) x 83.3(h)mm  
Thickness: 4mm



BACK

Shipping and handling: \_\_\_\_\_

4 coins or fewer = \$7

5 to 30 coins = \$10.85

31 to 50 coins = \$12.85

51+ will be calculated based on delivery address

Total amount for invoice to be mailed including shipping:  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Purchaser and shipping information:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

## Summary of Material Modifications for Fraternal Order of Police Legal Plan, Inc.

During the 2024–2025 Plan year, the following changes were adopted:

- Civil and Criminal coverage will be extended to include those SWAT (or tactical) Medics properly trained and required to carry a firearm, who are employed by a federal, state or local government agency, only for on-duty claims arising from the performance of duties when training and/or working alongside the SWAT (or tactical) team, while in the scope of employment.
- Individual Participants who fail to make timely payment of annual participation fees on the applicable renewal due date will be automatically considered delinquent and participation in the Plan shall cease effective as of 12:01 a.m. on the applicable due date.
- Beginning January 1, 2026, yearly renewal and Enrollment Fees for all Participants (Groups and Individuals) will be as follows: Full Coverage (Administrative, Civil and Criminal) will be \$396 and Criminal and Civil Coverage only will be \$84.

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## Summary Annual Report for Fraternal Order of Police Legal Plan, Inc.

This is a summary of the annual report for the Fraternal Order of Police Legal Plan, Inc. (Employer Identification No. 23-1283161, Plan No. 501), for the period May 1, 2024, to April 30, 2025. The annual report has been filed with the Employee Benefits Security Administration, as required under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA).

The value of Plan assets, after subtracting the liabilities of the Plan, was \$7,000,120 as of April 30, 2025, compared to \$8,187,992 as of May 1, 2024. During the Plan year, the Plan experienced a decrease in its net assets of \$1,187,872. This decrease includes unrealized appreciation in the value of the Plan assets; that is, the difference between the value of the Plan's assets at the end of the year and the value of the assets at the beginning of the year, or the cost of assets acquired during the year. During the Plan year, the Plan had total income of \$21,925,963. This income included participant contributions of \$19,052,616, and net investment gains of \$2,873,347 (consisting of interest and dividend income of \$1,356,672, net realized losses from the sale of investments of \$182,939, net appreciation of investments of \$1,807,704, less investment management fees of \$108,090).

Plan expenses were \$23,113,835. These expenses included \$3,096,453 in administrative expenses (which includes excess insurance premiums of \$652,905) and \$17,587,382 in benefits paid on behalf of participants and a \$2,430,000 increase in benefit obligations.

### Your Rights to Additional Information

You have the right to receive a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof, on request. The items listed below are included in that report:

1. An accountant's report
2. Assets held for investment
3. Transactions in excess of 5% of the Plan assets
4. Insurance information including sales commissions paid by insurance carriers

To obtain a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof, write or call the office of:

Fraternal Order of Police Legal Plan, Inc.  
Steve James, President, Board of Trustees  
701 Marriott Drive  
Nashville, TN 37214  
31-1439914 (Employer Identification Number)  
(615) 399-0900

Or the Plan administrator.

You also have the right to receive from the Plan administrator, on request and at no charge, a statement of the assets and liabilities of the Plan and accompanying notes, or a statement of income and expenses of the Plan and accompanying

notes, or both. If you request a copy of the full annual report from the Plan administrator, these two statements and accompanying notes will be included as part of that report. These portions of the report are furnished without charge.

You also have the legally protected right to examine the annual report at the main office of the Plan:

Fraternal Order of Police Legal Plan, Inc.  
701 Marriott Drive  
Nashville, TN 37214

And at the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington, D.C. or to obtain a copy from the U.S. Department of Labor upon payment of copying costs. Requests to the Department should be addressed to: U.S. Department of Labor, Employee Benefits Security Administration, Public Disclosure Room, 200 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Suite N-1513, Washington, D.C. 20210.

