



NATIONAL FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE

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“Public Safety Officer Support Act” Introduced In Senate *Lawmakers Introduce Bill to Support Officers’ Families*

Washington, DC - Patrick Yoes, National President of the Fraternal Order of Police, applauded the introduction of S. 3635, the “Public Safety Officer Support Act,” which acknowledges the connection between suicide and service-connected mental health issues of law enforcement officers and amends the Public Safety Officers’ Benefits (PSOB) program by providing death and disability benefits to officers and their families who attempt to take or do take their own life. This legislation was introduced by Senators L. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), John Cornyn III (R-TX), Richard J. Durbin (D-IL), Thomas R. Tillis (R-NC), Timothy M. Kaine (D-VA), Susan M. Collins (R-ME), Cory A. Booker (D-NJ), and James M. Inhofe (R-OK).

“The FOP is immensely grateful for the leadership of Senators Duckworth and Cornyn as well as all of the original cosponsors on the introduction of the ‘Public Safety Officer Support Act,’” said Yoes. “As a profession, we are doing a very good job at protecting our officers’ physical safety by providing them with tools like anti-ballistic body armor. Until recently, however, we have done a very poor job recognizing or addressing the tremendous mental stress our officers endure as a consequence of their service and the negative impact the job has on their physical, emotional, and mental health. It is time to recognize that long-term exposure to mental stress and traumatic events over the course of service can inflict ‘invisible injuries’ on the men and women in law enforcement.”

The PSOB death and disability benefit provides financial support to the families of law enforcement and other public safety officers who die in the line of duty or who have been permanently disabled as a result of a physical injury, including physical ailments that result from the stress of the job such as heart attacks. While the U.S. military already recognizes suicides by servicemembers as deaths in the line of duty, the PSOB does not. This legislation would allow officers to make a disability claim by recognizing work-related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and acute stress disorder as a line of duty injury for eligible officers as well as those who are permanently disabled as a result of attempted suicide. It would also make families of officers who die by trauma-linked suicide eligible to apply for death benefits. A similar bill has already been introduced in the House as H.R. 3071, but is not as comprehensive as S. 3635.

“Law enforcement and other public safety officers face a 25.6 times higher risk of developing PTSD or acute stress disorder than those in other professions,” said Yoes. “The fact is that severe PTSD is just as disabling as a physical injury and an officer who suffers from this or a similar disorder that may result in suicide is just as service-connected as any other line-of-duty death. The ‘Public Safety Officer Support Act’ shows compassion and support for our officers and their families and provides another step towards building support for officers facing mental wellness crises. We look forward to working with our friends in the Senate to get this bill to the floor.”

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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.