



NATIONAL FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE

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House of Representatives Passes Three Critical Law Enforcement Bills

Protects Federal LEOs; Supports Officers' Mental Health; PSOB Reform

Washington, DC – Patrick Yoes, National President of the Fraternal Order of Police, applauded today's news that the United States House of Representatives considered and passed three vital law enforcement-related bills: S. 921, the "Jaime Zapata and Victor Avila Federal Officers and Employees Protection Act," S. 1502, the "Confidentiality Opportunities for Peer Support (COPS) Act," and S. 1511, the "Protecting America's First Responders Act."

"All of these bills are of great importance not only to our members, but to all law enforcement officers across the country," said Yoes. "We are tremendously grateful for Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer's leadership on the frontlines to bring these bills to the House floor for a vote."

The House passed S. 921, the "Jaime Zapata and Victor Avila Federal Officers and Employees Protection Act," under a suspension of the rules, and it will now be sent to President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. to be signed into law. This legislation will clarify that Federal law clearly and unambiguously protects Federal law enforcement officers and other employees operating outside our borders. Federal Courts across the country have recognized for years that, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. 1114, the United States government could prosecute anyone who killed or attempted to kill a Federal officer or employee while they were performing their official duties. In January 2020, the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals vacated the murder convictions of two Los Zetas cartel assassins responsible for the heinous murder of ICE Agent Zapata and the attempted murder of ICE Agent Avila. The Court concluded that Congress was not expressively clear that Section 1114 applies to crimes committed outside the United States.

"The families and friends of Agents Zapata and Avila deserve no less, and our Federal law enforcement officers and other employees operating outside the borders of the United States need these protections," said Yoes. "This legislation will undo the dangerous precedent set by the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals and we are grateful to Minority Leader Kevin O. McCarthy for his tireless advocacy on this issue."

The House also passed S. 1502, the "Confidentiality Opportunities for Peer Support (COPS) Act," under a suspension of the rules, and it will now be sent to President Biden to be signed into law. This legislation will reduce the barriers for law enforcement officers when trying to access mental health resources.

"The job of a law enforcement officer is not easy," said Yoes. "Law enforcement officers, unfortunately, see the very worst of humanity, with some statistics suggesting that a police officer will experience more traumatic events in six months than the average person will experience in a lifetime. By increasing the level of confidentiality for individuals seeking peer support counseling, this legislation ensures that our nation's everyday heroes will be better

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equipped to address a personal or professional crisis and to protect and serve their communities.”

Lastly, the House passed S. 1511, the “Protecting America’s First Responders Act,” under a suspension of the rules, and it will now go back to the Senate after being amended. This legislation would update the Public Safety Officers’ Benefits (PSOB) disability determinations and the definitions making it more consistent with existing Federal law, greatly improving the ability of our injured and disabled officers to have their claims processed more fairly and more quickly. This PSOB reform would also extend the COVID-19 presumption for the PSOB program through the end of 2023 or the end of the public health emergency —whichever comes first.

“While no law, benefit or government program can alleviate the grief of losing a loved one or heal a permanent injury that the officer must live with for the rest of his days, this legislation can reduce the financial pressures these families may encounter,” said Yoes. “We knew at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic that law enforcement officers on the frontlines would be increasingly vulnerable to contracting the virus—according to our data, 764 law enforcement officers have died due to COVID-19 as of today. This legislation is critically necessary to ensure that these officers and their families will be taken care of if they become disabled and are unable to continue to serve as law enforcement officers.”

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Founded in 1915, the Fraternal Order of Police is the largest law enforcement labor organization in the United States, with more than 364,000 members. With national offices in Nashville, Tennessee, and Washington, D.C., the FOP is committed to improving the working conditions of law enforcement officers and the safety of those served through education, legislation, information, community involvement, and employee representation. Please visit <https://www.fop.net> for more information.