



NATIONAL FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE®

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9 May 2008

The Honorable Harry M. Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senators Reid and McConnell,

I am writing to advise you of our strong support for H.R. 980, the “Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act,” which the Senate will consider next week. This legislation is the top legislative priority for the more than 325,000 members of the Fraternal Order of Police, and we strongly urge its swift passage. In that spirit and context, we urge you to reject the convoluted logic and dangerous demagoguery of the opponents of this critically important bill.

There is a great deal of misinformation circulating on Capitol Hill about the impact this legislation will have, and some of it is even coming from Administration officials—officials who know that their assertions are incorrect. We strongly disagree with these characterizations and reject any and all arguments which suggest that the adoption of this legislation would do anything other than improve the safety of public safety officers and the public itself. To oppose this legislation is to oppose the basic right of an employee to talk with his employer about workplace issues. This is not an industry where profit is the bottom line—the bottom line is saving lives. The joint goal of both public safety managers and public safety employees is to bring the officers home safely at the end of their shift and to ensure the most efficient possible delivery of emergency services.

At this time in our nation’s history, where we struggle against the forces of terrorism abroad, we must be prepared to prevent, defend against, and respond to attacks on our homeland. This Administration has a responsibility to display leadership in coordinating local, State, and Federal resources—especially public safety resources, but cannot be allowed to use a perverted interpretation of that responsibility as a weapon against the basic rights of public safety professionals. Public safety agencies are rightly encouraged, and sometimes required, to cooperate in every facet of their work, why then prohibit meaningful cooperation between managers and the employees? This is abhorrent to public policy and tragically unfair to the men and women who put their lives on the line to protect our citizens and communities.

The bill that the Senate will consider next week was passed by the House on an overwhelming 314 to 97 vote, after being favorably reported by the Committee on Education and Labor on a 42-1 vote. This legislation is bipartisan and won support from a majority of both party caucuses.

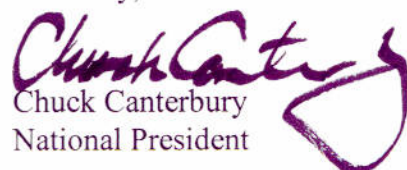
—BUILDING ON A PROUD TRADITION—

The reason the bill has earned such broad support is that it is carefully constructed to preserve and protect the authority of the State to maintain and administer its own collective bargaining law. Public safety occupations are unique, and their labor relations need to reflect that, and H.R. 980 merely establishes very basic collective bargaining principles which State laws must meet and leaves the implementation and enforcement of those principles entirely to the States. The legislation does not require binding arbitration, protects existing right-to-work laws, and specifically prohibits strikes and lockouts.

It is irresponsible for anyone familiar with the public safety mission to suggest that the provisions of this bill are in any way counterproductive to the law enforcement or public safety mission. Virtually every public safety agency that responded to the attacks on the United States in 2001 were covered by collective bargaining agreements and no one would suggest that those agreements at all impeded the ability of the managers and employees to work together during those dark and difficult days. The defense of our homeland and the protection of the public is a national concern and the Federal government has correctly led the way in fostering greater cooperation between levels of government and the public safety disciplines. This legislation will foster the same cooperation between employers and employees, and we are very confident that it will improve public safety and the security of our country.

The passage of H.R. 980 is the top legislative priority of the Fraternal Order of Police. We are committed to working with you to get this legislation passed and we will be calling on the President to honor his commitment to us, which he has personally given on three separate occasions, and ask him to reject the advice of his advisors and sign the legislation into law. I want to thank you both for your efforts on this issue and would urge you to support the passage of the legislation when the voting on this measure begins next week. If I can be of any additional help on this or any other issue, please do not hesitate to contact me or Executive Director Jim Pasco in my Washington office.

Sincerely,


Chuck Canterbury
National President