

SECURE AMERICA ACT SIGNED INTO LAW // P. 16

FOP



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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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America at 250 and the FOP at 111: A Legacy Worth Preserving



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

For two and a half centuries, our nation has stood as the world's greatest experiment in self-government. It was founded on the revolutionary idea that liberty is a gift from God, that government derives its power from the people and that freedom carries both extraordinary opportunity and profound responsibility.

America's story has never been one of perfection. It has been one of perseverance.

Generation after generation has answered the call to defend the ideals upon which this nation was founded. Some served on distant battlefields. Others built our communities, advanced justice, expanded opportunity and strengthened the institutions that hold our Republic together.

Among those institutions is the Fraternal Order of Police.

As America celebrates 250 years, the Fraternal Order of Police just marked its 111th anniversary. For more than a century, our members have stood watch over the communities they serve, protecting not only lives and property, but the freedoms that allow our nation to flourish.

Every day, law enforcement officers preserve something uniquely American, the ability of our citizens to live freely, worship openly, raise their families safely and pursue their dreams without fear. While others sleep, police officers answer the call. They run toward danger, protect the vulnerable and uphold the rule of law that serves as the foundation of every free society.

Since 1915, the Fraternal Order of Police has stood beside those officers. Through world wars, economic hardship, civil unrest, natural disasters,

acts of terrorism, pandemics and unprecedented challenges to our profession, we have remained steadfast in our mission to support those who protect America.

Today, our organization is more than 382,000 members strong, making the Fraternal Order of Police the largest and most influential law enforcement organization in the United States. But our greatest strength has never been measured by

**The same spirit that
carried our nation
through its first 250
years continues to
live in Americans
who choose
service over self.**

membership alone. It is measured by our shared values: service, integrity, courage, sacrifice and an unwavering commitment to one another.

The past several years have tested our profession unlike any time in recent memory. We have endured staffing shortages, targeted violence, public criticism and efforts to diminish the essential role of policing. Yet through every challenge, America's law enforcement officers never stopped answering the call.

And today, the national conversation is changing.

Communities are once again recognizing a timeless truth: public safety is the foundation upon which every thriving community is built. Safe neighborhoods matter. Strong families matter. The men and women who protect them matter.

As we commemorate America's 250th birthday, we should do so with immense pride and renewed optimism.

The same spirit that carried our nation through its first 250 years continues to live in Americans who choose service over self. It lives in every police officer who pins on a badge, every family who stands behind them and every member of the Fraternal Order of Police who works to strengthen this profession for those who will follow.

Those who founded our nation entrusted future generations with the responsibility to preserve liberty.

Those who founded the Fraternal Order of Police entrusted us with the responsibility to protect those who preserve it.

That mission has never been more important.

As we begin our 112th year of service, let us honor both legacies by leading with integrity, serving with compassion, advocating with courage and remaining united in our commitment to one another.

America's first 250 years were built by citizens who believed in the promise of freedom.

The next 250 years will depend upon those willing to preserve it.

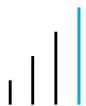
For 111 years and counting, the Fraternal Order of Police has proudly answered that call.

And together, we will continue to answer it for generations to come. **FOP**



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Marking a Historic American Milestone



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

Brothers and sisters, please join with me in celebrating our great country's 250th birthday. Between 1773 and 1775, anger over British taxation and oppression raised tensions in the citizens of the 13 American colonies. In the summer of 1775, the Second Continental Congress sent an "olive branch" petition to King George III hoping for reconciliation, but instead, the king rejected it. In early 1776, Thomas Paine published a pamphlet called *Common Sense* that argued for American independence from Great Britain. Written in plain and simple language, it attacked the king and advocated for an independent republican form of government. This writing changed public opinion and convinced many citizens who were on the fence to support the independence movement. In June 1776, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia introduced a resolution to Congress declaring independence. A five-member committee was appointed to draft the official document detailing the reasons for separation from Great Britain. The committee consisted of Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Robert R. Livingston and Roger Sherman. The Lee resolution for independence was approved on July 2, and the text, primarily authored by Thomas Jefferson, was adopted on July 4 at the Pennsylvania State House. Ironically, it wasn't until August 2 that the 56 delegates officially signed the document that we know today as the Declaration of Independence.

It is a beautiful document that has stood the test of time. It lists 27 specific grievances against King George III. It asserts that all people possess unalienable rights of "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." It establishes the primary purpose of government, the government's



**If you have never
read the Declaration
of Independence
or it's been a
while, take a few
minutes to do so.**

responsibility to protect these declared rights and that the government derives its power from its citizens. If you have never read the Declaration of Independence or it's been a while, take a few minutes to do so.

