

# Lowering Health Costs, Recruitment & Retention, NAPO on the Hill

October 20, 2023

[View PDF](#)

## Special Thanks to the Sponsors of NAPO's 2023 Legal Seminar



**CITIZEN**



**BLUE LADDER**  
MARKETING



## NAPO Supports Bill to Increase Transparency & Lower Costs in Healthcare

NAPO pledged its support for the Lower Costs, More Transparency Act, H.R. 5378, sponsored by House Energy and Commerce Committee Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) and Ranking Member Frank Pallone (D-NJ), House Ways and Means Committee Chair Jason Smith (R-MO), and House Education and the Workforce Committee Chair Virginia Foxx (R-NC). This bill would promote price transparency in the health care sector, including for prescription drugs.

Out-of-pocket health care costs are skyrocketing for Americans, and many are faced with unexpected and unaffordable medical payments for treatments and prescription drugs. The Lower Costs, More Transparency Act would help mitigate this issue by requiring hospitals, insurance companies, labs, imaging providers, and ambulatory surgical centers to publicly list the prices they charge patients, empowering patients to make educated choices on the treatment and services available. This bill also provides for transparency in prescription drug costs to ensure patients and employer-sponsored health plans know the true cost of drugs and can get the best deal available.

These are just a few examples of how this legislation would improve transparency and accountability in healthcare costs and support patients as they navigate their way through our nation's complicated healthcare system. Something must be done about the rising costs of healthcare and the struggle Americans go through when trying to get affordable care for themselves and their loved ones. Therefore, NAPO supports this important bill and calls on Congress to act now to promote more transparency and lower prices in our healthcare system.

The Lower Costs, More Transparency Act was placed on the suspension calendar in the House at the end of September in the hopes of a quick,

bipartisan vote, but it had to be pulled due to several high-ranking Democrats opposing the bill saying that it does not go far enough. NAPO is monitoring the situation and lending our support where needed to move this legislation forward.

## BJA & COPS Release Report on Recruitment & Retention

On April 18, NAPO participated in a Recruitment and Retention Convening held by the Department of Justice and led by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office. The purpose of the meeting was to focus on identifying short-term responses and long-term strategies in support of law enforcement agencies and their efforts to recruit and retain qualified professionals. Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta kicked off the meeting, which was attended by BJA Director Karlton Moore and COPS Director Hugh Clements. There were over 30 participants in the meeting, with the large majority of participants representing management.

The meeting was largely an open discussion on best practices on a variety of subjects and issues, including eligibility and hiring practices, benefits and incentives, work/life balance and officer wellness, pipeline programs, and the image of the law enforcement profession. No decisions were made at the meeting as to what are the best practices to move forward. The BJA and the COPS Office just released a report, *Recruitment and Retention for the Modern Law Enforcement Agency*, that reviews the issues and possible solutions and strategies that were discussed in the meeting. Despite no group agreement on specific recommendations during the meeting, the report also includes recommendations based on the discussion that law enforcement agencies and the DOJ can implement.

While NAPO agrees with many of the recommendations included in the publication, there is one specific recommendation we do not support,

and voiced our strong opposition to when it was discussed during the meeting. The proposal, under the “Benefits and Incentives” section, suggests that agencies consider shifting away from traditional defined benefit pension plans towards defined contribution or 401(k) plans that are more portable. While NAPO supports agencies providing 401(k) plans as a voluntary supplement to a pension plan, we strongly feel – and research backs our position<sup>[i]</sup> – that switching from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan will have serious negative impacts on retention. It is incumbent upon the agency to inform new recruits as to the benefits of a pension plan. Involving the union in educating new recruits and candidate officers on the benefits and incentives that come with becoming a law enforcement officer can go a long way in recruitment and retention efforts.

Additionally, we do not believe the importance of the role of the union in these efforts was sufficiently emphasized, even though several of the highlighted solutions are union-driven. Nevertheless, overall, the BJA and COPS Report provides examples and some innovative ideas that could be useful for agencies struggling with recruitment and retention. NAPO appreciated the opportunity to participate in the meeting and we will continue to work with the Department of Justice to ensure state and local law enforcement are given the tools and resources to serve their communities efficiently and effectively.

NAPO on the Hill: Rape Kit Backlogs;

PSOB Cancer Coverage; NDAA

Tracking State & Local Law Enforcement Rape Kit Backlogs

On September 28, the House Judiciary Committee unanimously approved the Rape Kit Backlog Progress Act, H.R. 5721, sponsored by Congresswoman Nancy Mace (R-SC). While NAPO supports the intent of

the bill – to track state and local law enforcement agencies’ progress on clearing their sexual assault kit backlogs – we have concerns that the bill pursues its goals through penalties to the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) Program – a critical resource for law enforcement.

