



# NATIONAL FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE®

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**CHUCK CANTERBURY**  
NATIONAL PRESIDENT

**JAMES O. PASCO, JR.**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

3 November 2017

The Honorable Robert W. Goodlatte  
Chairman  
Committee on the Judiciary  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Judiciary  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley  
Chairman  
Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairmen, Representative Conyers and Senator Feinstein,

I am writing on behalf of the members of the Fraternal Order of Police to advise you that, while we do not support any currently pending legislation addressing sentencing reform, we remain committed to working with Congress to improve our criminal justice system.

No law enforcement officer wants to see anyone unjustly incarcerated, or incarcerated for a period far in excess of what suits the crime. To the extent that such cases exist, we are ready and willing to play an active role in developing a remedy for past, present and future wrongs. That being said, we do not support the wholesale release of prisoners just on the premise that their sentences are too long or that their crimes were nonviolent. Recent changes to Federal law and sentencing guidelines were retroactively applied—meaning thousands of offenders benefitted from early release. The previous Administration's aggressive clemency program released thousands more well before they reached the end of their just sentences. We do not yet know what impact these offenders may have on public safety, but we do know that recidivism rates have remained fairly constant over the years. For these reasons, we do not see that there should be any rush to move a criminal justice or sentencing reform without knowing all the facts.

For this reason, the FOP supports legislation like H.R. 1886/S. 573, the "National Criminal Justice Commission Act," which would establish commission to study our nation's criminal justice systems in the mold of the Johnson Commission of 1965. The Johnson Commission's report and recommendation significantly professionalized law enforcement in the United States and greatly improved our criminal justice system. It is time for us to do this again. While we appreciate that there are drafts which incorporate this into a larger package, we feel strongly that the commission must be created and allowed to do its work before we proceed to reform. It makes no sense to administer a cure without a proper diagnosis.

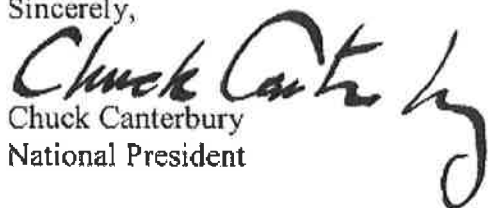
The FOP also believes that the motivation for reform should be to make our system better and more just—not to cut costs. We are very concerned that some of the reforms proposed are driven, not by public safety, but by fiscal burdens. We fight seemingly interminable wars, spending billions, to keep America safe. We spend billions and trillions on Medicare and Social Security to keep our elderly and infirm healthy and marginally solvent. Some things are just worth the money – and public safety is first among equally important priorities.

Finally, these reform efforts seem to ignore the fact that a huge number of those currently incarcerated are mentally ill. They are in penal institutions because governments at every level have failed them – we have a crippled, if not ruined, mental health system in this country. Those who need doctors end up getting jailers, and that is unconscionable. What is far worse is the prospect of turning them loose, with no prospect of treatment, to commit whatever offenses their imbalanced minds conjure up. This legislation causes us to ponder a true Hobson's choice: should the mentally ill be wards of the court or wards of the street?

We would remind you that it was Congress who passed the laws many now lament. The FOP is ready to work with all of you or any other Member of Congress on efforts to improve our nation's criminal justice systems, provided they serve the interest of public safety. We cannot, however, accept so called "reforms" that serve only to save money or trigger mass early releases for current offenders.

On behalf of our more than 330,000 members, I thank you all for your consideration of our views on this matter. We look forward to working with you in the months ahead on this and other public safety issues facing our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chuck Canterbury". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "C" at the beginning and a long, sweeping tail that loops back under the name.

Chuck Canterbury  
National President