MR. C.O.P.S. // P. 28

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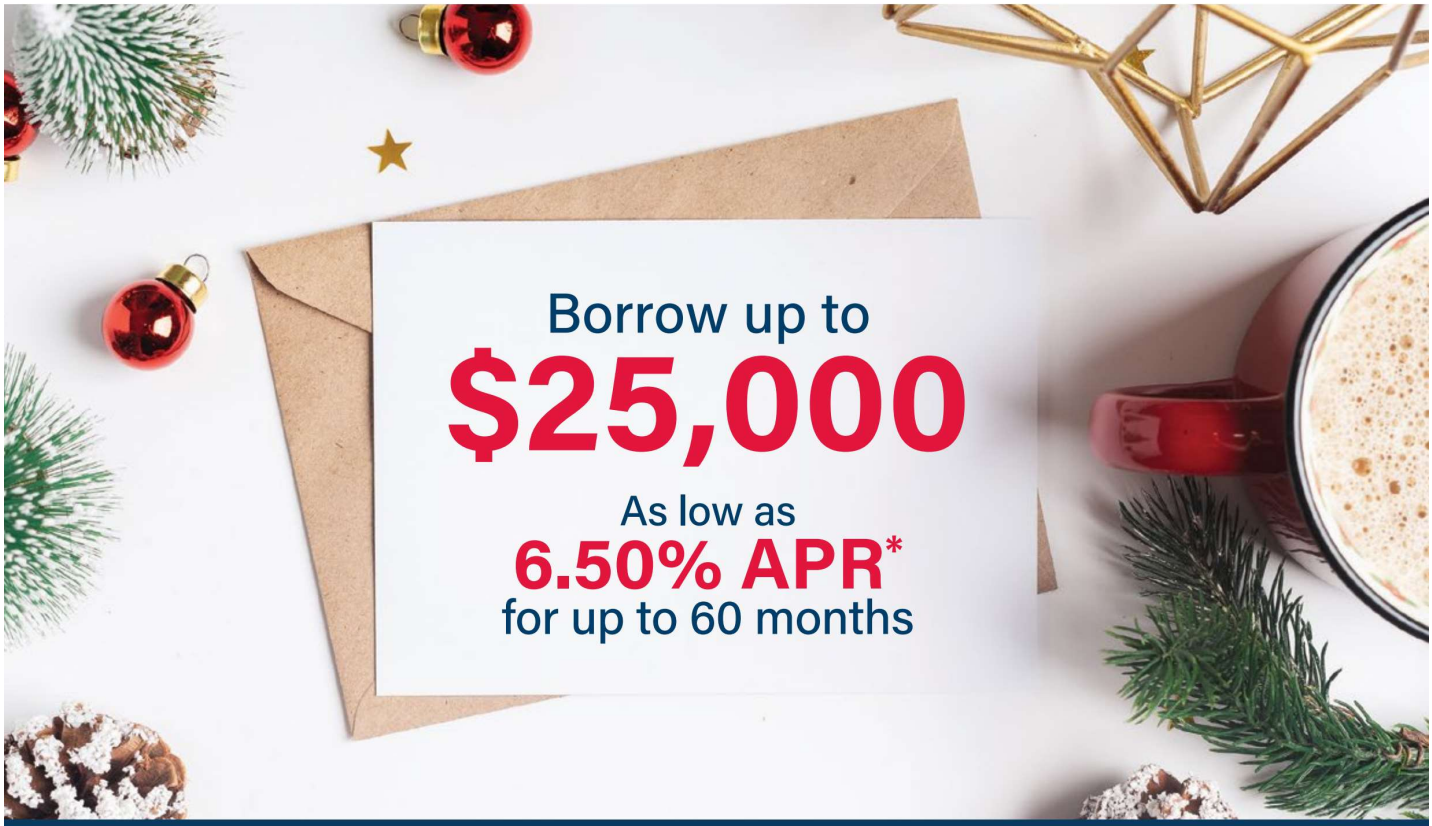
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Elections Come and Go, Our Mission Remains



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

For well over a century, the Fraternal Order of Police has stood at the forefront of virtually every major advancement in American policing. Through Republican and Democratic administrations, shifting congressional majorities and changing political landscapes, our commitment to the men and women of law enforcement has never wavered. Our success has never been defined by which party holds power, but by our ability to focus on our issues, build consensus and forge relationships with those willing to stand alongside us. Our issues are not Republican or Democratic issues. They are law enforcement issues, and that is where our focus must remain.

As this edition of the *FOP Journal* reaches our members, our nation is approaching another consequential midterm election. Written before Election Day, the outcome remains unknown. The balance of power could shift in the House, the Senate, or both. Current forecasts appear to favor Republicans retaining control of the Senate, while the House presents a more uncertain picture. However, history reminds us that polls do not cast ballots, people do.

Regardless of the outcome, one thing appears likely: the margins separating the majority and minority parties will remain narrow. That reality presents both challenges and tremendous opportunities for the FOP.

In a closely divided Congress, building coalitions and finding common ground become essential. Few organizations are better positioned to navigate that environment than the FOP. Our relationships extend across party lines and generations of elected leadership, built through principled advocacy, honest dialogue and a willingness to work with anyone committed to supporting law enforcement.

Our success in securing passage of the Social Security Fairness Act is a powerful example. Repealing the Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset required years of persistence, extraordinary grassroots engagement and bipartisan support. It was not a Republican victory or a Democratic victory. It was a victory for America's public servants and their families because we remained focused on the issue rather than the politics.

> **Our collective voice carries tremendous weight, but only when we participate.**

That same approach will be essential as we continue advocating for officer safety, collective bargaining rights, retirement security, officer wellness and the protections our members deserve.

But our influence in Washington, D.C., begins long before legislation reaches the floor of Congress. It begins with each of you.

I cannot overstate the importance of every FOP member exercising their right to vote. With more than 382,000 members nationwide, our collective voice carries tremendous weight, but only when we participate.

I encourage every member to look beyond political labels, campaign advertisements and partisan rhetoric. Examine each candidate individually. Study their record, their positions and, most importantly, their actions. Have they stood with law enforcement when it mattered? Have they supported the legislative priorities of the FOP? Have they demonstrated a willingness to listen to rank-and-file officers?

Political promises are easy to make. Leadership is demonstrated through action.

We should never assume a candidate deserves our support simply because of the letter following their name, nor dismiss someone who has consistently supported our priorities because they belong to another political party. Our responsibility is to evaluate candidates based on their commitment to the issues that matter most to our members.

When the votes are counted, the FOP will be ready. We will strengthen existing relationships, establish new ones and continue building the bipartisan coalitions necessary to advance our priorities.

The FOP has endured through more than a century of political change because our mission has always been greater than any election, administration or political party.

Elections determine who holds office. They do not determine our mission, our principles or our commitment to the men and women we proudly represent.

Make your voice heard. Vote with purpose, evaluate candidates on their records and never underestimate your influence as a member of this great organization.

Our strength has never been in choosing sides. It has been in bringing people together to stand on the side of those who serve. **FOP**

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SCAN TO SCHEDULE A MEETING

Remembering Our Fraternal Obligations



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

Greetings brothers and sisters. I hope this November edition of the *Journal* finds you healthy and safe. This is a busy month. Midterm elections are on November 3, the National Board of Trustees meeting is on November 6 and 7, Veterans Day is on November 11 and Thanksgiving on November 26. I will be seeing our State presidents and National trustees in Chicago, and I anticipate very good and informative meetings. Chicago "John Dineen" Lodge #7 is the host in conjunction with the Illinois State Lodge, and they have planned a great event. I will report to you next month any important business transactions.

Per capita is now due for the first half of 2027. The per capita increased this year, the first time in approximately 15 years, to $14.50 per year or $7.25 for each half-year payment. The increase was necessary because of rising costs for National Lodge operations. Your National Executive Board and our National staff constantly explore ways to cut costs, improve efficiency and increase services for our members. As an example, over the past three years, we have replaced our three air conditioning/heating units with high-energy-efficient models. We replaced caulking and weather stripping to seal in energy loss. We also added a reflective window tint to better reflect heat, especially in the summer. However, we have also experienced increased utility rates that we have no control over.

Another example is our telephone system. There are many better systems available that have greater features, yet considerably lower monthly recurring costs. We are aggressively looking at various plans. A major expense that we have no control over is postage. Every year the United States Postal Service, UPS and FedEx raise their rates. We are trying to get the best bulk rate available for the mailing of membership cards, but it continues to increase. Obviously, taking care of our staff is of the utmost importance. Just like each of us, they deserve an annual cost-of-living adjustment, health care and other employee benefits. These costs continue to increase annually.