NAPO has long supported additional resources for state and local law enforcement agencies to assist them in ending the DNA backlogs for unsolved crimes, including sexual assaults, analyze DNA samples, and increase the capacity to process DNA samples in order to prevent future backlogs. However, this legislation has the potential to jeopardize public safety through extreme Byrne JAG penalties. The Byrne JAG Program provides resources for multi-jurisdictional drug and gang task forces, forensic science, information sharing and technology, county jails, prosecutors, drug courts, and juvenile delinquency and drug treatment courts. Losing access to this vital grant funding will challenge law enforcement’s mission to keep the public safe as well as undermine the intent of the bill.

NAPO sent a letter to House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan (R-OH) and Ranking Member Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) expressing our concerns with the bill. We also discussed our concerns with Congresswoman Mace’s staff and Committee staff and indicated our interest in working with them to find a solution to move this bill forward.

### Honoring Our Fallen Heroes Act

NAPO continues to reach out to lawmakers to garner additional cosponsors for the Honoring Our Fallen Heroes Act, which would recognize exposure-related cancers as line of duty injuries and would cover them under the Public Safety Officers’ Benefits (PSOB) Program for death and disability benefits. We are looking for ways to move this bill at a time when the work of Congress, particularly the House Judiciary

Committee, is tied up in other matters. Broad Republican support for the Honoring Our Fallen Heroes Act will be essential for moving it forward in any way and we are doubling down on our efforts to sign them on to the bill.

Our nation's public safety officers put their lives at risk every day. Sometimes unnoticed are the officers pulling families from burning cars or saving children from house fires or those responding to chemical fires or train wrecks like the one in East Palestine, Ohio. These acts of heroism often have long-term consequences for the officers, including exposure-related cancers. The Honoring Our Fallen Heroes Act recognizes these as line-of-duty injuries under the PSOB Program and ensures that officers suffering from these cancers and their families get the benefits they have earned.

#### National Defense Authorization Act, Fiscal 2024

While the House of Representatives has been without a Speaker for over two weeks, NAPO has been focusing on the work that needs to be done once a new Speaker is elected, which includes the passage of the final National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal 2024. The House passed its NDAA on July 14 and the Senate passed its version on July 27. The House and Senate must now come together in a conference committee to work out the differences between the two versions and come up with a final NDAA that can pass both chambers, which has not yet happened due to the chaos in the House. NAPO has several important provisions that were included in the House and Senate versions of the NDAA: funding for the 9/11 World Trade Center Health Program, the FEND Off Fentanyl Act, and protecting state and local law enforcements' access to surplus military equipment through the Department of Defense's 1033 Program. We are diligently working, educating members of the House and Senate Armed Services

Committees on these priorities to ensure there is strong support for keeping them in the final compromise NDAA.

## NAPO Backs Bill to Improve Mail Screenings

### for Illicit Drugs in Federal Prisons

NAPO is supporting the Interdiction of Fentanyl in Postal Mail at Federal Prisons Act, H.R. 5266, sponsored by Congressman Don Bacon (R-NE). This bill would require the Director of the Bureau of Prisons (BOP)

to develop and implement a strategy to interdict fentanyl and other synthetic drugs in the mail at Federal correctional facilities through the use of digital mail scanning or other interdiction technology.

BOP is comprised of 122 institutions across country, employing nearly 38,000 employees and responsible for more than 150,000 Federal inmates. The smuggling of drugs and illicit contraband into federal prisons through inmate mail is on the rise, and endangering the health and safety of BOP staff, officers, and inmates. Exacerbating the situation, the BOP is understaffed and under resourced, and correctional officers are being reassigned from other critical functions to assist in processing inmate mail.

The Fentanyl in Postal Mail at Federal Prisons Act is an important step towards eliminating dangerous contraband arriving through the mail at federal prisons, relieving stress on an overworked workforce, and protecting the health and welfare of BOP personnel and inmates.

NAPO's 35th Annual Police, Fire, EMS and Municipal Employee Pension & Benefits Seminar

Join us January 28 – 30, 2024 at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas for NAPO's 35th Annual Police, Fire, EMS & Municipal Employee Pension & Benefits Seminar. Working in close collaboration with our distinguished advisory board, we have put together a program relevant that will focus on the challenges and causes for concern in today's pension and benefits environment.

Greatly increased costs of living appear permanent, and the threats of stagflation and a general recession are rearing their heads. Politically, both parties are already focused on and positioning themselves regarding the upcoming general election. Expanded use of artificial intelligence, the retreat from socially conscious investing, the mounting national debt and its impact on the U.S. credit rating, expanded liability for fiduciaries, and expansion of IRS taxation and reporting powers are just some of the issues being debated. Meanwhile, benefits themselves are being increasingly viewed as a key component of recruitment and retention. We will examine these areas and more as we evaluate the effect of these trends on public employment benefits and security, and the overall economic situation for the near- and mid-term.

Take an active role in improving the future of your fund by registering today. You will find information regarding registration, hotel reservations and the full agenda on NAPO's website: [www.NAPO.org/PB24](http://www.NAPO.org/PB24)

---

[i] <https://www.nirsonline.org/reports/alaskareport/> and <https://www.nirsonline.org/reports/retirement-reform-lessons-the-experience-of-palm-beach-public-safety-pensions/>