In 1776, there were no centralized police departments. Instead, law enforcement was conducted by armed

volunteers and, in some bigger towns, paid night watchmen. A few states had appointed sheriffs and constables, but their primary duties were to watch the jails, serve court orders and collect taxes. During this time in history, many merchants hired men to protect their cargo and merchandise. Corruption was common. In 1789, the U.S. Marshals Service was created to enforce the newly formed government's federal law and protect the courts. It wasn't until the 1830s that professional full-time police departments became a reality. Chicago, Boston, New York and Philadelphia were some of the first to hire police officers to enforce the law, prevent crimes and provide overall public safety. Though they were hired and paid by the city, the pay was low, the hours were long, they had to buy their own guns and they received no

Continued on page 10 >

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SECRETARY'S MESSAGE

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benefits such as workers' compensation, pension or insurance. Not until the 1850s did departments start issuing guns and uniforms.

As our great country grew from 2.5 million citizens in 13 states in 1776 to 100.5 million in 48 states in 1915, the need for modern full-time law enforcement was ever present. Local, county, state and federal law enforcement agencies were created to provide public safety services. Though the number of agencies grew, the wages and the terms and conditions of employment for officers remained poor. In Pittsburgh, the two fathers of what would become the Fraternal Order of Police would meet and discuss these problems. Delbert Nagel (the first president) and Martin Toole (the first secretary), with the support of Pittsburgh Mayor Joseph G. Armstrong, created the FOP and began changing the law enforcement profession. This July we celebrate our great country's 250th birthday, and two months ago, on May 15, we celebrated the FOP's

111th birthday. The FOP has played a significant role in making the United States great. Today, we have a membership

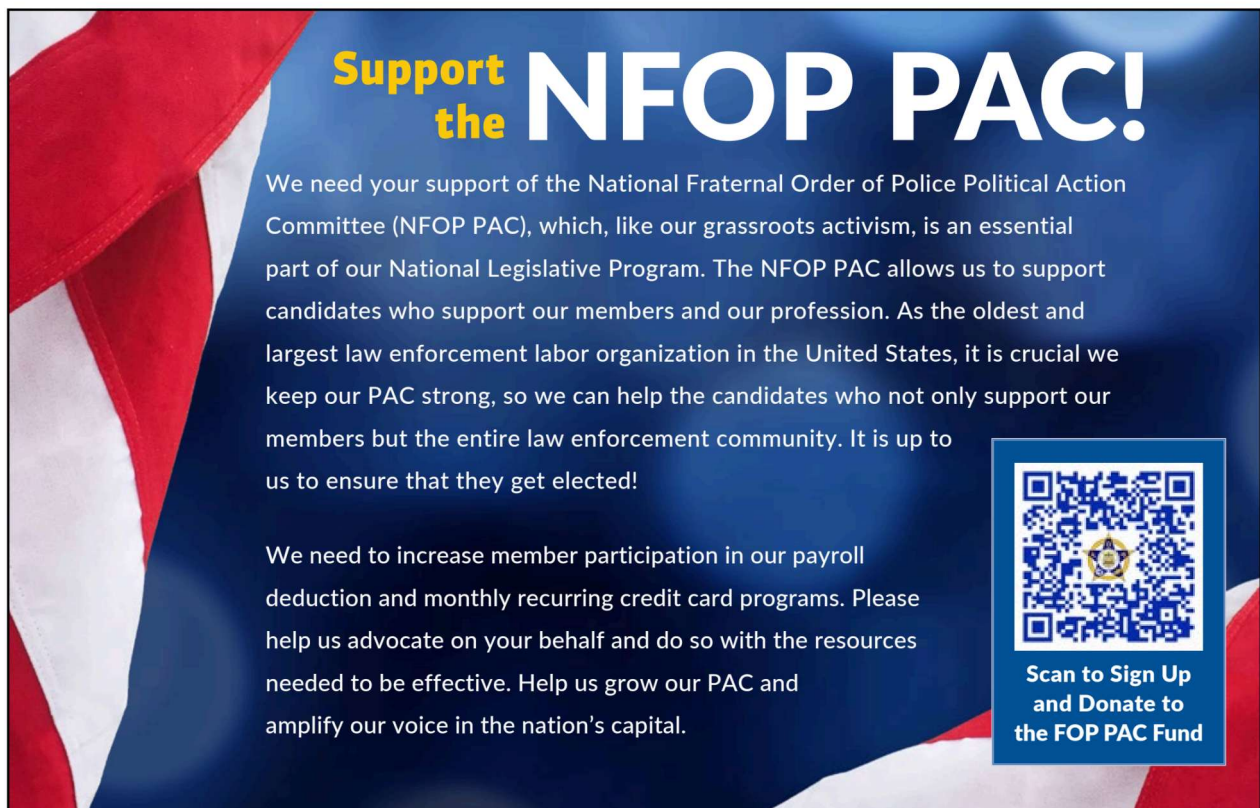
***This July we
celebrate our
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111th birthday.***

of over 382,000 in 2,222 lodges across 49 states and the District of Columbia.

The transition to the new membership database system, OrTu3, is running

smoothly. Currently we have onboarded 26 states and are ahead of our scheduled September 1 decoupling of Association Anywhere. Right now, we are rolling out the core system that allows state and local secretaries to keep track of their memberships and pay per capita. In the future, we will be adding additional features, such as electronic membership cards and the ability of individual members to update their own personal information including street address, phone number and email address. This access will be dependent on local and state lodges giving approval for their members to use these functions. The key to making our new system "state of the art" is the information you provide. If your email or other information is missing or outdated, please contact your local secretary and get it corrected.

