

Federal Police Officers

Law Enforcement Status

During the 107th Congress, the Law Enforcement Officers Equity Acts (H.R. 1841, S. 1935), were introduced by Representative Bob Filner (D-CA) and Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD). These bipartisan bills will grant Law Enforcement Officer status to most federal agency police officers.

This bill will bring parity to federal police officers and allow all to have the same retirement benefits. It expands the definition of “law enforcement officer” to Veterans’ Affairs and Department of Defense police, Immigration and Naturalization inspectors, Federal Protective Service officers, Internal Revenue Service officers, postal police, Secret Service special officers, Drug Enforcement Administration diversion investigators, and others. At present, these honorable protectors of the public are only considered law enforcement officers when they are killed in the line of duty and their names are inscribed on the wall of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial. They are not eligible for early retirement benefits as are their colleagues in similarly situated federal police positions.

Due to the inequities of pay and retirement benefits, the federal government experiences high turnover after we train these men and women because they are recruited by other law enforcement agencies that give them full respect, status and benefits. The Law Enforcement Officers Equity Act will bring equity to our federal police service and will help retain this well-trained and professional workforce.

AFGE’s Police Officer Steering Committee rallied Congressional support for H.R. 1841. These hardworking, committed activists lobbied the House of Representatives and assisted Rep. Filner in obtaining 212 cosponsors for H.R. 1841. When this bill is reintroduced into the 108th Congress, AFGE and our highly organized and effective Police Officer Steering Committee will continue to support the legislation and urge Representatives to cosponsor the new versions of H.R. 1841 and S. 1935.

Federal Protective Service

The Federal Protective Service Reform Act (H.R. 307 during the 107th Congress) is intended to rebuild the Federal Protective Service (FPS) into an elite federal law enforcement agency with a well trained, professionally led, and highly motivated cadre of officers. This bill correctly addresses the current problems within the FPS, namely the status of FPS within the General Services Administration (GSA), unclear lines of authority and jurisdiction, and non-competitive salary and benefits for our officers. Additionally, it addresses the

issue of federal childcare facility programs and operations. AFGE supports the childcare operational proposals of H.R. 307.

H.R. 307 will establish the FPS as a separate operating entity within the GSA and properly establish statutory guidelines for the agency. Under current law, the FPS operates under the Public Buildings Service (PBS) of the GSA, and although Title 40, Sec. 318 of the U.S. Code gives the GSA Administrator the authority to appoint “special police officers” and investigators, there is no statutory requirement to have a Federal Protective Service. The issue of elevation of FPS is a critical component of H.R. 307, and section six ensures that the mission of FPS is fulfilled by a professional management staff and that accountability is maintained. It will also ensure that human resources and funding provided to the agency will be utilized effectively and as intended by Congress.

Second, H.R. 307 will firmly establish the authority and jurisdiction of the Federal Protective Service officers. Since its enactment over fifty years, the pattern of crime and the threats to federal buildings and their occupants has grown exponentially, contrary to the crime reports of the Public Buildings Service. The reason this is not more well known is due to an unreliable data collection system and the numerous federal buildings where local authorities respond to calls for service because of the high number of contract security guards responsible for building security. Many of those local police reports are never reported to GSA, which creates a false impression, that crime rates are low. In addition, under current statute sidewalks, parking lots and streets surrounding the majority of our properties are outside of the jurisdiction of the FPS, and our police officers are virtually powerless to respond to situations outside of the physical building structure.

Currently, the majority of FPS law enforcement personnel are deployed across the nation in twenty-three core cities and satellite locations with responsibility for security at over 8,200 Federal buildings. Many of those cities have crime rates which impact federal buildings and their occupants. In the last two years FPS has begun expanding its presence in other locations across the nation with its newly established “series 080 Law Enforcement Security Officer” positions. While these positions have expanded our presence to previously underserved areas, they do not increase the overall manpower of the Federal Protective Service. The security of Federal Buildings is not a luxury or an option, but with the current authority in place, FPS capabilities are not sufficient in deterring crime and terrorists acts.

AFGE urges Representatives to cosponsor and support the version of H.R. 307 that is introduced into the 108th Congress.