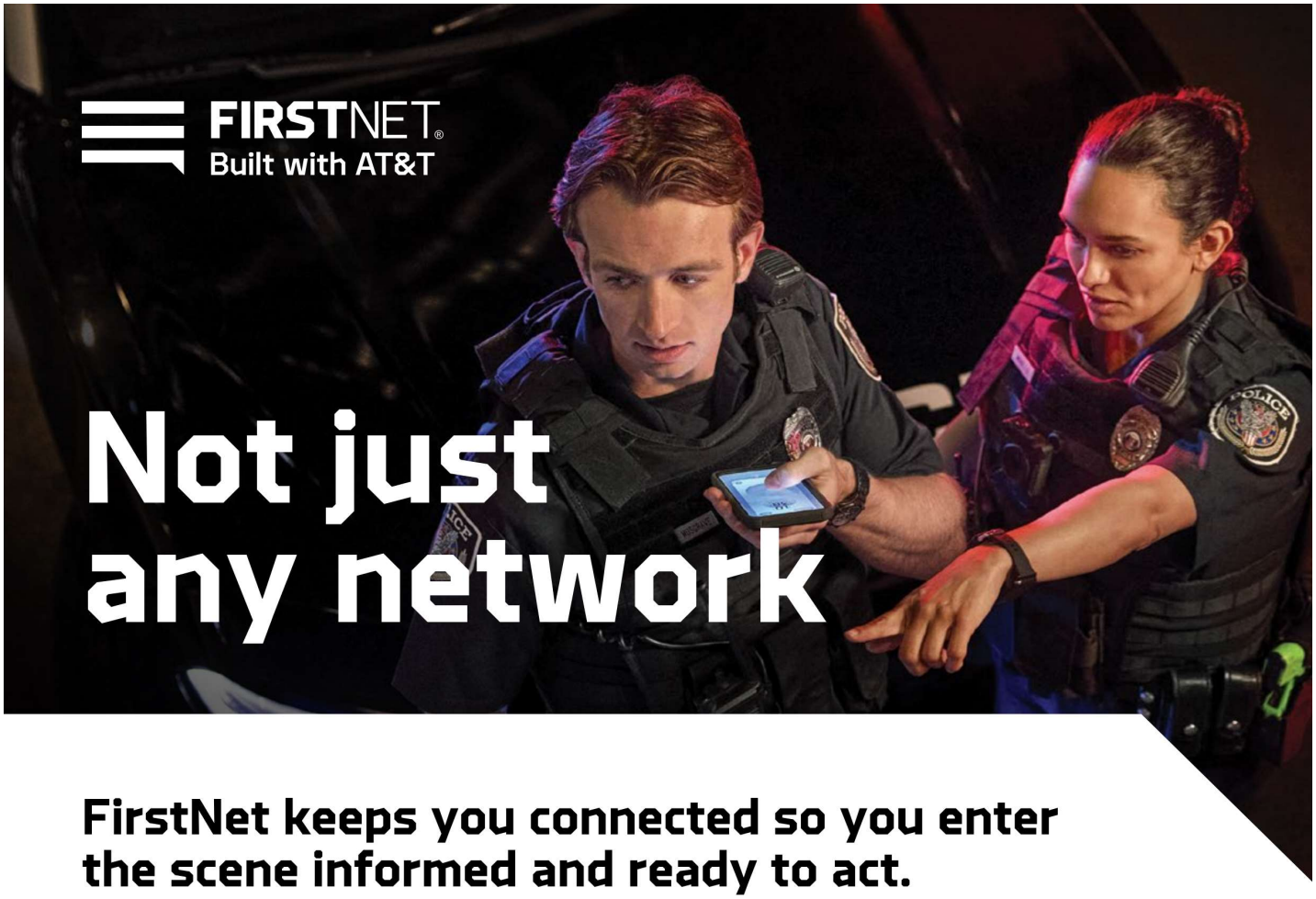
When you consider the great benefits the National Fraternal Order of Police offers — our outstanding legislative service and educational opportunities — where else can you get all of this for the price of an "upsized McDonald's Big Mac meal"? Nowhere!

I am pleased to inform you that we have received approximately 30% of our 2,220 local lodges per capita to date. The 2027 cards are already being issued. This smooth process is due largely to our new membership database system and the excellent work of our membership department. If you have paid your 2027 dues and have not yet received your 2027 card, contact your local lodge secretary to determine why. In most cases, the holdup is between the local and the State, or a discrepancy in membership count between the State lodge and National. Generally, these issues can be resolved quickly by the local lodge simply paying the required per capita.

In last November's *Journal* article, I wrote on the history of Veterans Day. Originally called Armistice Day, it was the day an official truce of World War I went into effect. Today, we honor all veterans who served in the military, both living and those who have died. Many of our members are military veterans. We are grateful for their service since they are the reason we can live, work, worship and pursue happiness in the freest country in the world. There are many things we can do on Veterans Day, go to parades, lay wreaths at cemeteries or have cookouts. But the most meaningful thing we can do is go see a military veteran FOP sister or brother and thank them for their service. They will appreciate the recognition.

As we enter the holiday season, starting right after Thanksgiving, I ask each of our members to do some soul searching. I am seeing an increased number of internal bickering in lodges. I get it if there is malfeasance, misfeasance or downright dishonesty and formal discipline must act. But the back-and-forth trash talking because Brother Bill didn't like something that Sister Nancy said at a meeting, or Sister Sally doesn't like what the lodge executive board voted to spend money on, needs to stop. Every lodge should have a procedure in place to allow members to be heard. Leadership should not just arbitrarily shut down a member for asking questions. There should be transparency, with only a few exceptions such as a pending legal issue. Distrust and internal strife will surely negatively impact a lodge. Why would a prospective member want to join an organization that is filled with turmoil? Why would a member want to stay involved only to hear grumbling? I understand, coming from a labor lodge, that sometimes issues become intense, but let's never forget our fraternal obligations as well. Be kind to each other. We have

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To give online, go to **fopfoundation.firstresponderprocessing.com**.

SECRETARY'S MESSAGE

Continued from page 8 ›

enough enemies on the outside and we must take care of each other.

It is with profound sadness that we share the passing of Marilyn Dineen, beloved wife of Past National President John Dineen. Our thoughts and heartfelt condolences are with the entire Dineen family during this difficult time.

For those wishing to send a card or express their condolences, please direct them to John and Marilyn's son, Tim Dineen, a retired Chicago Police sergeant: Tim Dineen, 5336 North Oketo, Chicago, IL 60656.

Please keep the Dineen family in your thoughts and prayers as they navigate this difficult loss.

It's an honor and privilege to serve as your National secretary. My staff and I stand ready to assist you any way we can. Be safe and I will see you soon. **FOP**




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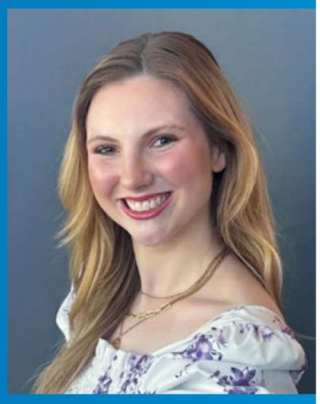
A Social Media Girl's

Journey Through the Sheriff's Citizens Academy

PART ONE

What does it take to better understand the people whose stories we tell? For National Fraternal Order of Police Social Media Administrator Savannah Nelson, that starts with stepping outside the office and into the Wilson County Sheriff's Department's Citizens Academy. Over the next 10 weeks, she'll learn firsthand about the people, practices and realities behind the badge, gaining a deeper understanding of the profession she works every day to represent.

In a three-part series appearing in the November, December and January issues of the *FOP Journal*, Savannah will reflect on her experiences, share the lessons that challenge her perspective and explore how a closer look at law enforcement will shape the way she tells officers' stories and advocates for the profession.



SAVANNAH NELSON / NATIONAL FOP SOCIAL MEDIA ADMINISTRATOR

When I joined the National Fraternal Order of Police in 2024, my experience with law enforcement was mostly limited to the officers who helped me after a car wreck and my love of police shows and true crime documentaries. Whether it was *48 Hours*, *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* or *Homicide: New York*, I would always finish watching, ready to be a cop myself, at least until I remembered that the job requires athleticism and occasionally running toward gunfire. With that in mind, it makes what I get to do at the FOP even more meaningful: using my skills in social media to highlight, recognize and advocate for the brave men and women of law enforcement. It is an honor and a privilege to play even a small part in the law enforcement and first responder community, and the more time I spend working alongside these professionals, the more I want to understand the people and profession I have the opportunity to represent.