In closing, it's a pleasure serving you as your National secretary. My staff and I stand ready to assist you in any way we can. Please enjoy celebrating our nation's 250th anniversary, and be safe. **FOP**



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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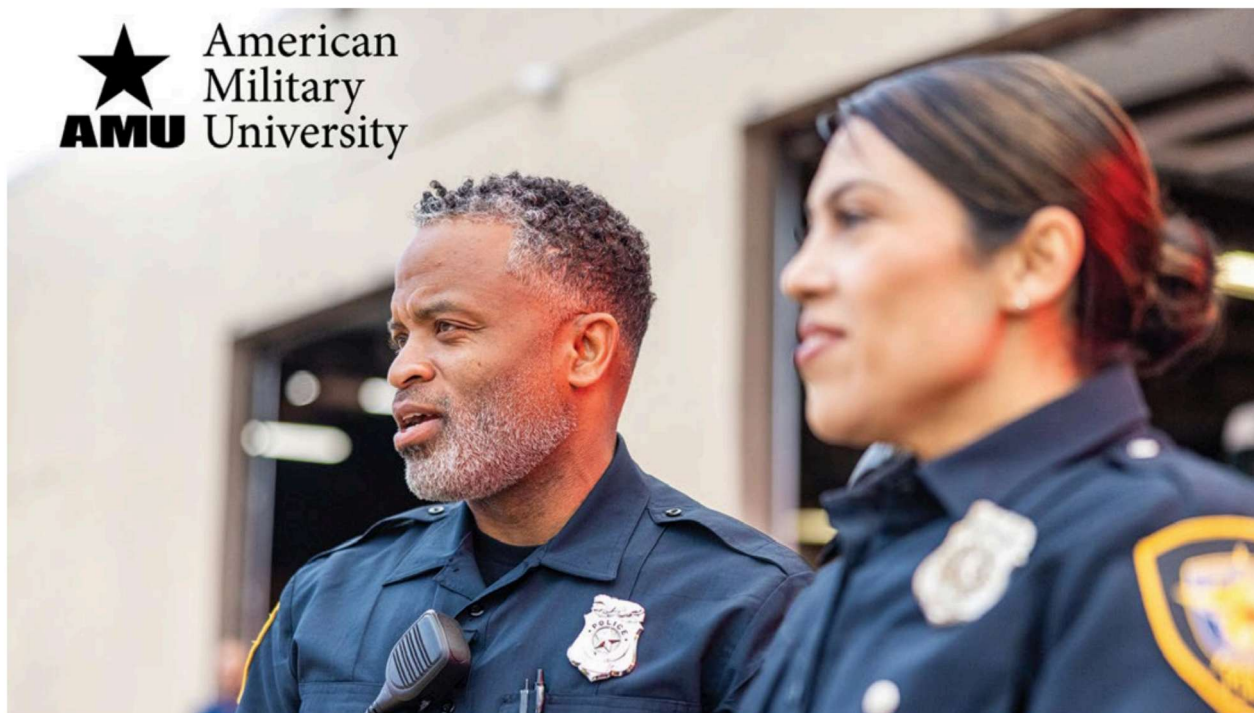


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American Military University



Combating Burnout With Community at AMU

Fewer officers. More overtime. Heavier workloads. Increased stress and burnout. Police officers feel the impact of the nationwide law enforcement staffing crisis every day, and it can be daunting to find a path forward. The peer support and community available while studying criminal justice at American Military University (AMU) — an online university with courses designed for police, by police — can be a beacon to help students find connection, resilience and solutions to shared struggles.

A Law Enforcement Crisis

From Philadelphia to Los Angeles, law enforcement agencies nationwide are struggling with understaffing,

compounding the stress and burnout already endemic to the profession.

This problem isn't new. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) called recruitment a "crisis" for law enforcement in 2019. Five years later, agencies are still dealing with a nearly 10% workforce deficit on average, according to "The State of Recruitment & Retention: A Continuing Crisis for Policing," published by the IACP last year (theiacp.org/resources/the-state-of-recruitment-retention-a-continuing-crisis-for-police).

"Very few agencies are properly staffed these days," said Dr. Chuck Russo, chair of the Criminal Justice department at AMU.

A Heavier Burden for the Blue

Police understaffing hurts response times, forces departments to cut services,

strains overtime budgets and undermines crime prevention. Those officers still holding the line are left to take on added work, forfeit time off and work extra overtime, resulting in more burnout, stress and familial strain.

As a result, one in seven officers worldwide experiences post-traumatic stress or depression, according to a 2024 report in *Health Psychology Research* (pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10875161).

"Burnout's always been an issue in this field, even when we were all fully staffed," Russo said.

Find Support in the AMU Community

Community and peer support are crucial to helping officers combat stress and burnout, Russo said. AMU offers both.

In the AMU Department of Criminal

Justice, 85% of staff come from the criminal justice sector, so they understand the profession's unique demands, Russo said.

