



The Washington Report

The Newsletter of the National Association of Police Organizations
Representing America's Finest

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NAPO Backs Bill to Help with Recruitment and Retention

NAPO pledged our support for the **Fuel the Force Act**, H.R. 7210, introduced by Representatives Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) and Marie Gluesenkamp Perez (D-WA), which would provide \$100,000 in annual Federal income tax exclusion to full-time federal, state, and local law enforcement officers who remain on the job for five or more years.

Law Enforcement agencies across the country serving urban, rural, big, and small communities are struggling to enlist and retain qualified candidates to help alleviate staffing shortages. A 2024 survey from the International Association of Chiefs of Police on the recruitment and retention of law enforcement officers shows more than 70% of responding agencies are having more difficulty recruiting qualified candidates than they did five years ago. 65% of responding agencies have reduced or eliminated agency services, units, and positions because of staffing difficulties. On average, agencies are operating at a 10% staffing deficit, putting additional stress and strains on their officers, many of whom are forced to work overtime to cover the shortages.

The survey also found that officers are most likely to resign within the first five years on the job. The Fuel the Force Act would play a vital role in ending our recruitment and retention crisis. The retention of good, qualified officers not only helps law enforcement agencies ensure they can protect and serve our communities efficiently and effectively, but it also improves officer morale, working conditions, and officer mental health and wellness.

View NAPO's letter of support [here](#).

Legislation Introduced to Make GPO and WEP Backpay Income Tax-Free

On January 5, 2025, NAPO celebrated the culmination of decades of tireless advocacy to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO), with the signing into law of the Social Security Fairness Act. For nearly 40 years, the WEP and GPO had been harming the retirement security of public safety officers by taking away hard-earned, and much needed benefits simply because they chose a public service profession that mandates early retirement. In 2025, public safety retirees saw their Social Security benefits fully restored and received a refund payment for a year's worth of deserved backpay for the benefits that were taken from them in 2024.

Unfortunately, public safety retirees are now facing a large tax bill on the same benefits Congress acted to restore. NAPO worked closely with Congressman Lance Gooden (R-TX) on the **No Tax on Restored Benefits Act**, which would exclude the 2024 lump sum payment public safety retirees received last year due to the Social Security Fairness Act from federal income taxes. This bill honors Congress's intent in repealing the GPO and WEP and would ensure no public servant continues to be penalized simply because they chose a life of public service.

NAPO stands with Congressman Gooden in support of this important legislation and thanks him for his continued support for the public safety community.

View NAPO's letter of support [here](#).

NAPO Participates in Congressional Staff Briefing on Public Safety Priority Grants Programs

On January 22, NAPO, together with other national public safety associations, participated in a public safety grant briefing on Capitol Hill, drawing nearly 150 Congressional and stakeholder staff as well as staff from the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security. The grant briefing provided a high-level overview of critical federal public safety grant programs and how they support state, local, tribal, and territorial agencies on the ground. NAPO focused our presentation on the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Hiring Program and the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act (LEMHWA) and the Supporting and Treating Officers in Crisis (STOIC) Act programs.

Law enforcement agencies across the country continue to face dire recruitment and retention issues and are struggling to attract qualified candidates. This impacts response time, efficiency, working conditions for officers, as well as officer morale and mental wellness. The COPS Hiring Program was appropriated just over \$253 million in fiscal 2026, with a \$10 million carve out for the LEMHWA and STOIC programs. These programs together are vitally important to agencies ability to recruit and retain officers.

In Fiscal 2025, 228 state, local, & tribal law enforcement agencies were awarded grants to support the hiring of 1,155 full time officers, deputies, and school resource officers. 50% of the grants went to large (39 agencies serving a population greater than 150,000) and 50% went to small agencies (139 agencies serving a population less than 150,000).

The LEMHWA and STOIC programs, which are combined into one grant under the COPS Office, are equally as important as they are used to create or expand mental health and wellness programs for law enforcement officers, including peer mentoring and support programs, training, family resources, and suicide prevention programs. Since 2020, an average of 182 officers died by suicide each year, making this grant program a vital resource to ensure our officers have access to much needed confidential and culturally competent mental health services.

NAPO pressed the staffers present to increase the funding to both the COPS Hiring Program and the LEMHWA and STOIC programs as they begin consideration of Fiscal 2027 appropriations to ensure that we can genuinely tackle the recruitment and retention crisis our state and local agencies are facing.

