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FEATURE



10 // Lodges: Submit Your Nominations for the Jack Dudek Member of the Year Award



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EXECUTIVE BOARD

6 // President's Message

Why the FOP Matters More Than Ever

8 // Secretary's Message

Making the Voice of Law Enforcement Stronger and Louder

DEPARTMENTS

12 // Wellness

Power in Peers: The Future of Law Enforcement Wellness

Protecting the Protectors: A New Focus on
Officer Health and Wellness, Part 1

16 // NFOPU Spotlight

Walden University

20 // Washington Report

Protect and Serve Act to Be Reintroduced in the Senate

24 // Legal Defense Plan

The True Cost of Legal Defense: Why Coverage Matters

26 // Labor News

NFOP Labor Services Division: Buster McGehee

28 // Legal Counsel

Conflicting Interpretation of Qualified Immunity
Standards After Zorn

32 // Education and Outreach

From Toughing It Out to Standing Strong



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Why the FOP Matters More Than Ever



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

Our Greatest Strength Is Neither Our Size nor Our History — It Is Our People

Over the past few months, I have had the privilege of traveling thousands of miles to attend state conferences, lodge meetings, memorial services, training events and legislative gatherings across our country. Every stop has reinforced something I have long believed: the future of the Fraternal Order of Police is incredibly bright.

It would be easy to focus on the challenges facing our profession. Recruiting and retaining qualified officers remains difficult. Violence directed at law enforcement continues to be a serious concern. Public expectations continue to evolve, while technology and the demands placed upon our officers change at an unprecedented pace.

Yet, that is not what I see when I meet with our members.

I see energy. I see commitment. I see innovation. Most importantly, I see a new generation of leaders who care deeply about this profession and are willing to invest their time, talent and passion to make it stronger.

Every conference reminds me that the strength of the FOP has never rested solely in our National Headquarters. It begins in our local lodges, where members volunteer countless hours advocating for fellow officers, negotiating contracts, supporting families during times of tragedy, mentoring young officers and serving their communities.

For more than 111 years, the FOP has grown because each generation understood it inherited not simply an organization, but a responsibility. Those who came before us built the foundation upon which we stand today. They fought for fair wages, safer working conditions, collective bargaining rights, legal protections, retirement security and

the strong legislative voice that represents more than 382,000 members today.

They did not build this organization for themselves. They built it for us.

Now it is our turn.

What gives me the greatest confidence is watching today's leaders embrace that same responsibility. Whether they are seasoned veterans or officers serving in lodge leadership for the first time, they understand that

The FOP has grown because each generation understood it inherited not simply an organization, but a responsibility.

the future of our profession depends upon serving something greater than themselves.

Leadership within the FOP has never been about titles. It has always been about service.

Across America, I have watched lodge presidents, trustees, committee members and volunteers dedicate evenings and weekends away from their families to represent their members. I have seen them comfort the families of fallen officers, mentor the next generation, advocate before legislatures and strengthen their communities through quiet acts of service

that rarely receive recognition but make an extraordinary difference.

This is the FOP at its very best.

Today's challenges demand organizations that are strong, adaptable and united. The FOP has become far more than a labor organization. We are the leading voice for law enforcement on Capitol Hill and in state legislatures. We are advancing officer wellness, expanding educational opportunities, strengthening legal protections, improving workplace conditions and ensuring law enforcement has a respected voice whenever decisions affecting our profession are made.

None of that happens without engaged members.

Every member who attends a lodge meeting, mentors a young officer, volunteers, serves on a committee or advocates for our legislative priorities strengthens this organization. Every act of service becomes another brick in the foundation that future generations will inherit.

As I travel across this country, I am reminded that our greatest strength is neither our size nor our history.

It is our people.

The enthusiasm, professionalism and dedication I witness from coast to coast leave me more optimistic than ever about the future of the FOP and the profession we proudly represent.

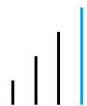
Our founders believed law enforcement officers had both the right and responsibility to shape their own future. More than a century later, that belief continues to define who we are.

The FOP matters more than ever because the men and women who wear the badge matter more than ever. Together, we will continue building upon the remarkable legacy entrusted to us, ensuring that the next generation inherits an even stronger FOP than the one we proudly serve today. **FOP**



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Making the Voice of Law Enforcement Stronger and Louder



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

Brothers and sisters, I hope this August edition of the *Journal* finds you and your family well. What a hot summer we are experiencing this year. Record-setting high temperatures have been recorded throughout our country. These high temps will most likely result in extreme weather conditions including tornados, flooding and hurricanes. Now is the time to prepare your emergency kits should you need to evacuate your family or if you are without power.

This month I am going to discuss membership. National President Patrick Yoes and National Vice President Joe Gamaldi have appointed a fantastic National Recruitment Committee (formally Membership Committee). I am here to tell you that each of us has the responsibility and duty to recruit new members, help reinstate those who have allowed their membership to lapse and assist in retaining our current members by keeping them informed and involved. We are, in essence, membership ambassadors of the Fraternal Order of Police.

The prerequisite for membership is simple: One needs to be a full-time employed or retired, appointed or elected law enforcement officer of any rank working at least 30 hours a week as their primary profession, and of the United States or any state or political subdivision. A law enforcement officer is a public employee who has the legal power to enforce laws, make arrests, keep the peace and protect people and property. There are many occupations that have some of these responsibilities but not all, especially the power to arrest or use force to effect an arrest. Over the years I have been asked to give opinions on membership eligibility. Some of the questions have been: Can the sheriff's secretary, who he deputized, be a member? Can a municipal building code enforcement agent be a member? Can a parking enforcement officer be a member? Can an animal control officer be a member?

Can a reserve police officer be a member?
Can a private police officer be a member?
There have been many more positions asked about, and my standard answer is no, they don't meet the basic prerequisite.

Article 4, section 2 of the National Constitution states that "each state and subordinate lodge [local lodge] shall be the judge of its membership ... and shall establish requirements for membership ... [but] such requirements shall not be inconsistent with the prerequisites" contained in the National Constitution and By-Laws. What this means is a state or local can restrict who can join their lodge, but they can't relax the prerequisite. For example, some states do not recognize constables or correctional officers as members, since those positions don't meet the state's training standards or they don't have the power of arrest. Some lodges restrict their membership to members of their respective agency or collective bargaining unit. Both examples are permissible provided that the denial of membership is not on account of race, religion, color, creed, sex, age or national origin.

I also have had lodges contact me about discovering they have members, and in a few cases lodge officers, who don't meet the prerequisites of membership. In all inquiries, it was determined that these members were allowed to join in past years because they were "good people" and friends with the lodge leadership at the time. These instances should never have happened and now pose a problematic issue. We have managed to resolve these issues, but they could escalate to legal action since the nonqualified members could argue they did everything required, paid their dues and per capita, and we accepted it. It is our responsibility as members to make sure we only allow those qualified for membership join our great Order. There are many "good people" who would love to join the Fraternal Order of

Police. They support the lodge by helping with events or monetarily, but they should be directed to join an associate lodge or, if the lodge elects to do so, they could be bestowed an honorary membership.

Three years ago, during a National Executive Board retreat and vision for the future planning meeting, Vice President Gamaldi presented a resolution to the Board that we should obtain a membership of 400,000 by the 2025 National Biennial Conference in Miami. We didn't complete that goal, but we are close. Today, we have 382,517 members in 2,220 lodges in 50 states and the District of Columbia. Together, as membership ambassadors, we can exceed that goal by the Biennial Conference next year in Salt Lake City. Will you help make the "the voice of our nation's law enforcement officers" even stronger and louder?

On the topic of membership, our new database system's rollout is nearly complete. We anticipate every lodge being on board with Ortu3 by August 31. Right now, the system supports core functions such as member information and per capita billing. In the future, many more functions will be added. One of those features will be a digital membership card with individual QR code. This feature will allow local and state lodges, and the National Lodge, to scan in membership attendance at meetings, credentialing for delegates and many other streamlining functions. If you are interested in obtaining a digital card, now is the time to act. Please make sure your local lodge secretary has your good, non-governmental email in your membership profile. When this feature is ready to be deployed, you will receive a notification and instructions at that email address.