AMU students can also find support in each other, because many are in the same trenches.

"My students, a lot of them come from the public safety community," Russo said. "It's a very supportive community."

AMU prioritizes student mental health and wellness with programs such as TalkCampus (amu.apus.edu/help/university-information/cognitive-mental-health-resources), a no-cost peer-support network available online 24/7/365.

TalkCampus enables students to connect, discuss and receive support for mental health issues, including stress and anxiety. They can even participate anonymously.

AMU also offers university chaplains, disability services accommodations and UWill, which provides wellness events and same-day appointments with licensed therapists.

That support is more important than ever at a time when the thin blue line may feel thin.

In addition to providing a support system, higher education helps officers prepare for promotion, retirement and unexpected career changes due to illness, injury or a workplace incident. Russo learned that lesson when he had to medically retire after 11 years as a police officer in Daytona, Florida.

"Higher education, it puts more tools in the toolbox," Russo said. "It's very important to have a backup plan and to be able to execute it ... because you never know when something could unfortunately happen."

Special Benefits for FOP Members

As an FOP member, officers qualify for unique benefits through the FOP's partnership with AMU. These include:

- Tuition grants such as the Everyday Heroes Grant, which reduces tuition costs by 20% for officers and their family members; \$0 e-books for undergraduates; and \$0 application fees for undergraduates and master's-level programs, making higher education more affordable
- Transfer credit for training, including up to 45 hours for basic academy and 12–45 hours for

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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.



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NFOPU SPOTLIGHT

Continued from page 13 >

in-service training, depending on the program, helping officers reach their educational goals more quickly

- Flexible, online* courses with monthly start dates and no set login times, allowing students to complete coursework on their own schedule, which is especially important for officers on shift work
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*Some programs require in-person activity, including doctoral residencies. View your program of interest for specific requirements.

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First Responder Wellness by Simple Recovery Costa Mesa, CA

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Throttle and Thrive Palos Verdes Estates, CA throttleandthrive.com

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There's a number on your mortgage paperwork that explains the whole thing. The federal government requires it to be disclosed. But **disclosure isn't education** — and the mortgage industry has built itself around the premise that educating homeowners isn't its job. The result is what I've watched across my whole career inside that industry: homeowner after homeowner carrying a loan for thirty years without anyone ever pointing the number out to them. Not once.

This guide is what nobody handed you the day you signed. It shows you that number. And it shows you what's becoming possible for working homeowners — mortgages eliminated years, and in many cases more than a decade, ahead of the bank's schedule.

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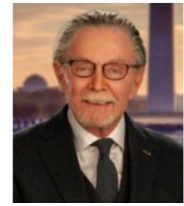
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Secure America Act Signed Into Law

Congress considered and finally passed S. 2, the Secure America Act, which provides essential funding for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and related law enforcement priorities that are vital to the safety of our neighborhoods, communities and nation.

The legislation, which the FOP supported, used the process of budget reconciliation to bypass the hyperpartisan gridlock that paralyzed Congress for months. The legislation provides DHS and its law enforcement components with substantial multiyear funding to strengthen our nation's defenses against illegal immigration, transnational criminal organizations, terrorists and other threats to our country by enhancing operational capabilities, supporting our personnel and helping ensure that law enforcement has the resources and tools necessary to protect our communities.

Because the bill was offered as a budget reconciliation measure, it was open to an amendment process in the U.S. Senate, which held a "vote-a-rama" on the package. More than 360 amendments were filed, and the Senate held a 19-hour session with 28 roll call votes. The following amendments, none of which were adopted, were of interest to our members:

- **S. Amdt. 5457** (Coons) would have prohibited the U.S. Department of Justice from using federal funds to make settlement payments to any person convicted of assaulting

Just the Facts:

» The FOP-supported Secure America Act was signed into law, funding the Department of Homeland Security and related law enforcement priorities, and the House Appropriations Committee recently considered and favorably reported the bill to provide DHS funding for 2027. The FOP is fully engaged with the administration and Congress on legislation to reauthorize the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet), and is also urging the appropriations committees to preserve the COPS Office and fully fund its programs, including CHP and CRI-TAC. The FOP's 2026 Congressional Candidate Questionnaire is now available online to help state and local lodges evaluate candidates for the U.S. Congress in the 2026 election.

law enforcement officers on January 6, 2021. The motion to waive the budget point of order and consider the amendment was rejected on a 54–45 vote.

- **S. Amdt. 5463** (Cortez-Masto) would have provided \$31 billion for the hiring program administered by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) through September 30, 2029, and was rejected on a 45–53 vote.
- **S. Amdt. 5808** (Padilla) would have required ICE and CBP officers to wear body-worn cameras while on duty, and was rejected on a 46–53 vote.
- **S. Amdt. 5812** (Cassidy-Van Hollen) would have provided compensation to law enforcement officers who defended the U.S. Capitol during the events of January 6, 2021. The motion to waive the budget point of order and consider the amendment was rejected on a 52–47 vote.

The Senate passed the legislation on a 52–47 vote and the House

then passed it on a 214–212 vote. President Trump signed it into law on June 10.