Every so often, however, I am reminded of just how much I still have to learn. Those moments sometimes involve texting James Smallwood and John Hoyt to ask what an information officer does or what separates a deputy from a master deputy. So you can imagine my excitement when James suggested I attend a local sheriff's department Citizens Academy. My police dreams were finally coming true, minus the gunfire and the running! Over the next 10 weeks, I will be trading my back-corner cubicle for the briefing room as I learn directly from the people who lead, support and carry out



The more time I spend working alongside these professionals, the more I want to understand the people and profession.





the work of the Department. Through classroom instruction, hands-on training, live demonstrations and facility tours, I will get a closer look at the responsibilities, structure, culture and terminology that shape their day-to-day work.

For me, this is about more than satisfying my own curiosity. The work I do at the FOP puts me in a position to tell law enforcement's story, recognize the sacrifices officers make and advocate for the profession in the public arena. The more I understand their work and the realities they face, the better equipped I will be to communicate those stories accurately, meaningfully and with the perspective they deserve. The officers and leaders I work alongside have already been through their own training. Now, it's my turn to learn. Join me over the next 10 weeks as I share what I learn, what surprises me and how this experience is changing the way I see the profession I have the privilege of supporting. FOP

Gratitude



A WELLNESS SKILL YOU DIDN'T LEARN IN THE ACADEMY

SHERRI MARTIN / DIRECTOR OF WELLNESS

As we approach the season when we take stock of our blessings and reflect on what we are each thankful for, it is worth asking why so many of us reserve that practice for just one day each year. Thanksgiving may be a single day on the calendar, but gratitude is far more powerful when it becomes a daily habit. Practiced consistently, gratitude has the power to transform not only how we see the world, but how we experience it.

That same proactive mindset can be applied to your health.

For law enforcement officers, gratitude doesn't always come naturally. Our brains are trained to recognize problems, identify threats and actively search for danger. Every shift requires us to notice what is out of place, what is wrong and what could become dangerous. That mindset is essential to officer safety. It is a tool that helps keep us alive. The downside is that we become conditioned to overlook what is good.

The reality is that bad things do happen. Difficult calls, traumatic experiences, organizational challenges and personal hardships are all part of the profession. Gratitude does not ask us to ignore those realities or pretend they don't exist. Instead, it asks us to intentionally notice the positive moments that exist alongside them, to create opportunities for exceptional experiences whenever we can, and to make recognizing them a consistent habit.

You've probably heard that human beings have a built-in negativity bias. From an evolutionary perspective, our ancestors survived because they noticed danger before opportunity. Those who paid attention to threats lived to see another day and raise the next generation. Now add repeated exposure to trauma, the constant demands of police work, public scrutiny, staffing shortages and the pressures of an overburdened agency, and it becomes easy to understand why cynicism can take root. Hypervigilance and skepticism often become protective mechanisms that help officers continue functioning under extraordinary stress. Within that environment, gratitude can feel unnatural — or even unnecessary.

Yet the science tells a different story.

Research consistently shows that gratitude strengthens resilience. It lowers stress, improves sleep quality, reduces burnout and helps shift our attention toward experiences that generate positive emotions rather than

negative ones. Those positive emotions matter. They broaden our perspective, making it easier to see options, identify solutions and think creatively when genuine problems arise.

That expanded perspective benefits us both professionally and personally. Greater cognitive flexibility often translates into better decision making, improved performance and stronger problem solving on the job. Off duty, it helps us become more patient with ourselves and with those around us, strengthening relationships with family, friends and co-workers. Gratitude doesn't eliminate stress or erase adversity, but it changes how we recover from it — and that recovery is what builds resilience over time.

So how do we begin to interrupt the patterns of negative thinking reinforced by evolution and years of officer survival training? What does gratitude actually look like in law enforcement?

Sometimes it is found in the smallest moments.

It is expressing appreciation to the partner who always has your back; not simply thinking it, but saying it out loud so they hear it.

It is walking through your front door after a safe shift and taking a moment to appreciate your home and the people waiting inside.

It is identifying the mentors who helped shape your career and thanking them specifically by sharing how their guidance made a difference.

Positive emotions matter. They broaden our perspective, making it easier to see options, identify solutions and think creatively.

It is celebrating the countless victories that never make the evening news but still matter — the successful de-escalation, the child safely returned home, the victim who finally feels heard or the problem quietly solved before it became something worse.

It is pausing when a community member quietly says, "Thank you." Too often we brush those moments aside because they seem small, yet they are reminders that our work matters.

It is appreciating the opportunity to watch younger officers develop, knowing they will carry forward the mission of protecting their communities long after we are gone.

And it is taking a moment to marvel at how much policing has evolved throughout your career, from technology and investigative tools to officer wellness initiatives and a growing recognition that taking care of our people is just as important as taking care of the public.

Police work contains extraordinary hardship, but it also offers extraordinary privilege. Few professions provide the opportunity to witness courage, compassion, sacrifice, perseverance and resilience on a daily basis. Those moments are easy to miss if we only train ourselves to see what is broken.

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Like any skill, gratitude becomes stronger with practice. Think of the previous examples as a week's worth of daily gratitude prompts. Start with one today and build from there. Over time, your brain begins to notice what it has been overlooking all along. There are countless simple, practical ways to strengthen a gratitude practice, including:

- Identify two good things that happened at the end of every shift.
- Keep a "wins" notebook that you can revisit on difficult days.
- Thank one co-worker each week for something specific they did well.
- End briefings by recognizing good work. Even if you aren't the shift supervisor, you can publicly acknowledge a colleague's contributions.
- Notice moments of teamwork, call them out and celebrate the collaboration that helped solve a problem.
- Celebrate progress instead of perfection. Success doesn't have to be flawless to be meaningful.

A few days ago, I came across an old favorite T-shirt tucked away in my closet. Across the front were four simple words: Happiness Is a Choice.

That message resonated differently than it did years ago. Gratitude is a choice, too — not because we choose



the hardships we face, but because we choose whether those hardships become the only story we tell ourselves. Practicing gratitude will not prevent tragedy, eliminate danger or erase organizational frustrations. Staffing shortages will still exist. Administrative challenges will still arise. The difficult calls will continue to come. But gratitude reminds us why we continue to answer them. It helps us remember the partners who stand beside us, the families who support us, the communities that quietly appreciate us and the countless moments of courage, compassion and service that often go unnoticed.

Gratitude doesn't ask us to ignore what is difficult. It simply refuses to let difficulty become the only lens through which we see our profession, and perhaps that is one of the greatest acts of officer survival we can practice. **FOP**





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This commitment can especially be seen through Tiffin University's School of Criminal Justice and Social Sciences. Whether you are starting your career in law enforcement or seeking advancement in your field, TU offers programs that fit your schedule and align with your goals. Many programs are delivered 100% online, providing flexibility for working professionals balancing career, family and community responsibilities. We offer a wide range of academic programs, including bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees on our main campus, online and abroad.

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Criminal Justice Programs at TU

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Your Dragon Pathway

TU's programs provide a unique pathway approach that we call Dragon Pathways, designed like a map to guide you at every stage of your college journey.

Your unique Dragon Pathway is meant to provide clarity and structure as you navigate college to allow you to maximize your experience and stay on course to graduation. You will work with advisors and mentors each semester to assess your progress and explore your academic opportunities both in and out of the classroom.

By utilizing Dragon Pathways, we are able to use an early alert system to identify if you are at risk of falling behind on your pathway. That way, we can help you get back on track before it's too late.

Online Programs Designed for Working Officers

At TU, we structure our online programs to make sense for working adults and others on a nontraditional path to a degree.

Most degree options, including bachelor's, master's and doctoral programs, are available 100% online. Our online courses are delivered in accelerated seven-week terms, with six start dates per year, giving students the flexibility to begin when it works best for them. Classes are offered through asynchronous delivery using Moodle, a platform designed for experiential online learning. Asynchronous courses allow you the freedom to complete your assignments on your own schedule.

Tuition Discounts for FOP Members

As a proud education partner of the Fraternal Order of Police, TU offers exclusive tuition discounts to FOP members. A TU degree is available to FOP members and their spouses at more than 30% off the normal tuition rate. These discounts make a high quality, career-focused education even more accessible.

