



## AFSCME STANDS WITH PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS 116<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS 2019

Public safety officers are dedicated public employees who protect our communities from criminal elements and the tragic events that unfortunately take place in our society. AFSCME currently represents nearly 100,000 dedicated public safety personnel in over 40 states, comprising of police, corrections, fire and EMS workers. They are on our nation's streets and in correctional facilities where each day they confront a new challenge or danger. AFSCME continues to fight for better pay and benefits, for safer work conditions, and to uphold the standard of professionalism for the men and women in this critical field. Legislation to improve health and safety, to provide adequate resources, and stronger protections for public safety officers is at the forefront of AFSCME's legislative agenda.

- ***Ensure Protections For Public Safety Officers***

- **Collective Bargaining Rights for Public Safety Officers.** AFSCME strongly supports protecting and expanding the rights of public safety officers to include the freedom to form a union and the ability to negotiate with their employers. The Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act (H.R. 1154) will put state and local government public safety officers on equal footing with other public servants. It will provide public safety officers with the freedom to form a labor union and it will establish the ability to negotiate with their employer over wages and hours. This will promote greater cooperation between public safety agencies and their employees, which will result in more effective and more efficient delivery of emergency services that all Americans depend upon.
- **Protecting Due Process Rights of Public Safety Officers.** This legislation provides standards and procedures to guide both state and local law enforcement agencies and law enforcement officers during internal investigations, interrogation of law enforcement officers, and administrative disciplinary hearings to ensure due process. A bill was introduced in past sessions of Congress, "The State and Local Law Enforcement Discipline, Accountability, and Due Process Act," but has not yet been introduced in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress.
- **Wayne "Cotton" Morgan Bulletproof Vest Act.** This legislation amends current law by removing the federal requirement that state and local governments must contribute funding for bulletproof vests that protect all officers serving in high-risk areas and correctional officers transporting prisoners in order to receive federal funding. AFSCME corrections

officer Wayne “Cotton” Morgan was gunned down and killed in 2005, while escorting a shackled prisoner outside of a courthouse in Kingston, Tennessee. Tragically, due to lack of funding he was not provided a bulletproof vest, which may have saved his life. In memory of Cotton and all fallen officers, AFSCME is fighting to pass this legislation.

- ***Securing Retirement Equity for Public Safety Officers***
  - **Repealing the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO).** Over two million workers nationally, including many public safety officers and their families, are hurt by WEP and GPO. These two policies unfairly impact public employees who are excluded from Social Security coverage. These provisions were approved by Congress in 1983 to eliminate perceived “double dipping” by those earning both a public pension and Social Security. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Rep. Rodney Davis (R-IL) have introduced legislation (S. 521 and H.R. 141) in the Senate and the House to repeal both WEP and GPO provisions. AFSCME strongly supports repeal of those unfair laws.
  - **Opposing Mandatory Social Security Coverage.** When Social Security was first created, public employees were *excluded* by design. According to the Social Security Administration (SSA), almost 30 percent of public employees—7 million—people are not covered by Social Security. State and local governments designed pension plans and retirement systems to fit the unique needs of law enforcement officers, public safety officials and other public employees. These pension plans meet the needs of state and local governmental employees and deliver benefits that take the place of Social Security. For example, state and local plans take into consideration earlier retirement age of law enforcement officers and other public safety officers as compared to other, more typical government employees. If the federal government mandates Social Security coverage for all existing or even future employees, which AFSCME opposes, it will severely compromise the financial solvency of these state and local plans.
- ***Increased Funding for State and Local Law Enforcement***
  - **Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grants.** This matching grant program would help state and local governments buy armor vests for public safety officers. AFSCME urges Congress to support full funding for this critical program by allocating \$22.5 million in funding for fiscal year (FY) 2019.
  - **Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program.** This program awards grants to state and local governments for a broad range of crime prevention and control activities. In early 2019 Congress and the Trump administration approved \$423.5 million for Byrne JAG. AFSCME urges Congress to pass a full reauthorization of the program and not reduce funding for programs and grants that assist law enforcement officers in fighting crime and protect them in the line of duty.

- **COPS, COPS Hiring, COPS Improvements.** This program awards grants to state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies to hire and train law enforcement officers to participate in community policing, purchase and deploy new crime-fighting technologies, and develop and test new and innovative policing strategies. AFSCME supported efforts by Congress and the Trump administration to provide \$303.5 million in FY 2019 for the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Program, and urges Congress to fund the critical hiring program at even higher levels than seen in previous years.
  
- ***Fight Privatization of Public Safety Operations***
  - **Ban Federal Private Prisons.** Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva (D-AZ) have introduced the “Justice Is Not For Sale Act,” which requires federal, state and local government to directly operate and perform core services at adult prisons and detention centers. It also bars federal, state and local government from contracting with private entities to provide and/or operate prisons and detention facilities. The bill has not yet been reintroduced in this Congress.

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

AFSCME asks all members of Congress to co-sponsor and support these bills and to make it a priority to increase programmatic funding for public safety officers’ priorities. If you would like additional information, please contact Karl Stark in AFSCME’s Department of Federal Government Affairs at 202-429-1034 or [kstark@afscme.org](mailto:kstark@afscme.org)

Department of Federal Government Affairs  
April 2019