FY2027 Appropriations Process Continues in the House

The House Committee on Appropriations recently considered and favorably reported H.R. 9310, the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2027, on a 34–27 vote. The bill as reported provides funding for DHS, allocating over \$28 billion to disaster relief, as well as the following for the Department's law enforcement components:

- \$18.3 billion for CBP
- \$10.1 billion for ICE
- \$11.3 billion for Transportation Security Administration (TSA)
- \$14.6 billion for the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)
- \$3.3 billion for the U.S. Secret Service (USSS)
- \$2.4 billion for Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)
- \$34.1 billion for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

The full House has not yet considered the bill.

FirstNet Reauthorization

The FOP is fully engaged with the administration and Congress on legislation to reauthorize the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet). We have been meeting regularly with top officials in the National Telecommunications and Information Administration within the U.S. Department of Commerce and are in constant communication with the White House on the issue as well.

The House has already passed a bill, H.R. 7386, the First Responder Network Authority Reauthorization Act, without the FOP's support. The House legislation, which is now pending before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Technology, contains provisions that will hinder FirstNet's primary objectives and introduce uncertainties that will jeopardize emergency operations and community protection, as well as officer and public safety.

The FOP, working with other stakeholders in the public safety community, has proposed alternative legislative language (tinyurl.com/Senate-FN-Reauth-Bill) that makes public safety interests the prime focus when it comes to regulation, decision-making and vendor interaction. The FirstNet Authority Board needs to make the decisions about the nationwide public safety broadband network, as well as the governance and operation of the FirstNet Authority. It is at variance with common sense to shift decision-making authority away from public safety professionals and put it in the hands of bureaucrats, which could revive old weaknesses, marginalize frontline input and delay vital choices. In our view, the new language puts officer and public safety above all other considerations.

CRI-TAC and COPS Reauthorization

The FOP and the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) recently sent a letter (tinyurl.com/FOP-IACP-CRI-TAC) to the

House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, urging them to include language in the spending bill to ensure that the COPS Office remains a separate and distinct grant-making entity within the U.S. Department of Justice and to fully fund the programs it administers through 2031, particularly the COPS Hiring Program (CHP) and the Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center (CRI-TAC).

Both programs are vital to state and local law enforcement agencies and our nation's community-oriented policing strategy for fighting crime. The CHP has been the cornerstone of our nation's community-oriented policing strategy for more than three decades. It is even more critical today as law enforcement agencies struggle to recruit new officers and retain experienced, veteran officers. The program provides direct funding to state and local law enforcement agencies to hire or rehire career law enforcement officers, increase community policing capacity and enhance crime prevention strategies.

CRI-TAC is a newer community-oriented policing tool for state and local agencies established under the first Trump administration to provide agencies with voluntary, no-cost, expert-driven technical assistance to help them address complex public safety challenges. The program is uniquely positioned to deliver rapid, tailored support to agencies of all sizes, allowing departments to access nationally recognized subject matter experts and implement proven, evidence-based strategies.

The House Appropriations Committee favorably reported H.R. 8845, the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, on a 32–28 vote in May. The Senate has not considered their own spending measure.

Bills Passed by the Senate

The following bills supported by the FOP were passed by the Senate and are awaiting action in the House:

- S. 736, the Lieutenant Osvaldo Albarati Stopping Prison



Contraband Act, which would make the introduction of a cellphone into a prison a felony offense

- S. 825, the Fighting Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Act, which would direct the U.S. Department of Justice to develop a state-of-the-art treatment program for public safety officers experiencing acute stress disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or similar conditions
- S. 1890, the Carla Walker Act, which would authorize a grant program that would provide certain eligible recipients, like law enforcement agencies and medical examiners, funds to facilitate forensic genetic genealogy (FGG) DNA analysis in furtherance of criminal investigations
- S. 3023, 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

Other Legislative Activity

Since the last issue of the *Journal*, the FOP has supported S. 4671, the Federal Firearms Licensee Protection Act, which would make thefts from a federal firearms licensee an offense punishable by up to 20 years in prison.

Continued on page 18 >

Top Priorities in Brief



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

House: 70 co-sponsors (19 R, 51 D)

Senate: Not yet introduced

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

House: 63 co-sponsors (10 R, 53 D)

Senate: 1 co-sponsor (1 D)

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

House: Passed

Senate: 12 co-sponsors (12 R)

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

House: 115 co-sponsors (93 R, 22 D)

Senate: 25 co-sponsors (25 R)

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

House: 134 co-sponsors (51 R, 83 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 17 >

2026 Model Congressional Questionnaire Released!

The National FOP has posted its 2026 Congressional Candidate Questionnaire (tinyurl.com/fop2026candidatequestionnaire)! The model questionnaire was prepared by staff at the Steve Young Law Enforcement Legislative Advocacy Center in Washington, D.C., for use by 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.

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:

- 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 certainly good news, it does not really compare with the much, much greater amounts raised by other law enforcement and public safety groups. We have to continue to contribute and grow our fund!

With the next election just months away, we need to raise more funds for our PAC — but we need to start today. 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.

