



# NATIONAL FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE®

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## **SENATE COMMITTEE PASSES BILLS ON BULLETPROOF VESTS, PSOB AND OFFICER SUPPORT**

### *BVP Program Named for Long-time FOP Champion Patrick Leahy*

Chuck Canterbury, National President of the Fraternal Order of Police, applauded news that the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, ably led by its Chairman Lindsey O. Graham (R-SC) and Ranking Member Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), has taken up three bills strongly supported by the FOP and favorably reported them to the Senate floor.

“The FOP is extremely proud and thankful to one of our longest-serving champions, Senator Leahy for introducing legislation to permanently authorize the Bulletproof Vest Partnership program and we could not be more pleased that the Judiciary Committee has named the bill after Senator Leahy in recognition of his role in the creation and promotion of this critical program,” said Canterbury. “In fact, it was Senator Leahy who worked with the FOP to create this program in 1998—more than two decades ago.”

Since 1999, more than 13,000 jurisdictions received a total of \$467 million in Federal funds for the purchase of nearly 1.35 million vests. The program is set to expire in FY2020, but the legislation passed by the Judiciary Committee today will permanently authorize the Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP) program.

“We recognize that there is no legislation, no government program, no grant or public-private partnership that can erase the sad fact that law enforcement officers will be shot and killed in the line of duty,” Canterbury explained. “The BVP grant program can document more than 3,100 officers whose lives were saved because they were wearing soft body armor. No other government program can document their success so starkly and we are very grateful to Senator Leahy and Chairman Graham for the support today.”

The Senate Committee on the Judiciary also favorably reported S. 1208, the “Protecting America’s First Responders Act,” introduced by Senators Charles E. Grassley (R-IA) and Kirsten E. Gillibrand (D-NY). This legislation makes critical improvements to the Public Safety Officers Benefit (PSOB) program, especially with respect to disability claims filed by officers who are severely injured in the line of duty.

—BUILDING ON A PROUD TRADITION—



“The Public Safety Officer Benefits (PSOB) program is of critical importance to law enforcement and their families. However, the PSOB program is currently burdened with unreasonable definitions of the terms ‘catastrophic injury’ and ‘gainful work’; preventing officers who are disabled in the line of duty from receiving the benefits to which they are entitled,” Canterbury explained. “Senator Grassley’s bill would update the PSOB disability determinations and the definition of ‘gainful work,’ making it more consistent with existing Federal law and helping those officers whose service left them severely disabled.”

The Judiciary Committee also considered and favorably reported S. 998, the “Supporting and Treating Officers in Crisis (STOIC) Act,” introduced by Senator Joshua D. Hawley (R-MO) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI). The bill would revive and expand programs designed to help officers and their families with stress reduction, suicide prevention, and the promotion of overall mental health and wellness.

“It is a sad fact that we lose more officers to suicide every year than we lose in the line of duty,” said Canterbury. “I think we can do more to help the officers suffering from job-related stress and address the need for better mental resiliency and wellness for our officers and their families. We’re grateful to Senators Hawley and Whitehouse for their leadership and all of the cosponsors of the bill.”

All three bills were passed by voice vote and will now go to the Senate floor for further action. They are expected to be considered sometime next week.

The Fraternal Order of Police is the largest law enforcement labor organization in the United States, with more than 348,000 members.