It is a high honor serving you as your National secretary. My staff and I stand ready to assist you any way we can. Be safe out there, and I look forward to seeing you soon. **FOP**

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LODGES: SUBMIT YOUR NOMINATIONS FOR THE JACK DUDEK MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD

The Jack Dudek Member of the Year Award was established as a means of rewarding an individual member for their service and dedication to the community, their department and the Fraternal Order of Police on the local, state and national levels. This award is the most prestigious acknowledgment that our membership can bestow on one of its own. It is an honor that is given each year, either at the midterm Board Meeting or at our National Conference.

In 2026, the Member of the Year Award Committee will determine who will receive this distinguished award at the 2026 Fall Board Meeting in Chicago, November 6–7.

Nominations are to be submitted in resume form by a subordinate lodge, stating the qualifications of the member being nominated for this award. The following guidelines are to be followed for the correct submission of an application and consideration by the committee for selection as Member of the Year:

- All applications must be submitted in legible typewritten form on FOP letterhead (five copies, please), giving all pertinent information as to why the members of your lodge feel the applicant should be considered for this prestigious award.
- All applications must be submitted by a subordinate lodge in good standing. No individual member shall submit their name as a nominee for this award.
- Nominees should be considered on the basis of their career in the law enforcement profession, FOP involvement and service to the community.
- Only active FOP members currently working in law enforcement or retired from law enforcement service shall be considered for this award.
- All applications will be sent to the committee chairperson, who will then disseminate copies to the selection committee members.
- In order to allow the committee ample time to read and consider each application, a cut-off date must be set for receiving applications. All applications must be received by the committee chairperson no later than six weeks prior to the first day of the Board Meeting or National Conference. **The deadline for 2026 nominations is September 23, 2026.**
- After each committee member receives a copy of all properly submitted applications, they will advise



Jack Dudek

the chairperson of their choice for the Fraternal Order of Police Member of the Year Award.

- The chairperson of the committee will then advise the National president of the selection by the committee and will follow the directives of the National president as to preparations of the Member of the Year plaque.
- The president of the National Lodge shall present a plaque to the recipient of the Member of the Year Award, along with a check for \$1,000.

Please submit all applications to:

Ed Brannigan, Chair
Awards and Recognition Committee
701 Marriott Drive
Nashville, TN 37214 **FOP**

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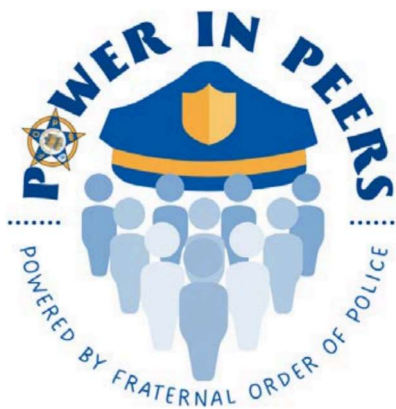
The Future of Law Enforcement Wellness

SHERRI MARTIN / DIRECTOR OF WELLNESS

This month, we're excited to share the remarkable growth of Power in Peers, the National Fraternal Order of Police's law enforcement peer-support training program. What began as an idea inspired by the voices of our members has become one of the nation's fastest-growing law enforcement wellness initiatives.

The program was built on insights gathered through national surveys of law enforcement officers. In 2019, the National Officer Wellness Committee learned that peer support was the wellness resource officers trusted and valued most. Armed with that knowledge — and with support from the U.S. Department of Justice COPS Office — we set out to create a nationwide network of trained peer supporters. From that vision, Power in Peers was born.

While standardized critical incident-response training has existed for many years, Power in Peers introduced a broader approach to peer support. Rather than focusing solely on major traumatic events, the program emphasizes proactive support for the everyday stressors that



come with a career in law enforcement. Developed specifically for our profession, the curriculum reflects the unique realities officers face while incorporating principles of positive psychology, a field that focuses on resilience, personal growth and helping people thrive despite life's challenges.

The program is open to active and retired law enforcement officers, allowing us to tap into one of our profession's greatest strengths: our retirees. Their knowledge and experience provide invaluable guidance to newer officers while

keeping retired members connected to the law enforcement family they dedicated their careers to serving.

Power in Peers also welcomes civilian employees, recognizing that many agencies' peer support teams serve the entire workforce, not just sworn personnel. Chaplains and licensed mental health professionals are also eligible to participate, and some of our strongest classes include representatives from each of these groups. Bringing together different perspectives creates richer discussions and stronger support networks.

The program initially launched through train-the-trainer sessions, allowing us to refine the curriculum while building a national cadre of certified instructors. Today, Power in Peers has been delivered in 20 states, with more than 300 certified trainers teaching the curriculum across the country. Every week, new supporting peer mentors are being trained, and additional instructors continue to earn certification. In the coming months alone, we expect to certify more than 150 new trainers.

Perhaps even more impressive than the program's growth is the impact it continues to have long after the classroom



experience ends. Graduates are building relationships with peer supporters from other agencies, collaborating on training opportunities and creating regional and statewide support networks. These connections ensure that officers have access to trusted peers well beyond their own departments.

Participants also gain a deeper understanding of their own strengths while learning to recognize and appreciate the strengths of others. Just as importantly, they become more comfortable reaching out for support themselves — an essential step toward strengthening officer wellness and resilience.

In several states, demand for the program has exceeded expectations, with agencies eager to host classes and certified trainers ready to meet the growing need. The momentum continues to build, reinforcing our belief that peer support is becoming an essential part of modern law enforcement wellness.

Looking ahead, Power in Peers will serve as the foundation for a nationwide peer-support network. With continued support from the COPS Office, the FOP has begun developing the Blue PowerLine, a mobile application designed to connect officers quickly and confidentially with qualified peer supporters.

Although stigma surrounding mental wellness has decreased significantly, some officers remain hesitant to seek support within their own agencies. Blue PowerLine is designed to remove those

Participants gain a deeper understanding of their own strengths while learning to recognize and appreciate the strengths of others.

barriers by providing private, easy access to certified supporting peer mentors who have volunteered to help fellow officers. Whether someone wants to connect with a peer in the next county or across the country, support will be only a few taps away.

The ultimate goal is simple: ensure that no officer has to face life's challenges alone.

A recent issue of *Community Policing Dispatch*, the e-newsletter produced by the COPS Office, highlighted many of the strengths of the Power in Peers program. We encourage you to read the article and learn more about how this innovative training is transforming peer support in law enforcement: cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/07-2026/peer_training.html.

Does your agency have a peer support

team? More importantly, do your officers feel comfortable using it?

As we continue strengthening support for our brothers and sisters in law enforcement, we encourage every agency to invest in well-trained, engaged and proactive peer support teams. Together, we can build a culture where seeking support is viewed as a sign of professionalism, strength and commitment to one another.

After all, one of the greatest strengths of the law enforcement profession has always been its people — and there is tremendous power in peers.

Interested in bringing Power in Peers to your agency? Visit the National FOP website or contact the Officer Wellness Committee to learn about upcoming courses and train-the-trainer opportunities. **FOP**

PROTECTING THE PROTECTORS: A NEW FOCUS ON OFFICER HEALTH AND WELLNESS, PART 1

The National Fraternal Order of Police and the American Heart Association share a common goal: helping officers live healthier, longer lives. Through this collaboration focused on officer health and wellness, we are bringing NFOP members a two-part series on an emerging health concept known as cardiovascular-kidney-metabolic (CKM) health (see tinyurl.com/aha-fop-ckm).

Why does CKM matter? Because the same factors that affect heart health also influence kidney health, metabolic health, diabetes risk and overall well-being. And unfortunately, the realities of police work can make managing these risks especially challenging.

Long shifts, disrupted sleep, chronic stress, irregular meals and extended periods of sitting can gradually increase the likelihood of developing conditions such as high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes, heart disease and kidney disease. Often, these risks develop silently, with few warning signs.

Health and Readiness Go Hand in Hand

Just as effective policing depends on teamwork, communication and preparation, good health depends on multiple systems working together. The American Heart Association's CKM framework recognizes that cardiovascular, kidney and metabolic health are interconnected — and that positive changes in one area can improve overall health.