This summer, 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**



Why the NFOP Labor Services Approach Works

“The Officer Speaks for the Profession; the Attorney Speaks for the Contract”

Across the country, law enforcement unions face the same question every bargaining cycle: Who should speak at the table? Experience shows that the strongest results come from a balanced, disciplined partnership between officers and attorneys.

NFOP Labor Services reinforces a simple, proven principle: The officer speaks for the profession; the attorney speaks for the contract. This model strengthens credibility, protects the record and ensures every bargaining team presents a unified, defensible position.

How Officers Speak for the Profession

When officers lead the operational

narrative, they bring unmatched authenticity and real-world insight. Officers provide firsthand understanding of staffing, safety and service impacts, credibility rooted in front-line experience, clear explanations of how proposals affect daily policing and authentic communication that resonates with management and the community. Their lived experience grounds the conversation in reality — something no outside voice can replicate.

How Attorneys Speak for the Contract

Legal partners ensure that proposals are enforceable, compliant and strategically sound. Attorneys provide contract language that holds up in arbitration, guidance on statutory requirements and timelines, protection

from statements that could weaken the record and strategic framing that safeguards long-term member interests. Their role is not to overshadow the officer's voice, but to protect it.

Why This Balance Matters

When each role stays in its lane, bargaining teams gain legitimacy through front-line experience, protection through legal precision and strategic balance through coordinated messaging. This hybrid approach is used by many of the nation's most effective police unions.

Bottom Line for Members

A high-performing bargaining team uses both strengths. The officer/leader is the public face, speaking to operations, impact and professional standards, and the attorney is the technical negotiator, ensuring enforceability and protecting the record.

In short: The officer speaks for the profession; the attorney speaks for the contract. **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.



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Services.**



Defining the Constitutional Boundaries of Public Recording



Few issues better illustrate the modern challenges of policing than the intersection between officer safety and public recording. Across the country, officers increasingly find themselves conducting arrests, traffic stops, investigations and crowd control operations while surrounded by individuals recording every movement on cellphones. In many situations, those individuals remain at a safe distance and simply observe. In others, they move closer, inject themselves into active scenes, distract officers or create additional risks during already volatile encounters.

In response, states have considered or enacted laws creating buffer zones around law enforcement officers and other first responders. Often referred to as “buffer zone” or “halo” laws, these statutes generally prohibit individuals from approaching too closely to officers engaged in lawful duties after receiving a verbal warning to step back. The purpose behind these laws is straightforward. Officers must be able to perform arrests, investigations, traffic stops, crowd control functions and emergency response duties without individuals moving into close physical proximity, interfering with commands, distracting officers or escalating already tense encounters. A person standing several feet away with a phone may claim to be “just recording,” but an officer in the middle of a lawful detention or arrest does not always have the luxury of distinguishing between recording and a potential threat in real time.

At the same time, these laws operate in an area where courts are highly sensitive to First Amendment concerns. The public generally has a constitutional right to observe and

Just the Facts:

>> Many states have considered or enacted “buffer zone” or “halo” laws to keep bystanders at a safe distance from first responders engaged in their lawful duties. The legal question is how lawmakers can protect law enforcement from interference while preserving the public’s right to observe and record government activity. Courts appear willing to consider reasonable safety measures but are scrutinizing laws that lack clear standards. To survive constitutional challenges, laws should be carefully drafted to identify the conduct that triggers the buffer, define the personnel and activities covered, preserve lawful recording from a reasonable distance and require a verbal warning. Meanwhile, officers should be prepared to articulate why distance was necessary in a specific situation.

record police officers performing their duties in public, subject to reasonable time, place and manner restrictions. The legal question is not whether officer safety matters. It always does. The question is how legislatures can protect officers without creating laws that courts view as too vague, too discretionary or too burdensome on lawful observation.

The most recent debate on this topic arrived before the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals on June 1, when it heard oral arguments regarding Louisiana’s 25-foot police buffer law. Enacted in 2024 as Act 259, the statute makes it a misdemeanor for a person to knowingly or intentionally approach within 25 feet of a peace officer who is lawfully engaged in official duties after being ordered to stop approaching or to retreat. A violation carries a potential penalty of up to a \$500 fine, up to 60 days in jail or both.

Before the law ever took effect, media organizations filed a lawsuit, arguing that the statute interferes with constitutionally protected news-gathering and the public’s ability to record police activity occurring in

public places. In January 2025, a federal district court agreed that the challengers were likely to succeed on their claim that the law is unconstitutionally vague and entered a preliminary injunction blocking enforcement. The court emphasized that while the statute established a 25-foot buffer zone, it failed to clearly define the circumstances under which an officer could require a person to move back.

Importantly, the district court did not primarily focus on the **size** of the buffer zone. Instead, the court focused on the circumstances under which an officer may invoke it. In the court’s view, the statute failed to provide meaningful standards governing when an officer may order a person to move away from an encounter. Without clear limitations, the law risked leaving too much discretion in the hands of individual officers.