In addition, TU offers transfer credit for military service, academy training and previous coursework, as well as prior learning assessments that recognize and reward professional experience.

Take advantage of our Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) program to get academic credit for your prior work experience and certifications, which will help save time and money toward your degree. Students who have completed their CLEE, PELC, STEP, FBINA, PSLA and other certifications can earn credits toward their degree to fulfill required courses and save on tuition. Learn more about CPL at TU: **go.tiffin.edu/admissions-aid/credit-for-prior-learning/cpl-for-graduate-students**.

A Legacy of Service and Leadership

TU graduates can be found across all sectors of public safety, serving in municipal police departments, state and federal agencies, correctional institutions, national security operations and more. Our vast alumni network provides valuable opportunities for networking, mentorship and professional growth long after graduation. Students enrolled in TU's criminal justice programs become part of a tight-knit community connected by their commitment to excellence, leadership and service.

Ready to Take the Next Steps?

Apply now at **go.tiffin.edu/apply-now** to take advantage of Tiffin University's programs and exclusive FOP tuition discounts. For more information, contact Cassie Paas at **paascj@tiffin.edu** or by phone at (419) 448-3447. **FOP**

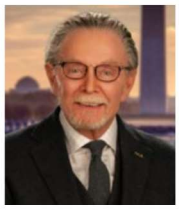
The National Fraternal Order of Police University

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**.

NFOPU CONSORTIUM SCHOOL

American Military University (AMU) — Charles Town, WV
American Public University — Charles Town, WV
Ashland University — Ashland, OH
Columbia Southern University — Orange Beach, AL
Lewis University — A Catholic and Lasallian University — Romeoville, IL
National University — San Diego, CA
Southeast Missouri State University · 1873 — Cape Girardeau, MO
Southern New Hampshire University — Manchester, NH
Tiffin University — Tiffin, OH
University of Cincinnati Online — Cincinnati, OH
University of Management and Technology — Arlington, VA
University of Maryland Global Campus — Adelphi, MD
University of San Diego — San Diego, CA
University of the Cumberlands — Williamsburg, KY
Upper Iowa University — Fayette, IA
Walden University — Minneapolis, MN
Wichita State University — Wichita, KS

FOP.net/fop-university



A Full Agenda Awaits Congress, Starting With Funding

Congress has been in recess since the last issue of the *FOP Journal*. The House returned from the August break and then recessed early to get back to the campaign trail for the midterms. The Senate remained in session until the beginning of October, but did not consider any major legislation, apart from one bill protecting the rights of college athletes.

When Congress returns for their lame-duck session, they will have a full agenda and few legislative days left on the calendar. Legislation that is considered "must pass" legislation includes completing work on the remaining fiscal year 2027 appropriations bills, which seems unlikely. The House passed its spending measures for the U.S. Departments of Justice and Homeland Security in May and June, respectively. While the Committee on Appropriations has favorably reported all 12 appropriations bills, only three have passed the House. The Senate Appropriations Committee, however, has yet to consider any spending bills and, in most cases, there is no draft legislative text available for review.

Congress is much more likely to adopt a new continuing resolution (CR) to avoid a partial shutdown of the federal government. The current CR expires on December 12.

A Third Reconciliation Bill?

Before the recess, the House considered and passed H. Con. Res. 113, which starts the process for a third budget reconciliation bill. The measure includes $73 billion in funding for the Iran war, $12 billion in aid to the nation's farmers and a $10 billion fund aimed at incentivizing states to adopt elements of the SAVE America Act.

Just the Facts:

» Although the U.S. House and Senate are still out of session, there is much to consider and prepare for during the lame-duck session. Soon after the election concludes, legislators will have to turn their attention to appropriations, national defense and FISA reauthorizations, and even the farm bill. There are also concerns the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) will sunset before receiving reauthorization, or perhaps have its oversight moved to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) within the U.S. Department of Commerce. The FOP opposes this provision and is continuing to work with legislative offices to ensure this essential system is not compromised. Additionally, there are several FOP-supported bills awaiting Senate approval that have the potential to pass before the newly elected Congress settles in next year.

Just before recessing for the midterm elections, Senate leaders announced that the Senate would not consider the reconciliation bill until after the elections — whether they will do so remains to be seen.

FY 2027 National Defense Reauthorization

Congress must also consider and pass the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY 2027. The House passed its bill, H.R. 8800, in July, but the Senate is writing its own version of the bill and that draft text has not been made available. The National Fraternal Order of Police has urged Senate leaders to include three provisions (**tinyurl.com/defense-authorization-act**) important to our members:

- **Fighting Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Act**, which would direct the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to develop treatment programs for law enforcement, fire, emergency medical and 9-1-1 personnel who suffer from PTSD or acute stress disorders
- **Strengthening Child Exploitation Enforcement Act**, which closes loopholes in federal criminal law related to child abuse and exploitation
- **Carla Walker Act**, which would establish a pilot program to make cutting-edge forensic genetic genealogy DNA analysis tools available to state and local investigative agencies

The NDAA is often a vehicle for numerous pieces of legislation, but it is not clear what the post-election outlook will be. The FOP will push to make sure these provisions at least make their way into the final bill.

FISA Reauthorization

Congress also needs to reauthorize Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), which expired in June. The law allows U.S. intelligence to conduct targeted electronic surveillance of non-U.S. persons located outside the country without an individual court warrant. These collection operations are continuing

under a different authorization, but that will expire in March 2027.

FirstNet Reauthorization

Finally, the FOP is pushing the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Technology to draft legislation reauthorizing the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) and focus on officer and public safety issues. Without reauthorization, FirstNet's authorities would sunset in February 2027, potentially disrupting operations.

The House passed H.R. 7386, the First Responder Network Authority Reauthorization Act in April, which would extend FirstNet's authorization through September 2037. The House bill, however, makes changes to the program that could put the lives of the men and women who rely on this network in jeopardy. The legislation would place FirstNet under the oversight of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) within the U.S. Department of Commerce, effectively ending its independent status. The FOP strongly opposes this provision, which we believe would impose redundant governmental oversight, heightened procedural burdens and escalated expenses without any palpable gains for public safety.

The Committee on Commerce, Science and Technology has received and is reviewing a draft bill put together by the FOP and the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) that ensures the FirstNet Authority Board, not the bureaucratic construct contained in the House-passed bill, has the authority to make the decisions about the nationwide public safety broadband network as well as the governance and operation of FirstNet. We cannot jeopardize officer and public safety by shifting decision making away from public safety professionals, and our legislative proposal puts officer and public safety above all other considerations.

Other Possible Measures

Congress is also scheduled to consider a new farm bill, as the previous authorization for these programs expired at the end of September. Similarly, the surfaces transportation bill, H.R. 8870, Building Unrivaled Infrastructure and Long-Term Development for America's 250th (BUILD America 250) Act, has cleared committee in May, but has not yet been considered by the House.

Legislative Update: Senate Urged to Act Quickly on FOP-Backed Bills Upon Return

Just before its recess, the House considered and passed, under a suspension of the rules, the following legislation by voice vote:

- **H.R. 309**, the National Law Enforcement Officers Remembrance, Support and Community Outreach Act
- **H.R. 1266**, the Combating Illicit Xylazine Act
- **H.R. 7834**, the Safe Cloud Storage Act
- **H.R. 8874**, the Homeland Security Capabilities Preservation Reporting Act
- **H.R. 8481**, Kayleigh's Law Act

All five of these bills are supported by the FOP and are pending before the Senate. We have urged the Senate to consider them in their first week back.

Legislative Update: FOP Pushes House to Act Soon on Senate-Passed Bills

The FOP is urging House leadership to bring H.R. 7876, the Secret Service-Local Law Enforcement Partnership Act, and S. 3897, the Officer John Barnes and Chief Michael Ansbro Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program Expansion Act, to the floor for consideration under a suspension of the rules.

The first bill would establish an Extraordinary Protection Reimbursement Program, which would authorize more than $61 million for law enforcement agencies that collaborate with the U.S. Secret Service (USSS) during protection and security missions. This money would be used towards purchasing equipment, hiring personnel and other necessary items to ensure that law enforcement agencies have the tools needed to assist the USSS when protecting the president, vice president and others who require protection details.

The Officer John Barnes and Chief Michael Ansbro Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program Expansion Act proposes improvements to the administration of the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program to ensure that the men and women who serve our communities — and their families — receive timely and meaningful support should their loved one fall in the line of duty. It serves to strengthen accountability and transparency within the PSOB Program by requiring the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to notify claimants promptly if information is missing and to issue benefit determinations within 270 days of receiving a complete claim. If that deadline is missed, interim benefits must be provided, offering critical financial stability to families during periods of uncertainty.

