

AFSCME

Legislative Fact Sheet

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AFSCME SUPPORTS PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS LEGISLATION

BACKGROUND

Public safety officers are dedicated public employees who protect our communities from the criminal element of our society. AFSCME currently represents over 125,000 public safety personnel in over 40 states, comprising of police, correction, fire and EMS workers. They are on our nation's streets and in correctional facilities where each day presents a new challenge or danger. AFSCME has been fighting for better pay and benefits, for safer work environments, and to uphold the standard of professionalism for the men and women in this field. Legislation to improve health and safety, to offer adequate resources, and stronger protections for public safety officers has been introduced in Congress and AFSCME is at the forefront in advancing this legislative agenda.

SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION SUPPORTED BY AFSCME

- *Legislation Supporting Public Safety Jobs*
Two pieces of legislation—The American Jobs Act of 2011 (S. 1549, H.R. 12) and the Teachers and First Responders Back to Work Act of 2011 (S. 1723)—would provide \$5 billion to the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Stabilization Fund for grants to hire, rehire or retain career public safety officers. The American Jobs Act of 2011 was introduced by Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV) and Rep. John Larson (D-CT), and the Teachers and First Responders Back to Work Act of 2011 was introduced by Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ).
- *Private Prison Information Act of 2011 (H.R. 74)*
Requires prisons and other correctional facilities holding federal prisoners under a contract with the federal government to make the same information available on the level of staffing and pay, and on the availability of training opportunities to the public that the federal prisons and correctional facilities are required to do by law. The Private Prison Information Act was introduced by Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX).
- *Public Servant Retirement Protection Act of 2011 (S. 113)*
Amends Title II of the Social Security Act (SSA) to repeal the current windfall elimination provision (WEP) that reduces benefits if an officer retires from a non-Social Security paying job and moves to a new job that does pay Social Security. The Public Servant Retirement Protection Act of 2011 was introduced by Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchinson (R-TX).
- *COPS Improvements Act of 2011 (S. 207)*
Reauthorizes the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program for \$650 million annually (\$500 million in Police Hiring Grants to hire up to 50,000 officers for general community policing, \$150 million in Community Prosecutor Grants). Since 1994 COPS has funded more than 120,000 community police officers in over 12,900 law enforcement agencies. The COPS Improvements Act of 2011 was introduced by Sen. Herb Kohl (D-WI).

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

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- *Protect Those Who Serve Act (S. 993)*
Authorizes \$500 million for the Attorney General to make grants to states, territories, and any Indian tribe for the renovation, modernization, and construction of law enforcement facilities. The Protect Those Who Serve Act of 2011 was introduced by Sen. John Kerry (D-MA).
- *State and Local Law Enforcement Discipline, Accountability, and Due Process Act of 2011 (H.R. 1789)*
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. The State and Local Law Enforcement Discipline, Accountability, and Due Process Act of 2011 was introduced by Rep. Erik Paulsen (R-MN).
- *Wayne "Cotton" Morgan Bulletproof Vest Act*
Amends current law by removing the federal requirement that state and local governments contribute funding for bulletproof vests that protect all officers serving in high-risk areas and correctional officers transporting prisoners. 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, he was not provided a bulletproof vest-which may have saved his life-due to lack of funding. In memory of Cotton and all fallen officers, AFSCME is fighting to pass this legislation.

ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC SAFETY PROGRAMS

Many of the federal programs public safety officers depend on to assist them in keeping our communities safe and protecting themselves on the job are threatened by calls for enormous cuts in federal spending. Reductions in spending for these programs would result in drastically fewer public safety officers and weakened safety in our communities. Top priorities include:

- **COPS and COPS Hiring**
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 supports the Justice Department's request to increase funding for COPS Hiring by \$302 million for FY 2012, but urges Congress not to reduce funding for programs and grants that assist law enforcement officers in fighting crime and protect them in the line of duty.
- **Byrne Justice Assistance Grants (JAG):**
Awards grants to state and local governments for a broad range of crime prevention and control activities. AFSCME supports the Justice Department's request of \$519 million to maintain this program at its current level for FY 2012.
- **Byrne Competitive Grant Program:**
Awards grants to state, local, and tribal government agencies, for-profit and non-profit organizations, and faith-based and community organizations to improve the functioning of the criminal justice system and assist victims of crime. AFSCME urges Congress to maintain full funding for FY 2012 for this program that helps law enforcement agencies become more innovative and effective. The Byrne Competitive Grant Program is currently funded at the \$39 million level.

- **Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program**
This new grant program that aims to control and prevent violent crime by “providing funding to support partnerships between law enforcement agencies and community-based organizations.” This program was originally proposed in the President’s FY 2011 budget. AFSCME supports the Justice Department’s request for \$30 million for this new program.
- **Bullet-Proof Vests**
Matching grant program that helps state and local governments buy armor vests for public safety officers. AFSCME urges Congress to sustain funding for this critical program, which currently provides \$36 million for matching grants.
- **Prison Rape Prosecution and Prevention:**
Reviews statistics of prison rape occurrences and analyses their effects to provide facility-level estimates of sexual assault for a 21-month period. AFSCME urges Congress to maintain funding for this critical program, currently funded at \$15 million.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

AFSCME asks all members of Congress to co-sponsor and support these bills and programmatic funding for public safety officers’ priorities. If your staff would like additional information, please contact Karl Stark in AFSCME’s Department of Legislation at 202-429-1034 or kstark@afscme.org

Legislation Department
March 2012