### Paperwork Reduction Act Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13), no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. The Department notes that a federal agency cannot conduct or sponsor a collection of information unless it is approved by OMB under the PRA, and displays a currently valid OMB control number, and the public is not required to respond to the collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. See 44 U.S.C. 3507. Also, notwithstanding any other provisions of law, no person shall be subject to penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if the collection of information does not display a currently valid OMB control number. See 44 U.S.C. 3512.

The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average less than one minute per notice (approximately 3 hours and 11 minutes per plan). Interested parties are encouraged to send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Chief Information Officer, attention: Departmental Clearance Officer, 200 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Room N-1301, Washington, D.C. 20210 or email [dol\\_pra\\_public@dol.gov](mailto:dol_pra_public@dol.gov) and reference the OMB control number 1210-0040.

OMB control number 1210-0040 (expires 03/31/2026 — pending renewal)

FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE



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# Why First Amendment Claims by Officers Often Survive Early Motions



A recent decision from the Tenth Circuit illustrates why First Amendment lawsuits involving police officers' social media activity rarely end at the motion-to-dismiss stage. In *Brown v. City of Tulsa*, an at-will Tulsa police officer, Wayne Brown, was terminated after a private citizen and activist circulated screenshots from Brown's personal Facebook account, which he maintained under the nickname "Duke Brown." Many of the posts were years old — several even predated Brown's employment with the department — yet they ultimately became the basis for the department's decision to terminate him.

The posts at issue were politically and ideologically charged. An August 2015 post depicted then-candidate Donald Trump riding a lion while holding a Confederate flag. A November 2015 post expressed opposition to Islamic sharia law and conveyed the view that Americans — particularly Christians — would not submit to Islam as a matter of religious conviction. A March 2016 post featured imagery associated with Chris Kyle layered over an American flag bearing a thin blue line, a symbol tied to the Blue Lives Matter movement. Other reposts from 2013 and 2014 included images criticizing Michelle Obama, content from "Stop Islamization of the World," pro-police images and memes critical of progressive or socialist ideology. Notably, the only post made while Brown was employed by the Tulsa Police Department was an August 2019 profile picture update showing Brown and another officer in uniform.

A Tulsa activist publicly reposted the screenshots on Facebook, accused Brown of bias against Muslims and Black Americans, and asserted that the content violated the Department's social media policy. The Department acted with speed. Within roughly one hour of receiving the complaint, Brown was terminated. According to the allegations, he was not interviewed, not meaningfully

## Just the Facts:

» In *Brown v. City of Tulsa*, a former Tulsa, Oklahoma, police officer brought a First Amendment retaliation claim following his 2019 termination after a local activist uncovered Facebook posts containing allegedly offensive images. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit held that applying the *Pickering* balancing test at the motion-to-dismiss stage is typically inappropriate — if not impossible — because discovery is often needed to assess the government's asserted interests and determine whether the officer's speech actually disrupted departmental operations.

questioned and not given an opportunity to explain the posts before the decision was made. He was simply "informed that he posted offending social media posts on his private Facebook page, and that these posts were sent by a complaining citizen to either the mayor's office or [Chief] Jordan's office." The City stated that it terminated Brown after the Tulsa

**Speech does not lose constitutional protection simply because it is controversial, unpopular or offensive.**

Police Department became aware of posts that violated departmental rules and policies, including its social media policy prohibiting speech that "ridicules, maligns, disparages, or otherwise expresses bias against any race, religion, or protected class."

Public criticism can be intense, media attention can escalate within hours and city officials may feel they have little room to wait. When controversial speech by an officer becomes public, departments often face significant pressure to respond quickly. But this case serves as a useful reminder that public urgency and legal defensibility are not always the same thing. The Tenth Circuit did not hold that the City was prohibited from taking action against Brown. Instead, it held something narrower: the district court should not have dismissed Brown's First Amendment claim at the motion-to-dismiss stage because the key constitutional question under *Pickering* required facts that had not yet been developed.