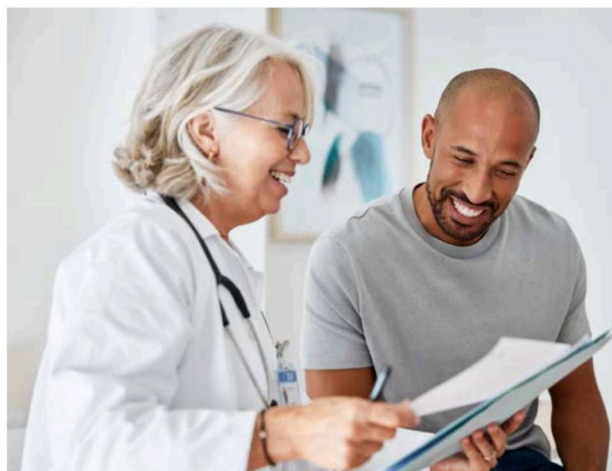
For officers, protecting health isn't simply a personal matter. It supports:

- Operational readiness
- Physical performance
- Mental sharpness and decision-making
- Resilience under stress
- Career longevity
- Family well-being

The Foundation: Life's Essential 8™

A key component of the American Heart Association and NFOP's collaboration and approach to officers' lifelong health is Life's Essential 8™ (tinyurl.com/aha-fop-essential-8), eight evidence-based behaviors and health measures that help improve and maintain cardiovascular health:

- Eat better
- Be more active
- Quit tobacco
- Get healthy sleep
- Manage weight
- Control cholesterol
- Manage blood sugar
- Manage blood pressure



These factors not only support heart health, but also play a critical role in improving CKM health and reducing long-term disease risk. By focusing on these fundamentals, officers can take meaningful steps toward protecting their health both on and off duty.

A Shared Commitment

The collaboration between the NFOP and the American Heart Association reflects a shared commitment to supporting the men and women who serve our communities every day. By increasing awareness of CKM health and promoting practical wellness strategies, we hope to empower officers to take charge of their health and future.

In Part 2 of this series next month, we'll explore simple, practical actions officers can take to improve CKM health and build a strong foundation through Life's Essential 8™. **FOP**

Check out the American Heart Association's Life's Essential 8™ (tinyurl.com/AHALifesEssential8) 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.

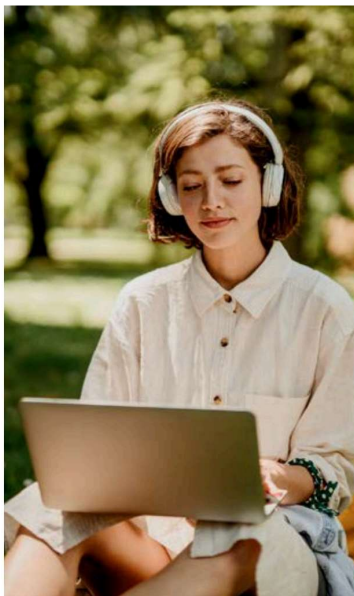


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Beyond the Badge: Why Education Makes Experience More Powerful

In law enforcement, we have continued to debate about the perceived value of education versus experience. Many of us in the field have earned our expertise through years of hands-on service, navigating complex and high-risk situations that no classroom could fully replicate. Yet, as the profession continues to evolve, and we are being asked to do more to manage and develop a political and business acumen, education is increasingly recognized not as a replacement for experience, but as a powerful amplifier of it.

We will encounter individuals who question the value of formal education, some believing that real-world policing is learned only on the streets. While experience is undeniably critical, this perspective overlooks how education enhances decision-making, broadens perspective and prepares us for those professional leadership roles in a modern policing environment.

The False Divide: Education Versus Experience

The idea that officers must choose between education and experience is a misconception. The most effective law enforcement professionals integrate both.

Experience provides practical knowledge: how to assess a scene, communicate under pressure and make immediate decisions.

Education provides theoretical frameworks: understanding human behavior, legal standards, ethics and evidence-based strategies.

When we combine education and experience, we produce a more thoughtful and adaptable officer and leader, and more importantly, a better person who not only acts but understands why certain



approaches are more effective than others.

How Education Enhances Real-World Experience

Strengthens critical thinking and decision-making: Education trains officers to analyze situations through multiple lenses. Coursework in criminal justice, forensic psychology and advanced leadership programs — such as a Doctorate in Public Safety and Leadership — helps officers recognize patterns in behavior, understand cultural dynamics and identify systemic influences that shape the situations they encounter daily.

Consider a recurring domestic call: An experienced officer brings invaluable pattern recognition to that scene — knowing the history, reading the environment and managing the immediate risk. An officer who has also pursued formal education can layer onto that experience: identifying underlying behavioral triggers, applying de-escalation strategies grounded in research and anticipating how systemic factors may be driving the cycle.

This layered approach leads to more

informed decisions, particularly in the complex and ambiguous situations that define modern policing. Experience tells you what to do. Education helps you understand why — and that understanding makes the difference.

Expands career opportunities and leadership readiness: As agencies become more complex, leadership roles increasingly require higher levels of education. Degrees and specialized training help officers:

- Compete for promotions
- Transition into supervisory or administrative roles
- Contribute to policy development and organizational strategy

Education prepares officers not just to lead people, but to lead systems, understanding budgets, policy implications and organizational change.

Enhances ethical awareness and professional standards: Law enforcement professionals operate under intense public scrutiny. Education reinforces ethical decision-making by exposing officers to:

- Legal precedents and constitutional law



Dr. Jessie Lee is a retired law enforcement executive and policy consultant and a graduate of the FBI National Academy, and holds a Ph.D. in Public Policy and Administration with a concentration in Homeland Security. He currently serves as associate dean in Walden University's College of Psychology and Community Services.

- Ethical frameworks and dilemmas
- Accountability standards

This foundation helps us navigate gray areas with confidence and professionalism, reducing risk for both the individual and the agency, and ultimately strengthening public trust.

Supports adaptation in a changing profession: Policing today is not what it was 10 or 20 years ago; accountability and transparency are paramount. Demands such as emerging technology, mental health crisis response and shifting community expectations have fundamentally transformed the landscape. Education helps officers stay current by:

- Introducing evidence-based policing practices
- Integrating new technologies and investigative tools
- Understanding evolving legal standards

An officer who combines experience with continuous learning is far better

Continued on page 18 >

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**.



Charles Town, WV



Ashland, OH



Orange Beach, AL



Romeoville, IL



San Diego, CA



Cape Girardeau, MO



Manchester, NH



Tiffin, OH



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Adelphi, MD



San Diego, CA



Williamsburg, KY



Fayette, IA



Minneapolis, MN



Wichita, KS

FOP.net/fop-university

NFOPU SPOTLIGHT

Continued from page 17 >

equipped to adapt and remain effective over time.

Addressing Common Skepticism

It is common to hear statements like:

- “You can’t learn policing in a classroom.”
- “Real cops learn on the job.”

While these statements highlight the importance of experience, they overlook the fact that education does not aim to replace fieldwork; it strengthens it. The most seasoned professionals often recognize that, had they acquired certain knowledge earlier, it could have improved their effectiveness and decision-making in the field.

Education also provides a shared language and framework that enhances collaboration across agencies, disciplines and jurisdictions.

The Competitive Advantage

In today’s law enforcement environment, professionals with both strong experience and educational

credentials stand out. They are often:

- More competitive for specialized assignments and promotional opportunities
- Better prepared for interdisciplinary work
- Positioned as subject matter experts within their agencies

This combination is not just beneficial — it is increasingly expected. Agencies seeking to meet the demands of modern policing are looking for leaders who can perform in the field and think strategically beyond it.

Making Education Work for You

Pursuing education while serving in law enforcement is more achievable today than ever before. Many colleges and universities now offer online and hybrid programs specifically designed for working professionals, allowing officers to advance their education without stepping away from their careers or families. Programs at the bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral level are increasingly structured around the schedules and lived experiences of

active law enforcement professionals. Additionally, many agencies offer tuition assistance or reimbursement programs, and federal resources may provide further financial support. The question is no longer whether education is accessible — it is whether you are ready to take the next step.

Education in law enforcement is not about replacing experience; it is about making that experience more meaningful, more informed and more impactful. Officers who invest in their education demonstrate a commitment to growth, professionalism and excellence.

As you progress in your career, you will encounter those who question the value of education. Rather than viewing it as an unnecessary requirement, consider it a strategic tool that sharpens your skills, expands your perspective and positions you for long-term success in an evolving profession.