That same concern appeared to drive much of the discussion during the Fifth Circuit’s recent oral argument. Members of the panel questioned whether Louisiana’s law provides adequate

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LEGAL COUNSEL

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guidance regarding when officers may establish a buffer zone. At its core, the debate centers on a familiar First Amendment principle: laws restricting protected activity must provide clear standards and cannot leave citizens guessing about what conduct is prohibited or permit enforcement based solely on an officer's unstructured discretion.

Louisiana is hardly alone in confronting these constitutional questions. Over the last several years, states across the country have enacted or proposed a variety of buffer-zone laws. The result has been a growing patchwork of legislation and a corresponding wave of constitutional challenges. Courts reviewing these laws are not suggesting that officers must tolerate interference or threats to their safety, nor are they saying the public has a right to crowd an active police scene. Existing law already grants officers the authority to control scenes, secure perimeters, prevent obstruction and address threats. The vulnerability of some buffer laws is that they can be written so broadly that they give an officer discretion to order a person away for any reason, or no articulated reason, even if the person is peacefully observing from a public place.

The Seventh Circuit reached that

conclusion in litigation over Indiana's 25-foot police buffer law. Indiana's statute made it a crime to approach within 25 feet of a law enforcement officer after being ordered to stop approaching. In 2025, the Seventh

***This does not mean
all buffer laws
are doomed. The
legislative trend
shows that states
are experimenting
with different
approaches.***

Circuit upheld an injunction blocking the law, finding it unconstitutionally vague because it failed to provide sufficient standards governing when officers could issue the order. The court's concern was arbitrary enforcement. If a statute does not define what conduct permits the officer to

create the buffer, courts may conclude that it leaves too much discretion in the hands of individual officers.

This does not mean all buffer laws are doomed. The legislative trend shows that states are experimenting with different approaches. Florida enacted a 25-foot buffer law that covers law enforcement officers, correctional probation officers, firefighters and emergency medical care providers. Unlike some earlier versions, Florida's law includes a defined harassment component, focusing on conduct directed at a first responder that intentionally causes substantial emotional distress and serves no legitimate purpose.

Other states have taken different approaches. Arizona enacted an 8-foot recording restriction in 2022, but that law was blocked by a federal court. Indiana enacted its original 25-foot law in 2023 and later enacted a revised version in 2025, though litigation has continued. Tennessee enacted a 25-foot law effective July 1, 2025, and litigation challenging that statute is ongoing. Ohio considered legislation in 2025 addressing interference with emergency service responders, which defined warnings in terms of commands to maintain distance, stay away, back away or refrain from interference.

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Massachusetts, South Carolina, Illinois and Michigan have also considered various forms of buffer-zone or first-responder protection legislation.

The broader national picture is clear: lawmakers are searching for ways to protect officers and first responders from close-range interference while preserving the public's ability to observe and record government activity. Courts appear willing to consider reasonable safety measures, but they are scrutinizing laws that lack clear standards.

For law enforcement, the practical lesson is important. Even where a buffer law exists, officers should be prepared to articulate why distance was necessary in that specific situation. The strongest justification will usually involve officer safety, suspect control, preservation of a scene, protection of evidence, crowd management, interference with commands or an escalating threat. The weakest justification will be a generalized desire not to be recorded or questioned.

For law enforcement advocates, the takeaway is equally clear. Buffer laws can serve an important public safety

function, but drafting matters. Laws are more likely to survive constitutional challenge when they identify the conduct that triggers the buffer, define the personnel and activities covered, preserve lawful recording from a reasonable distance and require a verbal warning before criminal liability attaches.

***The weakest
justification will be
a generalized desire
not to be recorded
or questioned.***

The debate over buffer laws is not going away. As more encounters are recorded and more police activity occurs in highly charged public environments, officer safety and First Amendment rights will continue to intersect. The challenge for legislatures, courts and law enforcement is to draw a workable

line: one that protects the public's right to observe police activity while also recognizing that officers cannot safely perform their duties when individuals are allowed to crowd, distract or interfere with active law enforcement operations. Everyone involved — officers, suspects, bystanders, journalists and the public — is safer when the law provides clear rules before an encounter escalates. **FOP**

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Raising the Bar: Preparing the Profession for Tomorrow

It is with tremendous humility and gratitude that I write my first article as the National Fraternal Order of Police director of Education and Outreach. There are many opportunities in life to serve, but few are as meaningful as serving the men and women who put on the badge each day and answer the call to protect their communities.

I officially assumed this role on July 1, and I can honestly say I have never been more honored to have the opportunity to serve the rank and file of our profession. While some positions may receive more public attention, there are few responsibilities more important than helping prepare our officers for success through education, training, leadership development, wellness and outreach.

During my first days in this position, I had the privilege of traveling with retiring Director Keith Turney to an IACP CRI-TAC partner meeting and later to Tennessee, where the FOP participated as a CRI-TAC partner in a meaningful training event hosted at the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation Headquarters in Nashville. Those experiences reinforced something that became clear almost immediately: the tremendous respect Keith Turney has earned throughout the law enforcement profession.