Other grant programs mentioned in the briefing included the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) Program, the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) Program, Law Enforcement De-Escalation Training Act Implementation, Missing and Exploited Children Programs, resources supporting counter-

Unmanned Aircraft Systems (C-UAS) and drones for public safety, the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP), the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), and the VALOR Officer Safety and Wellness Program.

NAPO on the Hill: HELPER Act & Child Care for Police Officers

HELPER Act

The **Homes for Every Local Protector, Educator, and Responder (HELPER) Act** is a legislative priority for NAPO as it establishes a first-time homebuyer program through the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to provide mortgage assistance to law enforcement officers, firefighters, and other first responders as well as teachers. Specifically, qualified individuals would be eligible for a mortgage on a primary family residence with no down payment and no monthly mortgage insurance premium. NAPO met with the staff of the bill's sponsors, Senators Ashley Moody (R-FL), Jon Ossoff (D-GA), and Raphael Warnock (D-GA) and Representative John Rutherford (R-FL) to discuss our efforts to move the bill across the finish line this year.

Both the Administration and Congress are focusing on affordability, including housing affordability, with Congress considering a large housing package, the ROAD to Housing Act. This broad, bipartisan package of 27 bills tackles the national affordability crisis through supply expansion, zoning reforms, financing modernization, rental assistance improvements, and data collection. We strongly feel that the HELPER Act can play a unique role in addressing both housing affordability and workforce shortages and should be considered as a companion to the ROAD to Housing Act.

Our biggest hurdle is the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, chaired by Senator Tim Scott (R-SC), which has been reluctant to move the HELPER Act. NAPO is focusing our efforts on educating Committee members on the bill, what it does and why it is so necessary, as well as continuing to build bipartisan support for the bill in the House and Senate.

Providing Child Care for Police Officers Act

NAPO met with the staff of Representative Scott Peters (D-CA) to discuss another legislative priority addressing affordability issues, the **Providing Child Care for Police Officers Act**, which Representative Peters sponsors along with Representative David Valadao (R-CA). This important bill would create a grant program to help law enforcement agencies establish childcare centers specifically tailored for law enforcement officers that accommodate for the nonstandard hours that many work, helping to lift barriers to entry and retention for parents seeking employment or already employed by law enforcement agencies.

The San Diego Police Officers Association, a NAPO member organization, created the first such childcare center in the nation and it has proved that by easing the complications of childcare services it allowed their officers to better perform in their work. Officers have one of the toughest jobs in the country and deserve to know that their children are being looked after while they are risking their lives to keep us safe.

Both the Providing Child Care for Police Officers Act and the HELPER Act would significantly help law enforcement agencies across the country that are still facing significant recruitment and retention challenges. Affordable and accessible housing and childcare are key to a strong workforce, a stronger economy, and safer communities.

National Blue Alert Advisory Committee Meets

The Blue Alert Advisory Group, of which NAPO is an original member, in conjunction with the Justice Department's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office, convened on January 29 to discuss the Network's continued work to establish Blue Alert systems in all 50 states. The COPS Acting Director Cory Randolph led the meeting.

Currently, eleven states and Washington, D.C. do not have Blue Alert networks. Getting Blue Alert plans up and running in all 50 states is a priority for NAPO as it ensures the National Blue Alert Network we fought so hard to get enacted as part of the Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act works efficiently and effectively to protect officers from harm. The Act was named after NAPO members NYPD Officers Ramos and Liu, who were assassinated while sitting in their police cruiser on December 20, 2014. The states that currently do not have active Blue Alert Networks are Alaska, Arkansas, Hawaii, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Legislation to create a Blue Alert plan is pending in Massachusetts, with NAPO member organization, the Massachusetts Coalition of Police, leading the push for the bill.

During the meeting, the Advisory Committee discussed the Blue Alerts issued since the Advisory Committee last met in September 2025 and the latest data on officers shot in the line of duty. Three Blue Alerts were issued over the past four months in Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas that all resulted in the successful capture of the assailants.

As of January 29, 21 officers have been shot in the line of duty of which one was killed. Five of the officers who were shot were ambushed. Officers continue to face an increasingly dangerous environment as they work to serve and protect our communities, making the National Blue Alert Network a vital officer safety tool.

NAPO, together with the COPS Office, stand ready to work with stakeholders in these remaining states to help enact such legislation. If you are interested in receiving information and resources on how to establish a Blue Alert plan or you wish to participate in the state-level working group, please contact the NAPO Office at (703) 549-0775 or info@napo.org.

Best practices and other Blue Alert resources collected from around nation, including examples of legislation, policies, forms, and a directory of state Blue Alert officials can be found on the National Blue Alert Network [website](#).

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