In the end, experience teaches you what to do. Education helps you understand why it matters — and how to do it better. **FOP**

WELLNESS PROVIDERS

Chateau Recovery Midway, UT

chateaufirstrecovery.com

FHE Health:

Shatterproof Program Deerfield Beach, FL

therehab.com/services/first-responders

First Responder Wellness by Simple Recovery Costa Mesa, CA

firstresponder-wellness.com

Harbor of Grace First Responder Program Havre de Grace, MD

harborofgracerecovery.com/first-responders

Throttle and Thrive Palos Verdes Estates, CA

throttleandthrive.com

Warrior’s Heart Bandera, TX

warriorshheart.com

Find more vetted and approved wellness providers
and programs at fop.net/officer-wellness/providers.

This Retired Cop Spent 28 Years Inside the Mortgage Industry. Then He Wrote the Guide That Shows Working Homeowners How to Safely Pay Off a 30-Year Mortgage in as Little as 7 Years.

On a \$300,000 mortgage at 6%, the bank's 30-year plan collects **\$347,514 in interest.** *(Locked in at 3%? The same loan still collects \$155,332.)*

A free 45-minute read for the law enforcement officers who refuse to retire still owing the bank.

If you're like most homeowners — and a lot of the people reading this wear a badge — you signed your mortgage years ago, and nobody has ever walked you through what that loan is actually built to cost you. Not the lender. Not the closing agent. Not the retirement statement that lands in your inbox every quarter.

That number has a name. The industry calls it your TIP — your Total Interest Percentage — and yours was tucked inside the two inches of paperwork you signed at the closing table. On the mortgage above, the TIP is 115.8%: for every dollar borrowed, the bank collects another \$1.16 in interest. Nobody in that chain earns a dollar when you pay off early — so nobody points it out. In 28 years inside the industry, I never saw it happen. Not once.

I wore a badge before I ever worked a loan file. Since then, I've taught hundreds of California homeowners — many of them first responders — to become mortgage- and debt-free years, often more than a decade, early. Now I'm bringing that teaching to the first responder community nationwide.

This guide shows you where your TIP is hiding on your own paperwork — and how a mortgage like yours can be gone in as little as 7 years instead of 30: no refinancing, not one dollar of new debt, and six figures in interest kept in your pocket instead of the bank's.

Free • A 45-minute read • No upsell • No refinancing • No HELOC • No new debt



Gregg Knight

Financial Educator & Mortgage Professional Since 1998

CLATM — Certified Liability Advisor · 1 of 38 in the United States

Retired Law Enforcement Officer · Founding Member, National Institute of Financial Education

SCAN OR VISIT

NoMoreMortgage.com/fop





Protect and Serve Act to Be Reintroduced in the Senate



In a major breakthrough that the Fraternal Order of Police has been working toward for months, Senator Thomas R. Tillis (R-N.C.), the sponsor of S. 167, the Protect and Serve Act, and Senator Christopher A. Coons (D-Del.) will be reintroducing the bill with amended language the FOP helped develop.

The bill changes the newly created offense from “knowingly assaults” a law enforcement officer to “willfully and with the intent to kill” a law enforcement officer simply because they are a law enforcement officer. This minor but important change was made for clarity and to more narrowly define how the federal government would bring cases against those who target or ambush local or state law enforcement officers. It also makes the bill bipartisan, which we hope will allow the Senate Judiciary Committee to consider the bill this year.

We expect the bill to be introduced in the next few weeks before the August recess.

In the House, the legislation remains stuck in the House Judiciary Committee with no real path forward, despite having 117 co-sponsors.

Please monitor the FOP website and the *Weekly Update* for more information as it develops.

4.9 GHz and FirstNet Reauthorization

The National FOP welcomed news about the unanimous decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit to uphold the Eighth Report and Order issued in October 2024 by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for the 4.9 GHz band.

Just the Facts:

» The reintroduced Protect and Serve Act includes a change in wording from “knowingly assaults” a law enforcement officer to “willfully and with the intent to kill” a law enforcement officer simply because they are a law enforcement officer. The change intends to clarify and more narrowly define how the federal government would bring cases against those who target or ambush local or state law enforcement officers. Other significant news is that the FCC is cleared to begin the process of selecting a band manager to effectively coordinate the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN).

Recognizing that the 4.9 GHz band, which is reserved for the exclusive use of public safety, has been chronically underutilized, the court cleared the way for the FCC to begin the process of selecting a band manager to effectively coordinate the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN), modernize it for advanced technologies and enable critical spectrum sharing for the benefit of our nation’s law enforcement, other first responders and the communities they serve. The decision will allow the FCC to reclaim unused spectrum, reduce harmful interference from overly broad geographic licenses and ensure the 4.9 GHz band can finally fulfill its potential as a vital tool for law enforcement and other emergency responders.

For years, the FOP has advocated for practical solutions that maximize spectrum resources for the men and women in the field whose very lives depend on the functionality of their equipment and the reliability of our public safety communication network. We look forward to working with the FCC to swiftly select a band manager who will listen to the needs of the rank-and-file officers and put this

spectrum to work protecting officers and the public.

The Washington, D.C., staff is also making great progress with our legislative efforts to reauthorize the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet). I met with Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas), chairman of the Committee on Commerce, Science and Technology, to discuss the FOP’s draft legislative proposal that correctly makes public safety the prime focus when it comes to regulation, decision making and vendor interaction.

We will be meeting with committee staff over the course of the next few weeks to make sure the FirstNet Authority Board, not the bureaucratic construct contained in the House-passed reauthorization bill, has the authority to make the decisions about the NPSBN as well as the governance and operation of the FirstNet Authority. We cannot jeopardize officer and public safety by shifting decision making away from public safety professionals. The FOP’s legislative proposal puts officer and public safety above all other considerations.

Continued on page 22 >

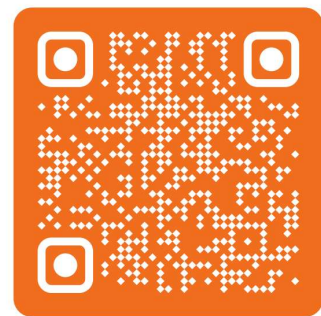


Confidence Under Pressure

TacticID® 1064 ST: Drug Identification When It Counts

From traffic stops and search warrants to clandestine lab investigations, the TacticID® 1064 ST helps officers identify narcotics and hazardous substances quickly and safely. Featuring see-through analysis, integrated HazMasterG3™ decision-support software, and one of the industry's most comprehensive fentanyl libraries, the system delivers actionable results in seconds without compromising evidence. Lightweight, rugged, and easy to use, TacticID® 1064 ST gives law enforcement agencies the intelligence needed to respond faster, reduce risk, and make confident decisions in critical situations.

Grant assistance opportunities are available through Police1 for qualifying agencies.



TO FIND OUT MORE,
SCAN HERE



Top Priorities in Brief



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

House: 71 co-sponsors (19 R, 52 D)

Senate: Not yet introduced

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

House: 65 co-sponsors (10 R, 55 D)

Senate: 2 co-sponsors (2 D)

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

House: Passed

Senate: 12 co-sponsors (12 R)

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

House: 117 co-sponsors (94 R, 23 D)

Senate: 25 co-sponsors (25 R)

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

House: 146 co-sponsors (50 R, 96 D)

Senate: 25 co-sponsors (8 R, 17 D)

To see a full list of legislation supported by the FOP in the previous Congress, please visit 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 20 >

Law Enforcement Officers' Equity Act

The Washington, D.C., Legislative Office staff recently met with staff in the offices of Senators Cory A. Booker (D-N.J.) and Jon A. Husted (R-Ohio) to discuss the introduction of the Senate version of the Law Enforcement Officers' Equity Act. We hope to have the bill introduced before the August recess.

In the House, the FOP continues its outreach to increase the number of co-sponsors, which currently stands at 71.

Interim Final Rule on Drones Issued

In July, the U.S. Departments of Justice (DOJ) and Homeland Security (DHS) issued an interim final rule establishing voluntary and operation guidelines for the expanded authority on the use of counter-unmanned aircraft systems (C-UAS) by state and local law enforcement.

Participation in the program is voluntary but requires agency certification by DOJ and DHS. The rule establishes two levels of operational authority: Tier 1 training authorizes certified agencies to detect, identify and track drones, coordinate with federal authorities and issue warnings, but it does not permit mitigation activities.