That distinction matters. Brown brought a First Amendment retaliation claim, alleging that he was terminated because of the content and viewpoint of his private speech. The Tenth Circuit analyzed the claim under the familiar public-employee speech framework and first concluded that Brown's posts were not made pursuant to his official duties. They were posted on his personal Facebook account, largely before he became an officer, and were unrelated to his work as a police officer. In other words, Brown was speaking as a private citizen, not as a representative of the Department.

Second, the court held that the posts involved matters of public concern. The

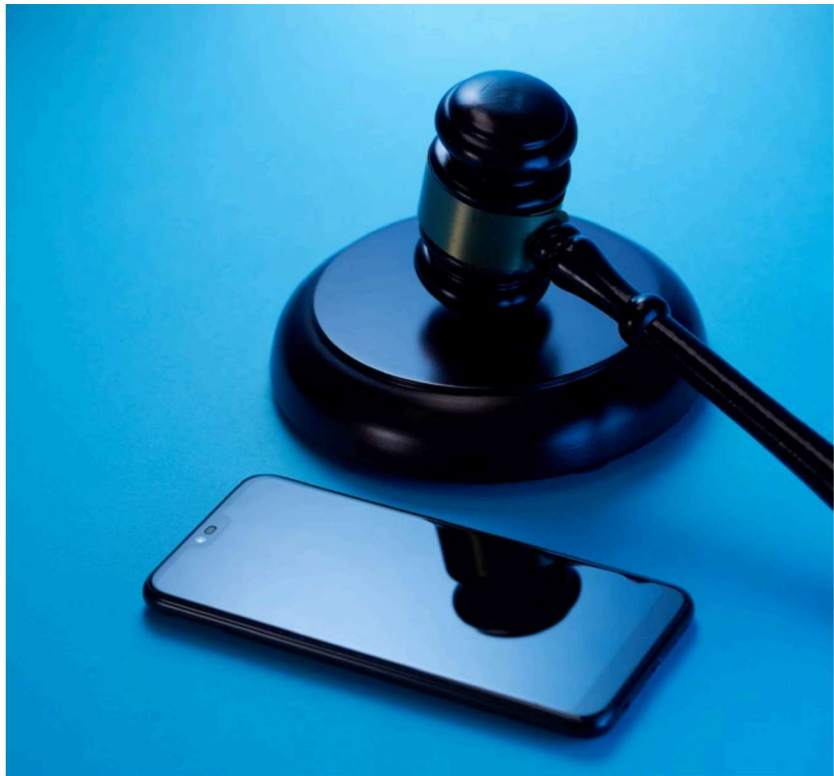
court did not endorse the content of the posts, nor did it suggest they reflected wise judgment. Instead, it recognized that political ideology, religion, law enforcement culture and commentary on public figures fall within the core of First Amendment protection. Speech does not lose constitutional protection simply because it is controversial, unpopular or offensive.

The real battle was over the *Pickering* balancing test — whether the government’s interest as employer outweighed Brown’s First Amendment speech rights. The district court dismissed the claim by accepting the City’s position that its interest in maintaining public trust in the police department outweighed Brown’s rights. The Tenth Circuit concluded that this determination was premature.

Under the *Pickering* balancing test, the government bears the burden of showing actual or reasonably predicted disruption to operations, discipline, close working relationships or the effective functioning of the agency. As the court explained, “the government’s burden to justify an adverse employment action against the plaintiff varies depending on the nature of the speech and the position held by the employee.” The more the speech contributes to public discourse, the greater the employer’s burden to justify disciplining the employee for it. At the same time, the government’s interest in regulating employee speech may be stronger when the employee holds a particularly visible or sensitive role, because “the extent of authority and public accountability the employee’s role entails” can increase the likelihood that speech will disrupt the employer’s operations.