The legislation also expands reporting requirements, mandatory audits by the Government Accountability Office for claims pending more than one year, and subpoena authority for unresponsive agencies, which will help reduce unnecessary delays and make sure the program operates efficiently and responsibly. Additionally, it streamlines death benefit approvals for 9/11 responders and survivors who have already received verified determinations from the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund or the World Trade Center Health Program, accelerating assistance to those who have already sacrificed so much. This bill ultimately makes long-overdue improvements to a program so critical to the safety and well-being of our officers and their families.

Budget Proposal Eliminating the COPS Office Through Consolidation Postponed

The FOP expressed deep concern with one component of the administration's FY 2027 budget request that proposed to consolidate the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) and the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) into a newly created entity within the DOJ, entitled the Bureau of Justice Grants (BJG).

The FOP has shared these concerns with Congressional appropriators, which specifically directed the DOJ to maintain COPS and OVW as "distinct organizational grantmaking entities within the Department" in the Joint

Continued on page 22 ›

Top Priorities in Brief



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

House: 77 co-sponsors (19 R, 58 D)
Senate: Not yet introduced

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

House: 66 co-sponsors (10 R, 56 D)
Senate: 2 co-sponsors (2 D)

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

House: Passed
Senate: 13 co-sponsors (13 R)

H.R. 1551/S. 5214, the Protect and Serve Act

House: 119 co-sponsors (96 R, 23 D)
Senate: 3 co-sponsors (1 R, 2 D)

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

House: 153 co-sponsors (52 R, 101 D)
Senate: 27 co-sponsors (9 R, 18 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.



Continued from page 21 ›

Explanatory Statement that accompanied the passage of both the FY 2026 and FY 2027 appropriations bills. Despite this direction from Congress and a lack of statutory authority in the case of OVW, the DOJ pushed to complete the consolidation prior to the end of FY 2026.

The FOP is working to pass H.R. 8750, the COPS Reauthorization Act, which would not only reauthorize the COPS Office and the programs it administers, but also establish the office in statute. This would protect the COPS Office from being eliminated or consolidated into another entity without Congressional approval.

Other Legislative Activity:

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

- **H.R. 10551**, the Public Service Educational Assistance Act, which would establish a federal educational assistance program covering the full cost of post-secondary education for the dependents of law enforcement officers and other public employees
- **H.R. 10678**, the Fight Against Fentanyl Act, which would allow grant funds from the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne-JAG) to be used for the purchase of fentanyl testing kits and opioid reversal agents
- **S. 4510**, the Relief for Families of the Fallen Act, which would exclude an officer's income for federal income tax purposes for the year they died in the line of duty or, in the case of a serious injury that resulted in death, the year this injury occurred using the same criteria as the Public Safety Officers Benefit Program

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 receiving 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**)
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- Truth Social (**@FOPNational**)

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

NFOP PAC Update

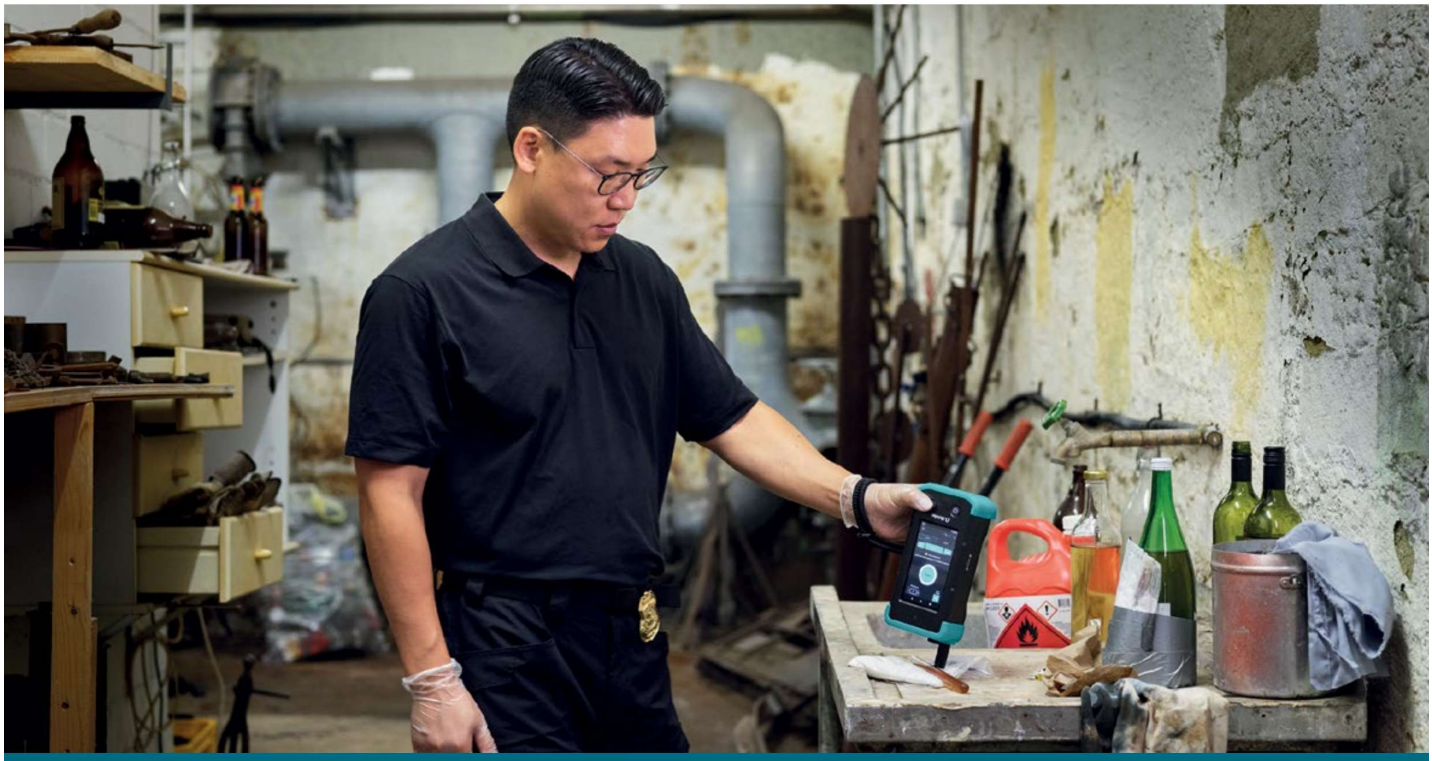
Yes, the midterm elections are nearly over, but the NFOP PAC still needs your support because the next presidential election has already started. With control of the White House and Congress at stake in 2028, we need to start preparing now if we want to make sure our message is heard.

That means we still need your help. When thousands of FOP members participate, even small contributions can make a difference. If you are not already a contributor, now is the time to join your brothers and sisters and support the NFOP PAC. The PAC provides an important tool to support our broader legislative efforts and maintain our presence in Washington. Together, we can continue building the resources needed to fight for our officers and the issues that matter most to them.

Contributions need not be for large amounts (though these are also very much appreciated) and 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



Fentanyl Changed the Risks. Has Your Identification Strategy Kept Up?

Fentanyl has changed the way agencies approach narcotics identification.

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Three Critical Challenges Facing the Profession



Law enforcement unions across the United States are sounding the alarm over three escalating challenges they say are reshaping the future of policing: recruitment and retention, officer safety and wellness, and the preservation of due process protections. These issues, once longstanding concerns, have reached a critical point affecting public safety and departmental stability.

Reports indicate recruitment and retention have become the most pressing operational crisis. Agencies nationwide are experiencing historically low applicant numbers while simultaneously seeing accelerated retirements and resignations. Departments are losing midcareer officers faster than they can replace them. Wage compression, mandatory overtime and shifting public perceptions are some key factors.

Another major concern centers on officer safety and wellness, an area unions say has become increasingly urgent. Recent national data shows rising assaults on officers, longer shifts and higher exposure to traumatic incidents. There is more concern for improved equipment standards, expanded mental-health resources and modernized training to address fatigue, PTSD and burnout. There is more focus that safety isn't just about body armor; it's about mental resilience and sustainable workloads.

Finally, there are concerns regarding due process and contract protections, including fair investigative procedures, arbitration rights and safeguards against politically motivated discipline. While critics argue these measures can slow accountability processes, unions maintain that such protections



are essential in a profession in which split-second decisions are heavily scrutinized. Officers deserve a fair process, not trial by public opinion.

