



NATIONAL FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE

PATRICK YOES NATIONAL PRESIDENT

JIM PASCO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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1 July 2022

The Honorable Jason T. Smith
U.S House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Smith,

I am writing on behalf of the members of the Fraternal Order of Police to ask that you cosponsor H.R. 7203, the “Wally Bunker Healthcare Enhancement for Local Public Safety Retirees Improvement Act,” introduced by Rep. Steven J. Chabot (R-OH) and Rep. Abigail A. Spanberger (D-VA). Last week, the Senate Committee on Finance amended the “Enhancing American Retirement Now (EARN) Act,” to include a similar provision.

In 2006, Congress enacted the HELPS Retirees Act, which provided a modest tax benefit to help retired public safety officers afford health insurance by allowing the use, on a pre-tax basis, of up to \$3,000 annually from their pension funds (including defined benefit plans and defined contribution plans) to pay for premiums on health care and long-term care insurance. The FOP was proud to have played a leading role in developing this legislation to help address the rising health care costs faced by many of our retired members. Because of the physical demands of their profession, law enforcement and other public safety officers often retire earlier than other occupations. In fact, many local, State and Federal agencies have mandatory retirement ages for their officers. In these instances, retired officers may lose their employer-provided health insurance upon or shortly after their retirement—a time when they are years away from being eligible for Medicare. This, coupled with the fact that law enforcement and other public safety officers face greater health care needs than other professions because of the hazards they faced in the line of duty, forces them to spend a considerable amount of their limited income on health insurance premiums. Many retired public safety officers were able to take advantage of this benefit.

However, too many public safety officers were ineligible or lost their eligibility for this benefit because of the law’s “direct pay” requirement. This means that the public pension system must pay the health or long-term care insurance company to exclude these payments from the employee’s gross income. This legislation is named after Wally Bunker, a retired law enforcement officer and active FOP member who was unable to take the deduction for years because of the direct payment requirement. This legislation would remove this requirement and allow all retired public employees to take advantage of this benefit, which they earned through their service to our communities, and increase the pre-tax amount from \$3,000 to \$6,000 per year.

On behalf of the more than 364,000 members of the Fraternal Order of Police, I thank you for consideration of our request that you cosponsor this important bill. If I can provide any additional information supporting H.R. 7203, please do not hesitate to contact me or Executive Director Jim Pasco in our Washington, D.C. office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Yoes", with a large, stylized initial "P" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Patrick Yoes
National President

CC: The Honorable Steven J. Chabot (R-OH)
 The Honorable Abigail A. Spanberger (D-VA)