Tier 2 training allows agencies to conduct approved mitigation activities, including disrupting communications or navigation systems, and where authorized, forcing drones to land or otherwise disable them. Because of the increased operational and public safety risks associated with mitigation, Tier 2 personnel must complete in-person training and certification at the National Counter-UAS Training Center (NCUTC), operated by the FBI in Huntsville, Alabama. The rule also establishes an abbreviated certification program tailored for correctional personnel to address the growing use of drones to introduce contraband into correctional facilities.

The public comment period on the rule is open until September 4, but agencies can now begin the process of seeking certification.

Other Legislative Activity

The FOP has supported the following

legislation since the last issue of the *Journal*:

- H.R. 5882/S. 3077, the Safer Supervision Act, which would reform the existing protocols on terminating supervised release for some offenders
- H.R. 6029, the Bank Secrecy Act, which would exempt transactions with respect to cash reward payments by crime stopper organizations from certain currency transaction reports
- H.R. 9503, the Officer Leslie Coffelt U.S. Secret Service Police Act, which would change the name of the United States Secret Service Uniformed Division to the United States Secret Service Police
- S. S.4514, the Corrections Officer Blake Schwarz Suicide Prevention Act, which would establish a grant program that would provide funding to the Federal Bureau of Prisons, states and localities to carry out mental health screenings and provide referrals, where applicable, to mental healthcare providers for corrections officers who are struggling with their mental health

Election 2026: Model Congressional Questionnaire Now Available

The National FOP has made its 2026 Congressional Candidate Questionnaire available on the FOP website (tinyurl.com/fop2026candidatequestionnaire).

The model questionnaire, prepared by staff at the Steve Young Law Enforcement Legislative Advocacy Center in Washington, D.C., is for state and local lodges to aid them in evaluating federal candidates for the U.S. Congress in the 2026 election cycle.

The questions are drawn from issues supported by the National FOP. It is particularly important for the state and local lodges to endorse candidates who support our top priority items and to publicly oppose those candidates who do not. The success of the National Legislative Program depends on having an active grassroots base and on electing lawmakers who support our pro-law enforcement agenda. Lodges are encouraged to include appropriate local and state issues that are important to them and that will help our members

determine which candidates support the FOP's agenda.

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 to sign up.

Please 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:

- Facebook (@GLFOP)
- X (@GLFOP)
- Instagram (@FOPnational)
- Truth Social (@FOPNational)

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

NFOP PAC Update

The NFOP PAC recently passed a

milestone by reaching a total of over \$100,000! While this is good news, our PAC still lags behind much greater amounts raised by other law enforcement and public safety groups.

We have to continue to grow and raise more funds for our PAC — but we need to start **now**. 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.

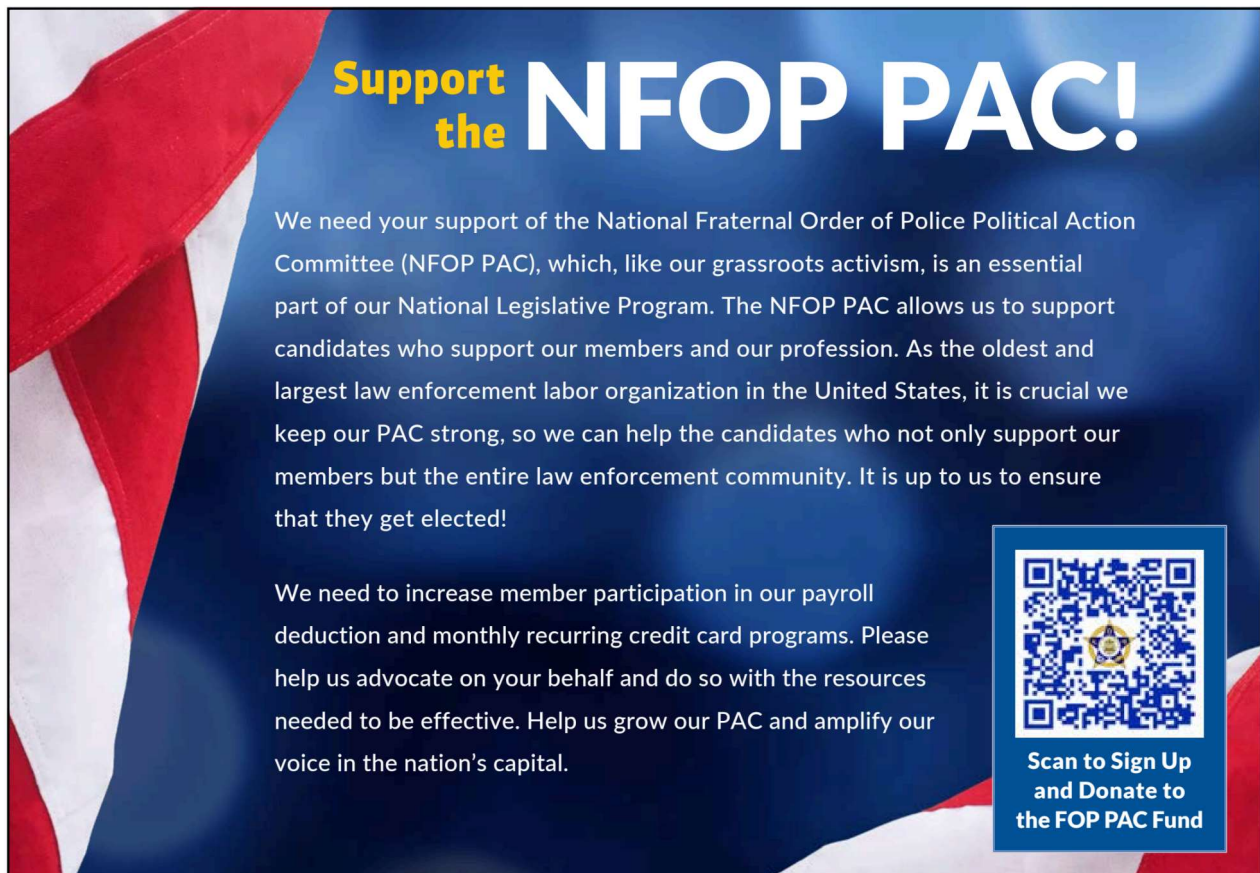
From now until Election Day, we are asking all FOP members to find a way to contribute to the National FOP PAC. Our profession depends on having well-informed lawmakers who listen to and understand the challenges facing law enforcement today.

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**. 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.

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

A graphic with a background of a red, white, and blue American flag. The text is white and yellow. The main headline is 'Support the NFOP PAC!'. Below it is a paragraph about the importance of the NFOP PAC. Another paragraph follows, asking for member participation. A QR code is in the bottom right corner, with the text 'Scan to Sign Up and Donate to the FOP PAC Fund' below it.

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.



Scan to Sign Up and Donate to the FOP PAC Fund

The True Cost of Legal Defense: Why Coverage Matters

When an officer is involved in a serious incident, the public often focuses on the headlines. What rarely makes the news is the cost of mounting a proper legal defense.

And that cost can be staggering.

The reality is simple: legal defense is not just about hiring an attorney; it is about building a case.

Defense Is a Team Effort

In complex administrative, civil or criminal matters, especially officer-involved shootings or high-profile use-of-force cases, defense requires far more than courtroom appearances. It often includes:

- Multiple defense attorneys
- Independent investigators
- Crime-scene reconstruction specialists
- Use-of-force and police practices experts
- Medical and forensic pathologists
- Digital and video analysts
- Trial strategists and jury consultants

Each of these professionals bills for time, preparation, reports, testimony and travel. Costs accumulate long before a case ever reaches trial.

In a 2018 officer-involved shooting case, the defense assembled more than a dozen experts and specialists, including investigators and use-of-force authorities. The total legal expenses ultimately exceeded \$1.5 million.

That is not an outlier in today's environment. It reflects how aggressively cases are prosecuted and litigated.

Even "Routine" Cases Add Up

Not every matter is a headline-grabbing criminal case.

The average claim cost is approximately \$8,000, and that figure can escalate

quickly if expert analysis or trial preparation becomes necessary.

Without coverage, legal expenses become an officer's responsibility and are paid from their personal finances.

Retainers alone for experienced defense counsel can reach tens of thousands of dollars. Expert witnesses often charge hourly rates comparable to attorneys. A multi-day trial can multiply costs overnight.

Legal defense is not just about hiring an attorney; it is about building a case.

Why Unlimited Defense With a Plan Attorney Matters

The FOP Legal Defense Plan was structured specifically to address this reality.