But the Tenth Circuit emphasized that the balancing inquiry cannot be meaningfully performed without facts. At the pleading stage, Brown could not reasonably be expected to allege detailed facts about the City’s internal operations, workplace morale or the degree of disruption his posts allegedly caused — information that sits almost entirely within the employer’s control. As the court explained, “we require facts to make a complaint plausible, but we do not require a plaintiff to plead facts over which it has no personal knowledge.”

In the context of a First Amendment retaliation claim, the plaintiff often has no way of knowing the government’s specific justification for taking action or what internal disruption (actual or anticipated) the employer claims occurred. The information needed to



conduct the *Pickering* balancing analysis “is generally accessible only to the employer.” Put differently, a plaintiff cannot reasonably be expected to plead facts supporting the government’s side of the balancing test before discovery has taken place.

For that reason, the court explained that conducting *Pickering* balancing at the motion-to-dismiss stage is usually inappropriate — if not impossible. Without an evidentiary record, courts risk speculating about the employer’s interests rather than evaluating them based on actual evidence. Other federal courts have reached the same conclusion, noting that the balancing test “can seldom be done on the basis of the pleadings alone.”

In practical terms, this means discovery is often necessary to evaluate the government’s asserted interests under the *Pickering* balancing test and to determine whether the officer’s speech actually caused disruption within the department. What specific disruption occurred? Were there internal complaints from supervisors or co-workers? Did the posts impair the officer’s ability to perform duties or damage working relationships within the department? Did the City have concrete evidence that continued employment would interfere with operations or community trust? Here, the Tenth Circuit noted that the district court relied on assertions about public outrage, media attention and loss of

community trust that were not actually alleged in Brown’s complaint.

That reasoning should make departments cautious and officers realistic. Officers should assume that old posts — even those made years before employment — may resurface and become an issue. Departments, meanwhile, should recognize that generalized appeals to public trust, standing alone, may not carry the day at the motion-to-dismiss stage. If a department relies on disruption to justify discipline, it may ultimately need evidence demonstrating how the speech actually interfered with operations, discipline or working relationships. In short, courts often require facts before deciding whether an officer’s speech justifies discipline. **FOP**

## FOP GENERAL COUNSEL

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# Welfare Check Gone Wrong: Officer Terry Lee Palmer

The evening air in Clarkesville, Georgia, hung thick with tension as Officer Terry Palmer rolled into the Cameron Circle Apartments. It was September 7, 2024, just after 6:38 p.m., the time most families would be settling into dinner, not bracing for danger.

But the call Palmer received was anything but routine. A welfare check. Those words could mean anything, and tonight they meant everything. The subject had reportedly made suicidal threats after learning of an impending divorce.

When Palmer first approached the apartment, there was no answer. Silence. Stillness. The kind that makes the hair stand up on the back of your neck.

Moments later, neighbors began reporting something far more concerning: the subject had been seen walking around with a handgun. Palmer's instincts sharpened. Backup arrived, including officers from Demorest P.D. and deputies from Habersham County Sheriff's Office. They coordinated quickly, splitting positions, some to the rear, Palmer holding the front entrance. It was a textbook setup, calm and controlled. Until it wasn't.

Unbeknownst to the officers clearing the rear, the subject had already slipped back inside the apartment. And he hadn't come back empty-handed.

From his position, Palmer caught movement, a shadow shifting behind the officers at the back. Then it became terrifyingly clear. The man was advancing, rifle in hand: an AR-15-style weapon, and he was closing in on officers who had no idea they were seconds away from being ambushed.

Time slowed. Palmer didn't hesitate. He moved forward, closing



the distance, his voice cutting through the tension as he issued commands to drop the weapon. The suspect turned, surprised, but not surrendering. In an instant, the rifle came up. Palmer fired. The sound shattered the evening.

