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PSOB Reform Bill Clears Senate Committee *FOP successful in amending the legislation before final vote*

Chuck Canterbury, National President of the Fraternal Order of Police, was very pleased that the Senate Committee on the Judiciary favorably reported S. 2944, the “Public Safety Officers’ Benefits (PSOB) Improvements Act.” The FOP was an early supporter of the bill and worked with Members of the Committee—Senator Patrick J. Leahy (D-VT), Ranking Member, and Senator John Cornyn III (R-TX) to craft amendments all of which were adopted during today’s vote.

“The Public Safety Officers’ Benefits program is very important to law enforcement and the wider public safety community,” Canterbury said. “It gives our members peace of mind because they know their families will be taken care of in the event they are killed or disabled in the line of duty.”

The legislation, authored by Judiciary Committee Chairman Senator Charles E. Grassley (R-IA), addresses existing problems at the Public Safety Officers’ Benefits (PSOB) Office with respect to transparency and accountability.

“The backlog of PSOB claims is unacceptable,” Canterbury said. “The FOP believes that this legislation will help address this issue, which has only grown worse in the last few years.”

The FOP worked with staff in the office of Senator Leahy to develop three amendments, all of which were adopted at today’s committee meeting. The first would ensure that children of claimants would not “age out” of their eligibility because the claims were not processed in a timely fashion. A second amendment would ensure that PSOB did not abandon claims which could not be determined because of a lack of information from a third party, like the employing agency. The last amendment would ensure that the changes made to the Federal statute would apply to all pending claims in addition to those filed in the future. All the amendments were adopted on a single vote.

“Senator Leahy is one of our foremost champions and a real partner to law enforcement,” Canterbury said. “He is very committed to the PSOB program because he knows how important it is to us and I could not be more grateful for all his hardwork.”

— BUILDING ON A PROUD TRADITION —

When the PSOB was established, the law provided that death and disability claims of a law enforcement or other public safety officer should be presumed to have occurred in the line of duty. However, the regulations were rewritten more than 10 years ago which added several additional levels of legal review and shifted a higher burden of proof to the families of the fallen. The FOP sought to restore the presumptive nature of the program and worked with the office of Senator Cornyn on a fourth amendment which was also agreed to by the committee.

“Senator Cornyn has shown time and time again that he is a strong friend and ally of law enforcement and of the FOP in particular,” Canterbury said. “We are fortunate to have such a strong advocate for our men and women in the field.”

The legislation was favorably reported and is now pending on the Senate floor. At this writing, there was no timeline for its consideration.

The Fraternal Order of Police is the largest law enforcement labor organization in the United States with more than 330,000 members.