When a participant uses a Plan attorney, reasonable and necessary legal fees and approved costs for covered claims are fully paid under the terms of the Plan. There is no preset dollar cap that forces an officer to choose between financial survival and a complete defense strategy.

That unlimited defense benefit with a Plan attorney is critical because:

- It allows attorneys to build the right defense.
- It supports the use of appropriate experts when needed.
- It protects officers from personal financial devastation during prolonged litigation.



The Financial Risk Is Real

Legal defense today is more complex than ever. Prosecutorial scrutiny is higher. Civil litigation is more aggressive. Public perception can influence jury pools and prosecutorial decisions.

Officers cannot control whether they are investigated or sued. But they can control whether they are financially prepared.

The true cost of legal defense is not theoretical. It is measured in attorney hours, expert invoices and months — sometimes years — of litigation.

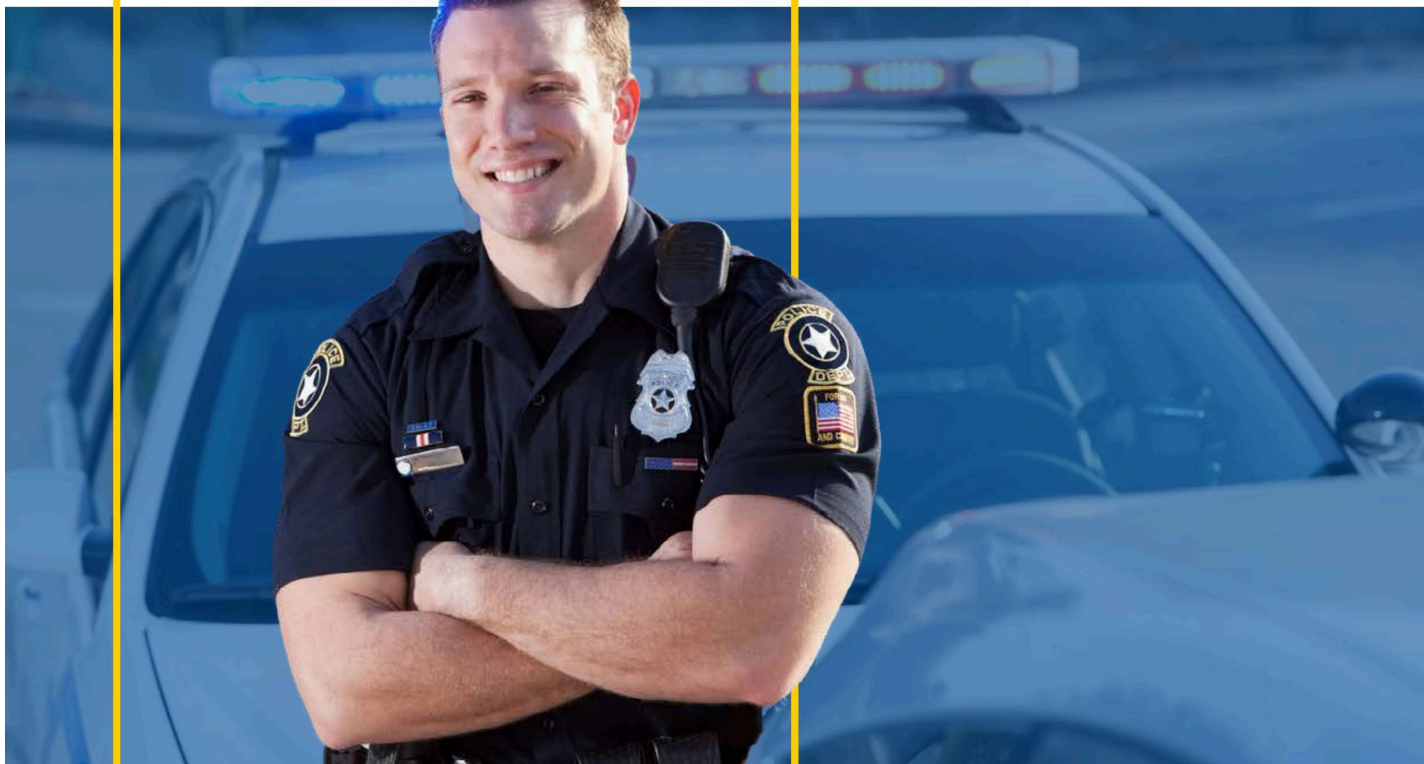
Coverage ensures that the focus stays where it belongs: on building the strongest possible defense.

See the Difference for Yourself

Protecting your career, reputation and financial future starts with understanding the true cost of legal defense and the value of having the right coverage in place.

For more information, visit the new **foplegal.com** website to explore resources and articles that highlight the value of the Plan. Additionally, if you have questions, contact your local lodge administrator or call the FOP Legal Defense Plan at (800) 341-6038. **FOP**

FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE



When It's **YOUR NAME** on the Line

In today's environment, one moment can turn into a career-defining event.

The FOP Legal Defense Plan ensures you're never facing it alone. With access to legal counsel, coverage for administrative, civil, and criminal matters, and the ability to choose your attorney, you stay protected when it matters most.

Stand protected. Enroll today at foplegal.com

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NFOP Labor Services Division: Buster McGehee



Buster McGehee joined the NFOP Labor Services Division in 2011 as a part-time labor specialist. His commitment, expertise and reliability quickly became evident, and on June 18, 2015, he transitioned into a full-time role. With him came more than 40 years of law enforcement experience, including an extraordinary 30-year tenure as a police chief in the state of Washington. His leadership background was not only impressive, but it also became a cornerstone of the Division's credibility and effectiveness.

Buster's contributions reflect the highest standards of service — rooted in integrity, commitment and a genuine belief in the mission of the NFOP.

Throughout his career, Buster built a reputation for integrity, steadiness and a deep understanding of both operational and administrative leadership. His résumé reflects a lifetime of service:

- WASPC State Accreditation Committee chairman
- City of Buckley emergency management director

- Fire commissioner and volunteer firefighter
- Acting Buckley city administrator
- Labor experience from both sides of the bargaining table
- Graduate of the FBI National Academy, 155th Session

These roles were not simply titles — they were lived experiences that shaped the way Buster approached every challenge within NFOP Labor Services. His ability to navigate complex issues, provide balanced guidance and support members with clarity and professionalism made him a trusted resource across the country.

Within the Division, Buster became known for his institutional knowledge, credibility and unwavering dedication to the mission. His work supported countless members, strengthened bargaining outcomes and contributed directly to the national success of NFOP's labor services programs. Buster brought a level of steadiness and professionalism that elevated the entire team.

His contributions reflect the highest standards of service — rooted in integrity, commitment and a genuine belief in the mission of the NFOP. The Division is stronger because of his work, and his legacy will remain part of its foundation for years to come.



As we honor Buster's service, we also celebrate the example he set: a career defined by leadership, dedication and a deep respect for the profession and the people it serves.

Thank you for your years of service, your professionalism and your unwavering commitment to the NFOP Labor Services Division. You leave behind a legacy that will not be forgotten.

With our deepest gratitude and best wishes as you begin the next chapter. **FOP**



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for more information
about NFOP Labor
Services.**

PROJECT LIFESAVER. YOU HAD US AT *HELP*.™

Get trained, certified and equipped in rapid search and rescue for citizens with cognitive impairments.



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Project Lifesaver® International is the leading 501(c)(3) nonprofit training and equipping first responders and public-safety professionals in expedited SAR for people prone to wandering due to cognitive impairment.

- **More than 1,800 active member agencies nationwide and beyond.**
- **More than 4,500 reported rescues to date.**
- **Average search involves 1–3 certified and equipped electronic search specialists and less than 30 minutes.**
- **2026 conference registration now open! Members and non-members welcome. Visit www.ProjectLifesaver.org/conference**

Contact us today to learn how to quickly and affordably begin saving precious time, resources and lives as a certified Project Lifesaver member agency while developing more positive and rewarding community engagement and department morale.

projectlifesaver.org

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IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF SECONDS BEFORE EVERY SECOND MATTERS.

Wandering and elopement are common behaviors among people with autism, dementia, Down syndrome and other cognitive conditions. Children and adults can go missing in an instant from even the most "protected" environments and watchful supervision. And when they do, time is always of the essence as life-threatening challenges await that standard SAR protocol simply cannot address. The Project Lifesaver approach addresses the unique challenges involved by applying the strategic methodology and proven-effective radio-frequency (RF) technology required to quickly and efficiently locate missing participants.