Keith is one of only two remaining original members of the IACP CRI-TAC Partner Board. Everywhere we traveled, it was evident that he has spent years building relationships, fostering collaboration and ensuring the FOP had a respected voice at the table. Through his leadership, the FOP has represented the interests of rank-and-file officers in conversations that shape training, policy, officer safety and professional development nationwide.

Keith's commitment to education and outreach has strengthened our

profession and elevated the standing of the FOP among national law enforcement organizations. On behalf of our members, I want to offer a sincere and heartfelt thank-you for his years of service and dedication. We also extend our very best wishes to Keith and Carol as they begin a new chapter and enjoy a slower pace of life after years of selfless service.

Excellence does not happen by accident. It is built through intentional preparation, continuous learning and a commitment to growth.

As we move forward, I am excited about the opportunities ahead. One of our major priorities is preparing for the 2027 Pathways to Excellence Conference, which will be held February 21–26, 2027, at South Point Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. The call for presentations has already been released, and our team is working diligently to build one of the most comprehensive and impactful training events available to law enforcement professionals.

The title says it all: Pathways to Excellence. Excellence does not happen by accident. It is built through intentional preparation, continuous learning and a

commitment to growth. Every officer leaves for work each day hoping they are prepared for whatever challenges may come their way. The reality is that critical incidents rarely provide advance notice. They occur suddenly, unexpectedly and often under the most stressful circumstances imaginable.

Training bridges the gap between hope and preparedness. When an officer faces a life-threatening encounter, responds to a mass casualty event, navigates a complex legal issue or assists a citizen experiencing a mental health crisis, they rely on the knowledge, skills and judgment developed through quality training. Every hour invested in education today may save a life tomorrow.

But training is about more than tactics. It is about developing resilient leaders. It is about improving communication skills. It is about building stronger relationships with the communities we serve. It is about understanding emerging legal issues and labor concerns. It is about creating a culture that values officer wellness and recognizes that healthy officers are more effective officers.

The FOP has long championed the importance of wellness, labor advocacy and legal protection. These priorities remain essential as we navigate increasingly complex challenges facing our profession.

Our officers face unprecedented demands. They are expected to be guardians, problem-solvers, counselors, mediators, investigators and protectors, all while operating under intense public scrutiny. To meet those expectations, we must equip them with the tools necessary to succeed. That means providing relevant, high-quality training that prepares officers for the realities they face every day.

Continued on page 28 >



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- **Leadership Matters: \$600** | February 24–26

Registration Opens November 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 26 >

The FOP is uniquely positioned to lead this effort. As the largest law enforcement organization in the United States, and the only organization solely dedicated to protecting the interests of rank-and-file officers, we have both the responsibility and the opportunity to shape the future of our profession.

The FOP is the voice of law enforcement. That voice must continue advocating for officer safety, professional development, wellness, labor rights and legal protections. But advocacy alone is not enough. We must also help raise the professional standard of policing through meaningful education and outreach initiatives that strengthen the men and women behind the badge.

We must remain committed to preparing our members not only for the challenges of today, but for those that lie ahead tomorrow. Every generation of officers inherits a profession shaped by those who came before them. It is our responsibility to leave policing stronger than we found it.

I am excited about the future. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve. Most importantly, I am committed to ensuring that education and outreach continue to provide value to every member of the Fraternal Order of Police.

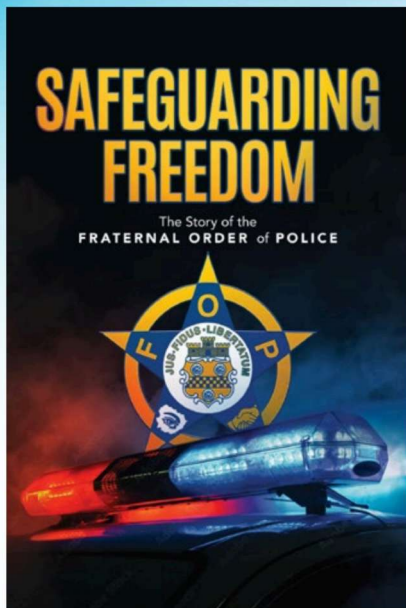
Together, we will continue raising the bar. Together, we will continue protecting those who protect others. And together, we will continue building pathways to excellence. **FOP**

FOP DIVISION OF EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Don't forget about the Collaborative Reform Initiative – Technical Assistance



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SAFEGUARDING FREEDOM: *The Story of the Fraternal Order of Police*

The National Fraternal Order of Police History Committee and the National Board of Trustees are excited to present you with a new book, *Safeguarding Freedom: The Story of the Fraternal Order of Police*. This literary work is the result of reviewing historical documents, combing through thousands of photographs and conducting interviews to give the reader a comprehensive history of how the Fraternal Order of Police has impacted policing in America. Author Max DiLallo, co-author with James Patterson on numerous books, along with the direction of National History Committee Chair David Stevens, has worked tirelessly over the past year to reveal the journey of the FOP.

This fantastic book is available from the National Office for \$25 plus shipping, and the proceeds benefit our National FOP Foundation. Donations of \$30 or more to the Foundation will receive a free book.



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