His rounds struck the suspect, halting his advance — but the threat wasn't over. The man attempted to raise the rifle again. Another volley rang out.

Behind Palmer, another deputy rushed to assist, also issuing commands. But Palmer knew the danger wasn't just in front of him; it was behind him, too. Officers clearing the rear could still be caught in the crossfire.

Thinking beyond himself, Palmer shifted positions, pulling the assisting deputy by her ballistic vest and dragging her into cover behind the corner wall of the building. It was a small movement with tremendous consequence — one that likely saved her life.

The suspect was finally incapacitated. But the job wasn't done. Palmer immediately transitioned from warrior to lifesaver. He and other deputies moved in, rendering aid and stabilizing the suspect until medical personnel arrived. The same hands that had just stopped a deadly threat were now working to preserve life.



As sirens grew louder in the distance, the chaos began to settle. The officers at the rear were safe. The deputy beside him was alive. A situation that could have ended in tragedy had been turned by seconds — by instinct, by training, by courage.

Later, when Clarkesville Police Chief Daniel Cloutre and North Georgia Mountain Lodge #112 President Michael Palmer (no relation) reviewed the incident, they called it valor. They spoke of composure under fire, of selflessness, of decisive action in the face of imminent danger. Palmer received a Valor Award for his courage and a Lifesaving Award for his actions that fateful evening. He was also recognized in both the Georgia Senate and House of Representatives.

But in that moment, for Palmer, it wasn't about recognition. It was about doing his job. And making sure everyone went home.

Palmer has served four years with the Clarkesville Police Department and is currently working on his Ph.D. Palmer's true loves are teaching, his wife, Samantha, and his daughter, Ardella.

*The National FOP History Committee members are David L. Stevens (chair, Fla.), James Flores (N.M.), Dewey Stokes (Ohio), Bruce Evarrt (Md.), Ben Roberts (Texas) and Adolph South (Ala.). FOP*





# Pathways to Excellence: A Vision Realized

Some ideas look good on paper. Others prove their value when put into practice. Pathways to Excellence has now done exactly that.

At its core, the FOP has always been about more than representation — it is about preparing leaders, strengthening our profession and ensuring that those who serve their communities are equipped with the knowledge and support they need to succeed.

When we first introduced the concept of Pathways to Excellence, it was clear that the FOP was taking a bold step forward in how we approach education and leadership development. The vision was straightforward but ambitious: to bring together several of our most impactful training programs into one comprehensive experience where our members could learn, collaborate and grow together.

Now that the inaugural Pathways to Excellence has concluded, it is clear that the concept delivered exactly what it set out to accomplish.

For one week in Las Vegas, FOP members from across the country gathered at the South Point Hotel, Casino and Convention Center to participate in a truly unique educational experience. Instead of attending multiple seminars throughout the year in different locations, participants were able to take advantage of several training opportunities during a single week of focused learning and collaboration.

The idea behind Pathways grew from conversations with our members and lodge leaders who shared a common challenge: travel costs, staffing shortages and time away from their agencies often limited their ability to attend multiple

FOP training events each year. Pathways was designed to bring those educational opportunities together in a way that better serves our membership.

The result was a weeklong experience that combined six distinct educational paths: the Wellness Professionals' Forum, the Wellness Summit, the Labor Leadership Summit, the Legal Counselors Seminar, Excellency in Chaplaincy and the long-standing Leadership Matters program.

