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Washington Watch: Legislative Update For the Week of 7 February 2011

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I. LEGISLATIVE NEWS AND ACTIVITY

Executive Director Jim Pasco attended a US Secret Service retirement party for Assistant Director Mike Stenger. Mr. Stenger, an active FOP member who also serves as the FOP representative on the review board of the Congressional Badge of Bravery, will be joining the Senate Sergeant at Arms as the Assistant Sergeant at Arms for Intelligence and State and Local Coordination. He will be responsible for receiving and disseminating information as well as coordinating with state and local law enforcement on the protection for Members of Congress.

Executive Director Pasco also spoke with several media outlets, including *The Wall Street Journal* and National Public Radio, regarding the early release of prison inmates as a response to growing budget concerns.

Senior Legislative Liaison Tim Richardson met with Senator James H. Webb, Jr. and members of his staff to discuss strategy for moving forward with S. 306, the "National Criminal Justice Commission Act." The legislation, which the FOP supports, would create a national commission to study the criminal justice systems of the nation and the States.

Senior Legislative Liaison Richardson and Legislative Liaison Breanna Bock-Nielsen met with Senator Herbert H. Kohl's Judiciary Committee staff to discuss S. 207, the "COPS Improvement Act." The bill, which the FOP supports, would establish the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) as a distinct entity within the U.S. Department of Justice and reauthorize the law enforcement officer hiring program, as well as reauthorizes funds for technology grants and community prosecutors.

Senior Legislative Liaison Richardson and Legislative Liaison Jessica Caswell met with staff in the office of Representative Kevin P. Brady (R-TX), to discuss the introduction strategy for legislation entitled the "Public Servant Retirement Protection Act." The bill, which the FOP supports, would repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and replace it with a more equitable, individualized calculation of Social Security benefits.

Senior Legislative Liaison Richardson met with staff in the office of Representative Robert E. Latta (R-OH) to discuss H.R. 498, the "State and Local Law Enforcement Hatch Act Reform Act." The bill, which the FOP has not yet taken a position, would amend the Hatch Act to allow Sheriffs to participate in political events and allow law enforcement officers to be candidates for the office of Sheriff.

Senior Legislative Liaison Richardson met with staff in the office of Representative Michael G. Grimm (R-NY) to potential legislation.

Legislative Liaison Bock-Nielsen represented the FOP at a briefing held by the U.S. Department of Labor on the Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA) reform proposal.

Legislative Liaison Bock-Nielsen represented the FOP at a labor organization stakeholder meeting to discuss public pensions.

II. THIS WEEK IN CONGRESS

The House and Senate were in session.

Action in the House

The House Appropriations Committee released its proposed cuts to the President's Fiscal Year 2011 budget request. The proposal calls for \$74 billion in spending cuts.

Action in the Senate

The Senate continued its consideration of S. 223, which would reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration program.

III. UPDATE ON FOP TOP LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

For the complete list of cosponsors for all of our top legislative priorities, or to find out if your Representative and Senators are cosponsors of specific bills, check out <http://thomas.loc.gov> .

A. Social Security Issues

(1) Support the "Social Security Fairness Act"

This legislation, which would repeal both the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO), has not yet been reintroduced. Staff from the National Legislative Office are engaged with staff in both the House and the Senate to get these bills introduced quickly.

(2) Opposing any legislation that would require the participation of public employees in Social Security

The FOP will continue to lobby against this scheme and oppose any legislation which would mandate participation in Social Security.

B. Support the "Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act"

This legislation, which would guarantee the right of public safety employees to bargain collectively with their employers over hours, wages and conditions of employment, has not yet been introduced. The National Legislative Office staff has already contacted key Members of Congress regarding this legislation and we are working on an introduction strategy.

C. Support the "Law Enforcement Officer's Procedural Bill of Rights Act"

This legislation, which would provide a minimum level of procedural protections for law enforcement officers accused of administrative wrongdoing because of the gravity of potential harm to officers created by this lack of uniform safeguards, has not yet been introduced. National Legislative Office staff are engaged with staff in both the House and the Senate to get these bills introduced.

D. Support the "Law Enforcement Officers' Equity Act"

This legislation, which would provide would provide 6 (c) benefits to approximately 30,000 Federal law enforcement officers who currently do not have them, was introduced in the House on 19 January 2011. National Legislative Office staff are engaged with staff in the Senate to get a companion introduced.

IV. FOP NEWS : Letter to the Editor of the Baltimore Sun

Dear Editor:

There was a time when newspapers defended the First Amendment rights of their neighbors and readership as assiduously as they did their own. Apparently, this is no longer the case at the Baltimore Sun, which describes the exercise of those rights by law enforcement officers and firefighters as "misguided."

The editors of the Sun seem to be preoccupied with protecting Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake from embarrassment in urging Baltimore's public safety officers to stand aside, and keep quiet about the unilateral decision of the mayor and the council to toss aside agreements on pay and pension benefits. Do the editors of this paper use similar standards when deciding whether or not to report on stories which may embarrass other public officials? Or is it just the mayor and her guests that warrant special protections?

The meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors in Baltimore is an excellent opportunity for local law enforcement and firefighters to highlight an issue that many local governments are facing—how to balance a budget and to protect the public. Mayors at the conference should be aware that there is a right way and a wrong way to go about it. The “embarrassment” for Mayor Rawlings-Blake is not the planned protest, but the way she and the council have handled the issue.

Law enforcement officers and firefighters put themselves in harms' way every day to protect the people of Baltimore and it is unfair to them to have their hometown paper urge them to stay out of sight when the mayor's friends come to call.

V. FOP NEWS: Day on the Hill 2011: 14-16 February!!!

Your participation in this year's *Day on the Hill* event could not be more important. Following a historic mid-term election, the 112th Congress was sworn in this week, resulting in a change of control of the U.S. House of Representatives and a dynamic shift in the political climate on Capitol Hill. We need to make our voices heard at the start of the Congress, and work hard to ensure that our issues are considered in the next two years. *Please attend if you can--we need your participation!!!*

The ***FOP Day on The Hill 2011*** will begin on Monday, 14 February 2011. The National Legislative Office and the National Legislative Committee will host a short briefing on our legislative agenda at the District of Columbia Lodge #1 at 711 4th Street, NW. The briefing will take place on Monday afternoon at 3pm and last approximately one hour. Additional details will be forthcoming.

Tuesday and Wednesday, 15-16 February, will be devoted to your meetings with Members from your home States and districts. ***These appointments should be made in advance!!!*** Event participants should make every effort to have their Representative or Senator attend the meeting along with the appropriate staff person.

Accommodations for “Day on the Hill” Participants

The National Legislative Office has arranged for accommodations at the Hamilton Crowne Plaza (<http://www.hamiltonhoteldc.com/>) at 14th & K Streets, NW, Washington, DC 20005. The hotel is located just one block from the Metro, making it easy for you to move around Capitol Hill and the city.

The rate is \$181 per night, and you must identify yourself as part of the ***National Legislative Office*** to get this special rate. Make your reservations now by calling 202-682-0111, or through the website above.

The cut-off date for reservations is 1 February 2011, so don't delay--make that reservation today!!!

VI. FOP NEWS: National Legislative Office is now on Facebook!

Because our grassroots are so important to our efforts on Capitol Hill, we have created a National Legislative Office Facebook page to keep our members informed.

Take a moment now to join our Facebook page to stay current with the latest information from Washington, D.C. Please feel free to join in any of our discussions and don't forget to invite all your FOP brothers and sisters to join!

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