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STATEMENT OF NATIONAL PRESIDENT PATRICK YOES ON ANNOUNCEMENT OF CHANGES TO PSOB IN COVID-19 CASES *With Great Appreciation to the President and his Team at the Justice Department*

Patrick Yoes, National President of the Fraternal Order of Police, applauded today's announcement that law enforcement and other public safety officers who file a death benefit claim through the Public Safety Officers' Benefit (PSOB) program for a COVID-19 related death will be found by the Bureau of Justice Assistance to have contracted the disease in the line of duty in most cases.

"This was a vitally important issue for the men and women on the front lines during this pandemic crisis," Yoes said. "I hope this assurance will bring some comfort and peace of mind to our officers that their families will be taken care of should they contract this horrible virus in the line of duty."

Current law recognizes "infectious diseases" as a potential line of duty injury, but to file a claim for such an injury requires substantial documentation to definitively link exposure and contraction of the disease to a line of duty action. The new guidance from the Justice Department provides:

In general, BJA will find that the evidence shows a public safety officer with COVID-19 contracted it in the line of duty, when (1) the officer had engaged in line of duty action or activity under circumstances that indicate that it was medically possible that the officer was exposed to the virus, SARS-CoV-2, while so engaged; and (2) the officer did contract the disease, COVID-19, within a time-frame where it was medically possible to contract the disease from that exposure. In addition, in the absence of evidence showing a different cause of death, BJA generally will find that the evidence shows a public safety officer who died while suffering from COVID-19 died as the direct and proximate result of COVID-19.

"Recently, frustrated by a lack of conclusive guidance, we took this matter directly to the White House and to Attorney General Barr," Yoes said. "We are extremely grateful, as always, to President Trump for his decisive leadership, especially in this time of crisis and for the exceptional team he has put together at the Justice Department."

The Fraternal Order of Police is the largest law enforcement labor organization in the United States, with more than 350,000 members.