Each of these programs addressed a different aspect of the modern law enforcement profession. Wellness professionals and clinicians explored strategies designed to strengthen the mental health and resilience of officers and their families. Labor

Continued on page 42 >

## Check out FOP.net

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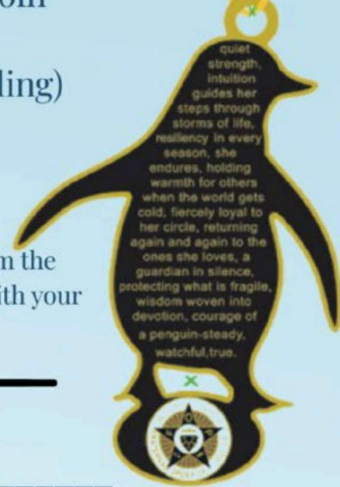
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You will receive an invoice by email from the National FOP Auxiliary. Square account with your total for coins and shipping



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## EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Continued from page 40 >

leaders and attorneys examined the evolving legal and collective bargaining landscape facing our members across the country. Chaplains gathered to share ideas and strengthen the spiritual support systems that many officers rely on during some of the most difficult moments in their careers.

Leadership Matters once again played a central role in the week's activities. For decades, this program has helped prepare new and emerging lodge leaders for the responsibilities of representing their members and managing their lodges. Bringing this program together with other training opportunities allowed participants to gain a broader perspective of the FOP and the many ways our organization supports its membership.

Another highlight of the week was the opportunity for attendees to hear directly from National leaders and subject-matter experts who addressed some of the most pressing issues facing law enforcement today. These discussions provided valuable insight into the policy landscape, the challenges confronting our profession and the leadership required to navigate them. Hearing from respected voices within government and the law enforcement community added another dimension to the Pathways experience and reinforced the importance of strong leadership and collaboration at every level of our profession.

While the educational value of these programs is undeniable, one of the most rewarding aspects of Pathways to Excellence was the interaction among participants. Conversations that began in breakout sessions often continued in hallways, during meals and throughout informal networking opportunities.

As with any event of this scale, the schedule evolved throughout the week as discussions continued and opportunities for additional dialogue emerged, further enriching the overall experience for those in attendance.

What became clear throughout the week was that Pathways to Excellence is more than a collection of seminars

— it represents a new way of thinking about how the FOP prepares its leaders and serves its members.

While many conferences provide valuable training, Pathways is uniquely designed by the FOP for the specific needs of our members. Every session, every presenter and every discussion is grounded in the real-world challenges facing lodge leaders, officers, attorneys, chaplains and wellness professionals. In that

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**The Pathways  
concept has  
opened the  
door to exciting  
possibilities for  
the future of  
FOP education.**

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sense, Pathways is less about lectures and more about collaboration among professionals who share a common mission — serving those who serve.

Events like this do not happen by accident. Pathways to Excellence was made possible through the vision and leadership of **National President Patrick Yoes** and the **National Executive Board**, whose commitment to strengthening education and leadership development continues to shape the future of our organization.

The dedication of our directors, presenters, committees and National staff also played a critical role in bringing this event to life. A tremendous amount of planning and coordination went into ensuring that every session delivered meaningful and practical information for those who attended.

Most importantly, we want to thank the many FOP members and professionals who took the time to participate in Pathways to Excellence. Their willingness to share ideas, experiences and perspectives is what truly makes events like this meaningful and helps strengthen the FOP as an organization.

As we reflect on the success of this year's event, one thing is certain: the Pathways concept has opened the door to exciting possibilities for the future of FOP education.

With that in mind, I encourage you to mark your calendars now. Planning has already begun for the next Pathways to Excellence event, which will return to the **South Point Hotel, Casino and Convention Center in Las Vegas from April 20–26, 2027**. The South Point proved to be an outstanding host for this unique training experience, and we look forward to building upon the strong foundation that has now been established.

Education and leadership development remain cornerstones of our profession, and the FOP will continue to lead the way in preparing our members for the challenges and responsibilities that lie ahead.

Until we meet again, God bless you and God bless the FOP! **FOP**

## FOP DIVISION OF EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

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If you have further questions, contact Director Keith

Turney at [kturney@fop.org](mailto:kturney@fop.org), or (815) 482-5620. For more

information on CRI-TAC, visit [cops.usdoj.gov/cri-tac](http://cops.usdoj.gov/cri-tac).



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