It's your call. How do you want it to end?





Conflicting Interpretation of Qualified Immunity Standards After Zorn



A Review of the Decision in *Shelby v. Manning*

The standard courts apply when denying qualified immunity may return to the United States Supreme Court in *Shelby v. Manning*. The case arises from the fatal encounter between Tulsa Police Officer Betty Shelby and Terence Crutcher in September 2016. Shelby encountered Crutcher near an unattended running vehicle stopped in the roadway. As the encounter unfolded, Crutcher did not respond to commands and moved toward the vehicle, requiring Shelby to make a rapid judgment in a tense and uncertain situation.

The district court concluded that qualified immunity applied. The 10th Circuit reversed. That disagreement is significant because it came shortly after the Supreme Court's decision in *Zorn v. Linton*, where the court emphasized that clearly established law must be defined with a high degree of factual specificity. The question presented in *Manning* is whether the 10th Circuit faithfully applied that standard or instead relied on generalized principles drawn from materially different use-of-force cases. The National FOP intends to file an amicus brief in support of Shelby's petition.

The concern with the 10th Circuit's analysis is that it appears difficult to reconcile with *Zorn*. Under *Zorn*, a court denying qualified immunity must identify precedent that would have placed the constitutional question beyond debate for an officer facing similar circumstances. That inquiry cannot be conducted at too high a level of generality. It must account for the facts confronting the officer at the moment force was used, including the uncertainty, speed and risk inherent in the encounter.

Just the Facts:

» *Shelby v. Manning* presents an important opportunity for the Supreme Court to reinforce the fact-specific qualified immunity analysis emphasized in *Zorn* — use-of-force cases must be evaluated from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, not with the benefit of slow-motion video, full briefing and a reconstructed narrative developed after the fact.



The 10th Circuit took a different path. Rather than identifying a factually analogous case involving comparable circumstances, the court relied on broader principles from cases involving materially different threat profiles. It then used those principles to characterize the encounter as one involving an “unarmed” and “nonthreatening” individual. That framing is problematic because it abstracts away the facts that matter most in the qualified immunity

analysis: the officer's position, the subject's noncompliance, the proximity to the vehicle and what a reasonable officer could perceive at the moment the decision was made.

The decision also raises a familiar hindsight concern. Use-of-force cases must be evaluated from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, not with the benefit of slow-motion video,

Continued on page 30 >



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Like many agencies, the Fulshear Police Department was looking for a better way to improve visibility across operations, strengthen accountability and ensure officers had the information necessary to make informed decisions in the field.

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The result is greater transparency, improved coordination and more confidence that the right resources are in the right place at the right time.

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- Identify coverage gaps
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🌐 patrolfinder.com

LEGAL COUNSEL

Continued from page 28 >

full briefing and a reconstructed narrative developed after the fact. Officers do not make decisions in a courtroom. They make them in real time, often with incomplete information and only fractions of a second to assess risk.

That distinction matters. Officers can be trained to follow standards with defined and predictable content. They cannot be trained to anticipate how a court may later parse a rapidly evolving encounter frame by frame. Qualified immunity is intended to prevent that kind of retroactive uncertainty by requiring fair notice before personal civil liability may attach. To perform their duties properly and safely, officers need notice of what conduct is prohibited before they are required to act, not after a court has reviewed the incident with the benefit of time, briefing and a fully developed record.

Whether the Supreme Court will grant review in *Manning* remains to be seen. But the case presents an important vehicle for addressing recurring uncertainty in the 10th Circuit's qualified immunity analysis. *Manning* does not appear to be an isolated

error. Rather, it reflects a broader pattern in which the court has relied on generalized principles, resolved factual disputes against the officer and denied immunity without identifying factually analogous precedent placing the specific conduct beyond debate.

That matters beyond this case. The 10th Circuit has described its approach as

**Officers do not
make decisions
in a courtroom.
They make them
in real time.**

binding on the district courts within the circuit. Unless corrected, that approach risks replacing the Supreme Court's fact-specific qualified immunity standard with a more generalized rule that provides little practical guidance to officers. Qualified immunity does not excuse misconduct, and it does not bar liability

where clearly established law placed the constitutional question beyond debate. But it does require courts to identify that law with specificity before exposing officers to personal civil liability. For law enforcement officers in the 10th Circuit and beyond, *Shelby v. Manning* presents an important opportunity for the Supreme Court to reinforce the fact-specific qualified immunity analysis emphasized in *Zorn*. **FOP**

FOP GENERAL COUNSEL

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There Is ALWAYS Another Option

FOP Vetted and Approved Crisis Hotlines



FOP.net/officer-wellness/crisis-hotlines



BENEFITS OF FOP MEMBERSHIP

The National Fraternal Order of Police is the world's largest organization of sworn law enforcement officers, with over 373,000 members in more than 2,200 lodges. We are committed to improving the working conditions of officers and the safety of those we serve through education, legislation, information, community involvement and employee representation. Here's a quick overview of the wide variety of services and benefits that the FOP offers to its members.

Legislative Office

The office on Capitol Hill lobbies on issues important to rank-and-file law enforcement officers. The National Legislative Program is the most active and comprehensive of any law enforcement organization in Washington.

Legal Defense Plan

This self-funded plan is available to eligible FOP groups and individual members to cover law enforcement exposures, including administrative, civil and criminal legal coverage; H.R. 218 coverage; and the Moonlighting Liability Insurance Program.

Labor Services Division

Comprehensive resources and services designed to ensure that no officer goes to the bargaining table alone. Labor Services stands ready to provide the people and resources you need for contract information, experienced legal experts, training seminars, personalized labor research and more.

National Peace Officers' Memorial Service

This solemn event is held every year during National Police Week to honor those who have given their lives in the line of duty. Open to the public, it brings together the expanded law enforcement family and national leaders, pays tribute to the fallen and offers words of comfort to their surviving family members.

FOP Journal

Published digitally 12 times a year, the *FOP Journal* is the official publication of the National FOP. Each issue contains reports from the Executive Board, updates on law enforcement legal and labor issues and so much more!

Disaster Relief

As part of the NFOP Foundation, the Fraternal Order of Police Disaster Relief Fund (a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization) relies on the generosity of individuals, organizations and corporations and is always prepared to assist our members in distress.

Charity Partnerships

- **Easter Seals:** Helping children and adults with disabilities live better lives is at the heart of Easter Seals' mission, and the FOP, as a long-standing Easter Seals National Corporate Partner, has helped raise more than \$15 million. Donate online at www.easterseals.com and be sure to indicate your FOP affiliation when donating!
- **Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics:** The FOP is committed to helping people with intellectual disabilities learn to become self-reliant and contributing members of our communities.

Service Providers

The National FOP list of Service Providers currently includes Liberty Mutual insurance, Avis and Enterprise car rentals and a variety of licensed products from HALO, the official FOP merchandiser.

Education Services

The Education Services Committee develops and implements professional law enforcement training programs and events to equip members with the skills needed to enhance their careers, and has established a training schedule covering a wide spectrum of leadership, labor and legal issues. The National FOP also provides scholarships to eligible applicants.

National Fraternal Order of Police University (NFOPU)

Recognizing that four-year and graduate degrees are increasingly important for law enforcement career advancement, the FOP collaborates with a select consortium of universities willing to offer members the education they need with a flexible schedule and reasonable cost. **FOP**



For more information on all of these programs, visit www.fop.net.