As these three issues converge, union leaders warn that the stability of the profession and the safety of the communities they serve may depend on how policymakers respond. Many unions are preparing legislative proposals, contract revisions and statewide campaigns aimed at addressing what they describe as a pivotal moment for American policing. **FOP**

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

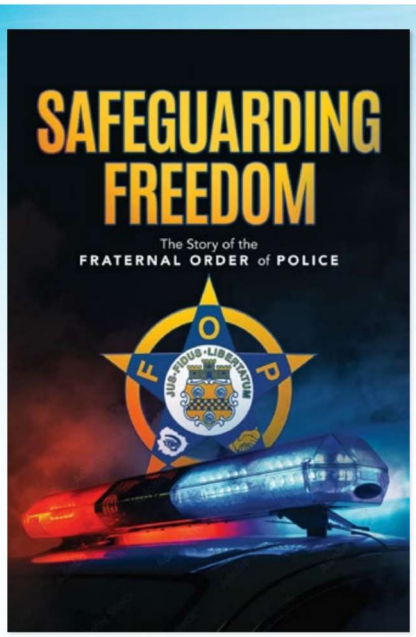
BLUE VIEW

TUNE IN TO THE FOP PODCAST

Listen in every week to hear from law enforcement experts, elected officials and other notable leaders to gain insight into the issues and current events surrounding the law enforcement community.



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



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.

The "Totality of the Circumstances" Upheld



Supreme Court Grants Review and Reverses in *District of Columbia v. R.W.*

In the early morning hours, a Metropolitan Police officer pulled into an apartment complex in Washington, D.C., to check on a reported suspicious vehicle. Before he had done anything more than arrive, two people jumped out of a parked car and ran, leaving a door open behind them. The driver stayed behind the wheel and began backing out of the space, the rear door still ajar. For an experienced law enforcement officer, these circumstances would raise immediate and legitimate concerns warranting further investigation. On April 20, the U.S. Supreme Court confirmed that the Constitution permits officers to consider those circumstances collectively when determining whether reasonable suspicion exists to justify an investigatory stop.

In *District of Columbia v. R.W.*, the Court summarily reversed, without full briefing or oral argument, a decision of the D.C. Court of Appeals that had vacated a juvenile's delinquency adjudication arising from a stolen car. In a short *per curiam* opinion, the Court held that Officer Clifford Vanterpool "clearly had reasonable suspicion" to stop the driver. In doing so, it reaffirmed a principle the National Fraternal Order of Police has long defended: an officer's decision must be judged by the whole picture in front of them, not by a version of events with the most telling parts cut out. The National FOP filed an amicus brief supporting the District's petition. The decision is an important reaffirmation of the Fourth Amendment principles governing investigatory stops and a reminder that courts must evaluate an officer's observations in context, rather than isolating individual facts and dismissing their significance.

Just the Facts:

» The National Fraternal Order of Police has been an ardent advocate to have courts judge an officer's decisions based on the entirety of facts in the moment that led them to determine reasonable actions were necessary. In considering *District of Columbia v. R.W.*, the U.S. Supreme Court concluded lower courts should not base rulings on only the most telling parts of an officer's action, emphasizing the argument that the Fourth Amendment does not require each individual observation to independently establish reasonable suspicion. Rather, the Court emphasized there is greater evidentiary significance when all circumstances are considered, stating, "Pretending that the most revealing aspect of the encounter did not happen is incompatible with the totality-of-the-circumstances approach required by our precedents."

The case reached the Supreme Court because of how the D.C. Court of Appeals went about reviewing the stop. The trial court had denied R.W.'s motion to suppress based on four facts: the dispatch call, the companions' flight, the late hour and the car backing out with its door open. The appellate court took those facts one at a time. It set aside the dispatch call because the record did not show where the information came from, and it refused to hold the passengers' flight against the driver who stayed behind. Having "excis[ed]" those two facts, the court was left with the late hour and what it described as the "slight movement of the car," and it found that not enough. That approach is inconsistent with the practical realities of law enforcement, where officers must assess developing situations based on the combined significance of their observations, training and experience.

> **Courts must evaluate an officer's observations in context, rather than isolating individual facts and dismissing their significance.**

The Supreme Court rejected that approach in unusually direct terms. Drawing on *United States v. Arvizu*, the Court explained that the totality-of-the-circumstances test "precludes this sort of divide-and-conquer analysis," because "the whole is often greater than the sum of its parts." Reasonable suspicion, the Court emphasized, turns on the practical considerations of everyday life "on which reasonable and prudent men, not legal technicians, act." That distinction is critical. The Fourth Amendment does not require each individual observation to independently establish reasonable

suspicion. Rather, courts must consider whether the facts, viewed together and through the lens of an objectively reasonable officer, provide a particularized and objective basis for suspecting criminal activity. Conduct that may appear innocent when examined in isolation can take on greater significance when considered alongside other circumstances.

Viewed that way, the case was not close. Officer Vanterpool arrived already alert to a possible problem because of the dispatch call. Two occupants then fled from a police car that had simply pulled into the lot, and the Court has long recognized that unprovoked flight is "certainly suggestive" of wrongdoing. Because passengers are often engaged in a common enterprise with the driver, their flight cast R.W.'s presence in a suspicious light. And R.W.'s own response completed the picture. Few drivers whose passengers suddenly bolted would put the car in reverse and try to leave without so much as closing the door. The lower court had speculated that R.W. might not have noticed the open door, but the Supreme Court reiterated that reasonable suspicion "need not rule out the possibility of innocent conduct." An officer is not required to eliminate every conceivable innocent explanation before taking reasonable investigative action. Its closing observation is one every officer and attorney representing law enforcement should remember: "Pretending that the most revealing aspect of the encounter did not happen is incompatible with the totality-of-the-circumstances approach required by our precedents."

The National FOP filed an amicus brief in this matter because its stakes reached well beyond one stolen car in Washington D.C. Our brief stressed that the realities of policing demand flexibility, that conflicting rules from one court to the next undermine officer confidence and complicate training, and that officer and public safety suffer when courts second-guess decisions made in rapidly developing circumstances by filtering out what the officer actually saw. Law enforcement officers operate in circumstances where information is frequently incomplete, events unfold quickly and decisions must be made before the full nature of a potential threat or criminal activity is known. The reasonable suspicion standard recognizes those realities by requiring an objective and particularized basis for action, not certainty that a crime has occurred. The Court's reasoning reflects those concerns. It credits the commonsense judgment of the officer on the scene, and it treats their observations as what they were: a sequence of events in which each fact made the next more telling.

The decision should also bring some much needed consistency. Last year we noted that a number of courts had adopted similar exclusionary approaches, and that officers in the District faced different standards depending on whether federal or local prosecutors brought a case. A summary reversal sends an unmistakable message to lower courts that the divide-and-conquer method is wrong. Although the decision does not resolve every question concerning the application of reasonable suspicion, it reinforces a uniform constitutional framework that law enforcement agencies, officers and their counsel can rely upon when evaluating investigatory stops.

District of Columbia v. R.W. reaffirms the commonsense foundation laid in *Terry v. Ohio*: officers may act on the whole of what they see, not a version of events stripped of its most revealing facts. The Fourth Amendment requires reasonable suspicion, not certainty, and courts must assess an officer's actions based on the circumstances confronting the officer at the time, rather than through an artificial, fact-by-fact analysis conducted with the benefit of hindsight. The National FOP is proud to have supported the District's petition, and we will continue to advocate for clear, uniform rules that respect officers' training, experience and duty to act in uncertain and dangerous situations. **FOP**

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MR. C.O.P.S.

The Remarkable Life and Legacy of Charles Shinholser

Some titles are awarded through promotion. Some are printed on business cards or engraved on plaques. Others are earned.

For nearly three decades, Charles Ray Shinholser has been known throughout the Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.) organization by a title that never required an official ceremony. He earned it one grieving family at a time.

On October 6, Charles turned **95 years young**. He recently moved into an assisted-living facility, but anyone who thinks that means he has retired from his life's mission doesn't know Charles Shinholser. He is still on the phone almost every day talking with survivors of fallen law enforcement officers. His wardrobe regularly includes a C.O.P.S. hat and shirt. And close to his heart is a photo pin bearing the image of his son, Police Officer Charles Ray Shinholser Jr. of the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, Florida.





Charles and Virginia Shinholser

To understand why a 95-year-old man remains so committed to helping grieving law enforcement families, you have to travel back nearly a century — back to rural Florida, back to a teenage boy willing to walk miles just to see a girl, with her nine younger siblings behind them.