From Toughing It Out to Standing Strong



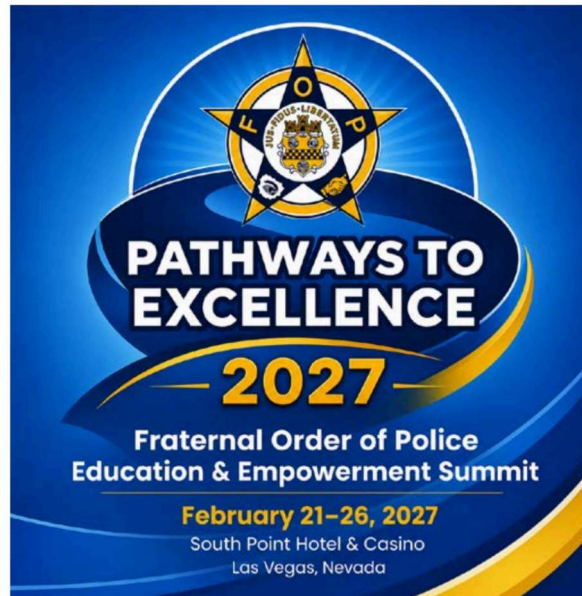
How Pathways to Excellence 2027 Prepares Officers for the Worst Day of Their Career

For generations, the culture around a law enforcement critical incident, officer-involved shooting, line-of-duty death, mass-casualty call or any other case that never leaves your head was simple and unforgiving: you handled it, you didn't talk about it and you got back in the car. That culture is changing. The National Fraternal Order of Police's 2027 Pathways to Excellence Summit in Las Vegas brings together four critical tracks including the Wellness Summit and Wellness Professionals' Forum, the Labor/Legal Leadership Forum, Leadership Matters, and Chaplaincy Leadership and Development. These tracks are built around one goal: making sure the rank and file are never left to face a critical incident alone, unprepared or unprotected.

Below is a look at each track, why it matters to the officer walking a beat or answering a call tonight, and how it changes the way a critical incident gets handled from the moment the radio call goes out to the months of recovery that follow.

Wellness Summit and Wellness Professionals' Forum

The Wellness Summit and Wellness Professionals' Forum is where the FOP's National Officer Wellness Committee gathers clinicians, peer-support leaders and officers themselves to build the tools that keep cops healthy over a full career, not just



after a crisis. This work traces back to 2001, when the FOP formed the Critical Incident Committee specifically to support members in the aftermath of critical incidents and large-scale disasters. By 2013, the Order recognized that officers needed steady, ongoing support, not just crisis response, and transformed the committee into what is now a full-time Division of Wellness Services (fop.net/officer-wellness), established in 2019 and led by Director Sherri Martin.

For the officer on patrol, this track is the difference between white-knuckling through a shooting, pursuit or child-death call and having a real plan: peer-support teams trained to respond in the first hours, clinicians who understand law enforcement culture and evidence-based interventions that reduce the odds of PTSD, substance use or suicide taking hold weeks later. Research compiled

for the Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime notes that mutual peer support and grief leadership from supervisor leaders who model that grief and mourning are acceptable, not weaknesses, are among the most effective tools for helping officers process traumatic incidents.¹ This track equips the people who build and run those programs at the department level so that the support exists before the incident happens, rather than being scrambled together afterward.

Labor/Legal Leadership Forum

A critical incident doesn't end when the scene is cleared for the officer involved. Rather, it often marks the beginning of an administrative investigation, criminal review, civil lawsuit or media firestorm, sometimes all four at once. The Labor/Legal Leadership Forum exists to make sure officers and their local lodges understand exactly what protections apply and how to use them.

This is not abstract policy talk. Courts around the country are actively deciding whether communications made during a critical-incident stress debriefing are legally protected, and the answer varies dramatically by state. Some states, like Utah, explicitly shield peer-support communications from being compelled in court. In other jurisdictions, officers who spoke candidly in a debriefing have been ordered

Continued on page 34 >



Join law enforcement professionals from across the nation for a premier week of education, collaboration, and professional development designed to strengthen leadership, wellness, labor relations, legal knowledge, and chaplaincy.

Why Attend?

- **Choose the training that's right for you** with five specialized educational tracks.
- **Learn from nationally recognized experts** in wellness, leadership, labor, legal, and chaplaincy.
- **Expand your network** by connecting with peers facing similar challenges and opportunities.
- **Explore innovative solutions** at the vendor showcase supporting today's law enforcement professionals.

Customize Your Experience

Attend a single track or combine two tracks for a full week of learning and networking.

- **Wellness Professionals' Forum: \$200** | February 21
- **Labor/Legal Leadership Forum: \$600** | February 21–23
- **Wellness Summit: \$450** | February 22–23
- **Chaplaincy Leadership Summit: \$300** | February 23–24
- **Leadership Matters: \$600** | February 24–26

Registration Opens October 1, 2026

Mark your calendar and watch for additional details.

Questions? Contact: Stephanie Simpson at ssimpson@nationalfop.org

We look forward to seeing you in Las Vegas for Pathways to Excellence 2027!

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Continued from page 32 >

to testify about what they said,² and critical-incident stress debriefings have, in some cases, been ruled discoverable in civil litigation.³ For the officer facing an internal affairs interview, grand jury or plaintiff's attorney after a use-of-force incident, knowing your rights and having a lodge and legal counsel who already know the case law on *Brady/Giglio*, duty to intervene, workers' compensation and arbitration is what separates a fair process from a career-ending one. Historically, officers often navigated this alone or leaned on department-issued counsel with competing loyalties. This track builds the labor and legal infrastructure, so the rank and file have advocates squarely on their side from the first radio call to the final ruling.

Leadership Matters

When an officer walks into roll call rattled after a critical incident, the first person they usually encounter isn't a therapist or lawyer; it's a sergeant, lodge officer or shift supervisor. Leadership Matters is built for exactly that person: the new or aspiring FOP leader who needs a full view of the organization, from running effective meetings and understanding Robert's Rules to handling labor issues and legal defense on behalf of members.

This matters to critical incident response in a very direct way. A lodge leader who understands grief leadership, knows how to activate wellness and legal resources immediately and can run a calm, organized response in the hours after a shooting or line-of-duty death sets the tone for how the entire department recovers. A well-trained leader recognizes the warning signs of an officer struggling, knows which resource to call first and can shield members from procedural missteps that make a bad day worse. Where officers once depended on whichever supervisor happened to be working that night, for better or worse, this track standardizes that response so every lodge in every department has leaders equipped to act decisively the moment a critical incident happens.

FOP DIVISION OF EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Don't forget about the Collaborative Reform Initiative – Technical Assistance Center (CRI-TAC) for no-cost training and consultation delivered by the field, for the field, from subject-matter experts from across the country. For more information, visit cops.usdoj.gov/cri-tac.



Chaplaincy Leadership and Development

The Chaplaincy Leadership and Development track trains the men and women who are often physically present at the worst moments of a critical incident — the scene of a hostage situation, fatal crash, line-of-duty funeral or 3 a.m. hospital vigil. As the National Sheriffs' Association's chaplain reference manual describes it, the chaplain's primary role during a critical incident is supportive: offering aid and comfort to personnel and victims in real time, while also serving as an information source and communications link between the scene and the department.⁴

For the officer in crisis, a trained chaplain provides something distinct from a clinician or a lawyer: an immediate, trusted, confidential presence who can help de-escalate the moment itself and walk alongside the officer and their family through the weeks and months that follow notifications, funerals, faith-based counseling and simply being present when no one else is. This track's back-to-basics approach connects new and seasoned chaplains so that every department, not just the largest ones, has access to a trained chaplaincy program rather than relying on an ad hoc arrangement or none at all.

Taken together, these four tracks map almost exactly onto the timeline of a critical incident itself. Chaplaincy shows

up in the first minutes on scene or at the hospital. Wellness and peer support carry the officer through the following days and months, working to prevent the trauma from becoming a permanent injury. Labor and legal protections defend the officer's career, reputation and rights through the investigation and litigation that so often follow. And leadership ties it all together, the person who recognizes what's needed and makes sure it actually happens.

That is the real story behind Pathways to Excellence. The FOP has moved from a legacy of "tough it out" to a coordinated system built specifically so no officer has to face a critical incident, or its aftermath, alone. For the rank and file walking into a roll call, courtroom or chapel this year, that shift isn't abstract. It's the difference between surviving a critical incident and actually recovering from one.

For more information, visit fop.net/training/pathways-to-excellence. **FOP**

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- ² *Police 1*, "Court Rulings Sound Alarm on Confidentiality in Peer Support Group Interventions," police1.com/legal/court-rulings-sound-alarm-on-confidentiality-in-peer-support-group-interventions.
- ³ *Police 1*, "Critical Incident Stress Debriefings May Be Discoverable in Civil Litigation," police1.com/legal/critical-incident-stress-debriefings-may-be-discoverable-in-civil-litigation.
- ⁴ National Sheriffs' Association, "Chaplains Resource Manual," sheriffs.org/sites/default/files/tb/ChaplainsResourceManual.pdf.



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