Charles and Virginia

Charles was born in 1931 and grew up around the small rural community of Perry, Florida. His childhood best friend was Wilson Bethea. Wilson had an older sister named Virginia, and Charles had always liked her. When Virginia was 15 and Charles was 14, they became boyfriend and girlfriend. Once Virginia turned 16, she was allowed to date.

There was just one problem; Charles did not have a car so he walked to Virginia's family farm, seemingly in the middle of nowhere, just for the opportunity to spend time with her.

And there was another complication, Virginia was the oldest of 10 children. When Charles and Virginia went on their walking dates holding hands, her nine younger siblings had to follow behind them. Privacy was apparently not part of the courtship agreement.

Behind that humorous memory, however, is the story of a remarkable young woman.

Virginia grew up in a home without electricity or running water. As the oldest child, she helped care for her nine younger brothers and sisters while attending school. Somehow she also found time to excel. Virgina was a star athlete in basketball and softball, and in 1948, she graduated from Taylor County High School as salutatorian.

Charles' academic career took a slightly different route. He liked to joke that he liked sixth grade so much that he decided to do it twice. The truth was that Charles and his best friend Wilson sometimes decided that skipping school to go swimming — and taking



Officer Charles Ray Shinholser Jr.

care of other matters of obvious teenage importance — was preferable to sitting in a classroom.

Charles eventually got serious enough to graduate from Taylor County High School in 1950, where he was named "Best Dressed" his senior year. After graduation, Charles went to work at a sawmill. He later learned of a job opening with A&P and was hired. With a steady job, Charles asked Virginia for her hand in marriage and on September 24, 1950, Charles and Virginia were married.

Their marriage would endure for 68 years.

A Family Built on Work and Service

Charles possessed an extraordinary work ethic, and A&P recognized it. He earned numerous promotions, and those opportunities meant moving his growing family again and again. Over the years, Charles and Virginia moved nine times because of his career. In 1967, he was given management responsibilities over a large area, with Jacksonville becoming the family's home base. Along the way, Charles and Virgina raised five children: three sons, Olin, Mark and Ray, and two daughters, Robin and Melissa. All five inherited the work ethic that defined their parents.

Their oldest son, Olin, always wanted to be come a lawyer. He attended the University of Florida, earned his law degree and built a successful legal career before becoming a county judge and later a circuit judge. His distinguished public service continued for decades. Although Judge Shinholser officially retired in 2016, retirement proved to be a relative term. He has continued serving as a senior judge, filling in for other judges when needed.

The family's tradition of public service continued into another generation. Olin's daughter, Rebecca, became an assistant state attorney in Alachua County, Florida.

Charles and Virginia's second son, Mark, had another childhood ambition. He wanted to become a police officer, and that dream became a reality in 1975 when Mark graduated from the Police Academy. He went on to enjoy a distinguished law enforcement career, eventually attaining the rank of sergeant before retiring in 2010. Ironically, Mark spent many years serving on the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office Honor Guard and their main function is to honor the fallen.

Mark's son, Ricky, continued the family tradition and has served over 20 years as a corrections officer. Ricky's wife, Holly, also served in corrections and retired from the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

Charles and Virginia's daughters, Robin and Melissa, also became extremely successful in their chosen professions. Robin's family added yet another generation to the Shinholser tradition of law enforcement service. Her oldest son, Marty, serves with the King County Sheriff's Office in the Seattle area. Marty's wife, Heather, is a retired Clay County deputy. Robin's youngest son, Thomas, serves as a director with the Clay County Sheriff's Office.

Public service wasn't simply a profession in the Shinholser family, it was becoming a legacy. But it was the career of Charles and Virginia's son, Ray, that would forever change their lives.

Ray

Ray Shinholser graduated from Forrest High School in 1976. Almost immediately, he began trying to follow in his older brother Mark's footsteps and join the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office. In 1977, his dreams were realized when he was hired by JSO. That same year he married his wife Debbie. Ray began his career as a corrections officer before transitioning to the Police Academy in 1981. Ray and Debbie would have two children, Mandy and Michael.

Like his brother Mark, Ray became



HEROES

A COP'S HOMAGE TO A SLAIN PAL BECOMES HIS OWN TRAGIC FAREWELL

part of the law enforcement world that fascinated the younger members of the Shinholser family. Robin remembered the effect her brothers had on her children. "My kids all loved watching Mark and Ray and all of their adventures," she says.

Her oldest son, Marty, was particularly close to Ray and spent considerable time with Ray and Debbie. Ray became an important influence in Marty's young life and his death would devastate Marty.

But Ray had another gift, he was a talented musician. Shortly before his own death, Ray used that talent to honor his friend and fellow Jacksonville police officer who made the ultimate sacrifice. Jacksonville Officer Gary Bevel was shot and killed in the line of duty on May 17, 1983.

Ray wrote and released a song titled, "When's Daddy Coming Home."

The song was a tribute to Bevel and the families of fallen officers. Ray was also attempting to raise funds for a National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, D.C. He could never have imagined how painfully personal the title of his song would soon become.

Only four months before Ray's death, he and fellow Jacksonville motorcycle officer, David Stevens, climbed aboard their police motorcycles for a solemn ride to Williston, Florida. They were there to represent the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office at the funeral of the first, and only,

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officer killed in the line of duty (Corporal David Wayne Moss) from that small community. Two Jacksonville motorcycle officers had ridden there to honor a fallen brother. Neither could have imagined what was coming.

On December 14, 1988, Ray Shinholser was killed in the line of duty when his police motorcycle was struck by a truck. Ray's daughter, Mandy, was eight years old. His son, Michael, was four years old.

In a matter of moments, Charles and Virginia Shinholser joined a group no parent ever wants to join. Debbie lost her husband, Mandy and Michael lost their father, brothers and sisters lost their brother, Robin's son Marty lost the uncle he idolized and the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office lost one of its own.

Then came one of the most heartbreaking chapter's of Ray's story. The song he had written to honor a fallen officer suddenly seemed to have been written for his own family. After Ray's death, Michael's young voice was added to the recording. A little boy could now be heard asking, "Daddy, when are you coming home?"

Ray wasn't coming home. The story of Ray's death, his music and his young son's voice captured national attention. *People* magazine highlighted Ray's song and story. But for Charles, Virginia, Debbie, Mandy, Michael and the rest of the Shinholser family, this wasn't a magazine story. It was their life.

After the Sound of TAPS Fades

Law enforcement funerals are filled with tradition. There are badges and uniforms, honor guards, flags, salutes. bagpipes and the haunting final notes of TAPS. Then the ceremony ends, the people begin leaving, the uniforms disappear.

And the surviving family goes home to face a reality that will continue long after the final notes have faded. At the time of Ray's death, there was no local Jacksonville support group dedicated specifically to helping police survivors through that journey. Charles and Virginia quickly discovered something about grief: helping others who dealt with the same pain helped them deal with their own.

In 1989, the Shinholser family traveled to Washington, D.C. for National Police Week where Ray would be honored for his supreme sacrifice. There, Charles met Suzie Sawyer of Concerns of Police Survivors. That meeting would change the direction of Charles and Virginia's lives. C.O.P.S. was a still relatively young organization but its mission spoke directly to the Shinholsers.

Rebuilding Shattered Lives

Charles and Virginia knew exactly what a shattered life looked like. They were living one, but they discovered that perhaps the best way to rebuild their own lives was to help others rebuild theirs. Charles possessed a particular ability to connect with fathers who had lost sons and daughters. He understood something that cannot always be taught in a grief support manual, sometimes people need to talk and sometimes they don't. When another father needed to talk, Charles listened. When he didn't need to talk, Charles simply sat beside him, and sometimes presence is enough.

When another father needed to talk, Charles listened. When he didn't need to talk, Charles simply sat beside him.

A Chapter is Born

Nearly a decade after Ray's death, another important chapter in the Shinholser story began. In 1998, Stevens was elected president of Jacksonville FOP Lodge #5-30. Charles approached him with a question: Would Stevens help him establish a Northeast Florida Chapter of C.O.P.S.?

For Stevens, it was an easy answer. He hadn't simply known Ray Shinholser, he had ridden police motorcycles along side of him. Stevens could still remember that trip to Williston only four months before Ray's death. Years later, at Virginia Shinholser's funeral, Stevens told the story of the two motorcycle officers riding to Williston to honor that community's fallen hero. After the funeral, a woman approached Stevens and introduced herself. She was the widow of the Williston officer whose funeral Ray and Stevens had attended all those years before.

Decades after two young officers rode their motorcycles into a small Florida town to honor a fallen brother, one officer was gone and the widow they had gone there to support was attending the funeral of a woman who had dedicated much of her life to helping families just like hers.

Life, loss and service had somehow traveled a complete circle.

October 9, 1998

The Northeast Florida Chapter of C.O.P.S. was officially chartered on October 9, 1998.

Charles and Virginia Shinholser, Sawyer, Jacksonville FOP Lodge President Stevens and city dignitaries gathered at Jacksonville City Hall to celebrate the occasion. It should have been a day devoted entirely to hope. Then reality delivered a devastating reminder of exactly why the organization was necessary. During the gathering, Stevens received notification that Jacksonville Officer Michael Boynton had just been killed while responding to an officer needs help (signal 34) call.

On the very day Jacksonville celebrated the creation of an organization dedicated to supporting families of fallen officers, another Jacksonville family suddenly needed that support. The mission was no longer theoretical, it was happening again.

From that day forward, Charles worked tirelessly for the families of fallen heroes and the connection between C.O.P.S. and Jacksonville FOP endured.

Since 1998, the Northeast Florida Chapter of C.O.P.S. has held its meetings at Jacksonville FOP Lodge #5-30. It became more than a meeting location, it became a home where survivors could gather with people who understood.

Charles and Virgina's Mission

Eventually, Charles left his career with A&P and devoted himself full

time to C.O.P.S. He had once told Sawyer that, when he retired, he would give C.O.P.S. 40 hours every week. He kept his word, not a few months, not a couple of years but for decades!

And Virginia was beside him. Together, Charles and Virginia became known throughout the country for their commitment to survivors. They didn't do it for financial reward. Neither Charles nor Virginia ever received a dime in salary for their work with C.O.P.S.

Their compensation came in a different form. It came when a grieving mother smiled again. When a widow realized she was not alone. When a father who couldn't find the words discovered he didn't have to say anything. When a child who lost a parent met another child who understood.

Their own family had been shattered in 1988, but now they found comfort in helping others dealing with the same devastation.

The Northeast Florida Chapter grew into one of the most successful chapters in the country and somewhere along the way, survivors stopped simply referring to Charles by his name.

He became "Mr. C.O.P.S."



C.O.P.S. Executive Director Emeritus Suzie Sawyer and Charles Shinholser at the 40-year celebration of C.O.P.S.

Suzie Sawyer Remembers

Few people are better positioned to describe Charles' impact than C.O.P.S. Executive Director Emeritus Sawyer.

She recalled, "I met the Shinholser family at National Police Week in 1989 in Washington, D.C., where Charles and Virginia Shinholser's son, Ray, would be honored for his supreme sacrifice serving the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office on December 14, 1988.

"C.O.P.S. was only in its fifth year of existence and events usually had many more women than men. Charles somehow helped to change that. He would sit with another father and talk. If the father didn't want to talk, Charles just sat with him.

"After attending a few events presented by C.O.P.S., the Shinholsers apparently found a lifetime mission in helping other law enforcement parents and families to deal with grief.

"Charles was known by so many survivors that he became 'Mr. C.O.P.S.' He truly is an icon who is still embracing and believing in 'rebuilding shattered lives' of American law enforcement officers.

"There are thousands of survivors who would join me in saying, 'Thank you, Charles, for sharing your time and love to grieving people and helping them get back to living their lives to the fullest.'" **FOP**

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Targeted Violence Prevention Comes to Pathways to Excellence



Preparing the Front Line: A First Look at the National FOP's New Prevention Training, and Why Every Officer Should Be in the Room

Every officer has had a call that stayed with them. Not because a crime had been committed, but because something did not sit right. A comment made in anger that sounded like more than anger. A grievance that kept growing. A post online, a concerned family member, a teacher who could not explain exactly why they were worried — no crime yet, no clear next step. Just a gut feeling and a decision to make.

Those moments are where prevention lives, and they almost always land first on the front line. Patrol officers and deputies, school resource officers, tribal officers and first-line sergeants are the people most likely to see the early warning signs of targeted violence and radicalization. Too often they are also the people who have received the least formal training on what to do next.

The National Fraternal Order of Police is working to change that. I am proud to announce that a session of our new Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) training will be offered at Pathways to Excellence 2027, February 21–26, at the South Point Hotel, Casino and Spa in Las Vegas.

Through a FEMA-funded TVTP initiative, the National FOP is building a national, prevention-focused framework to help law enforcement and community partners identify, interpret and respond to early behavioral indicators of targeted violence and radicalization.

Too much training is written by people far removed from a patrol car. We are taking a different approach. Curriculum and facilitation planning draw on input from law enforcement, behavioral health, prevention science, threat assessment and community engagement, so the final product is grounded in how policing actually works.

Most importantly, we are putting frontline officers at the design table. On November 4–5, the National FOP is convening a national TVTP roundtable in Chicago. Unlike most expert panels, this roundtable is made up mostly of generalist practitioners, the patrol officers, deputies, school resource officers, tribal officers and sergeants who will be expected to use this training, drawn from urban, suburban, rural and tribal communities, and from agencies of every size.

These officers are not reviewing a finished product. They are helping build it. They will shape realistic scenarios, test the decision framework against their own operating environments and tell us plainly what feels practical and what does not. They will help us answer the hard questions: What should an officer do when behavior is concerning but no crime has occurred? Where is the line between protected expression and a pathway toward violence? What happens when a rural or tribal agency does not have the same referral resources as a large city department?

The session at Pathways to Excellence 2027 is an important step in our plan to develop and launch this program nationwide in 2027. It takes what we learn from the Chicago roundtable and puts it in front of a national audience of FOP members and leaders.

Attendees will be introduced to the See → Understand → Decide → Act framework, work through realistic scenarios and see firsthand how this training is taking shape. Just as important, your questions and feedback will help refine the course before it rolls out across the country. When this program reaches your agency, you will know it was shaped by officers like you.

Prevention Does Not Start in a Command Post. It Starts With the Officer Who Notices Something is Wrong and Knows What to Do Next.

The officer who first encounters a person on a pathway toward violence is rarely a specialist. It is the deputy answering a disturbance call, the SRO who hears what students are saying in the hallway, the patrol officer who takes a report from a worried parent, or the sergeant deciding whether a concern rises to the next level. These officers often work with incomplete information, limited time and uneven access to threat assessment teams, intelligence resources or behavioral health partners.

This training is designed for that reality. It gives officers a common language and clear process for recognizing warning signs, understanding what they are seeing, deciding on a lawful and proportionate response, and acting in a way that connects people to the right resources. Done well, prevention protects the public, protects the person in crisis and protects the officer who has to make the call. Success will not always be measured by an arrest. Sometimes it will be measured by the tragedy that never happened.

That is why this matters to the FOP. Our members deserve training that prepares them for the situations they actually face and that supports their judgment rather than leaving them to second guess it alone.

Registration for Pathways to Excellence 2027 launched on October 1, and sessions are filling up fast. If you plan to attend, I strongly encourage you to register now, coordinate with your lodge and agency, and secure your place in the sessions that matter most to you.

Pathways is more than a conference. It is a week of education, collaboration and professional development built around the

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real needs of our members. This year's paths include:

- **Leadership Matters:** Leadership development for lodge leaders and members at every level, focused on leading from the line, organizational culture, communication and succession
- **Wellness Summit:** Training on officer wellness, resilience and the support our members and their families need before and after critical incidents
- **Wellness Professionals' Forum:** A dedicated path for the clinicians, peer support leaders and wellness professionals who serve our members
- **Labor/Legal Leadership Forum:** Education on member rights, representation, labor relations and the legal realities officers face
- **Excellence in Chaplaincy:** Preparing chaplains to provide spiritual care and support to officers and families. Chaplaincy Leadership and Development is building the next generation of chaplaincy leaders within the FOP.

Our program team reviewed more than 200 presentation proposals to build a schedule with fresh topics, new instructors and training that goes well beyond lodge operations. Whether you come for leadership, wellness, labor and legal education, chaplaincy or the new TVTP session, you will leave better prepared to serve your members, your agency and your community.

The work we do together at Pathways will help carry this program to officers in every part of the country next year. I invite you to join us in Las Vegas, take part in the TVTP session and be part of building training that reflects the realities of policing. I look forward to seeing you at South Point in February.

Register today by scanning this QR code. **FOP**

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**.

CRI-TAC Collaborative Reform Initiative TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

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