

Bipartisan Duckworth-Cornyn Public Safety Officer Support Act Signed Into Law

August 17 2022 9:19 AM



WASHINGTON DC - Bipartisan legislation authored by U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and John Cornyn (R-TX) to honor the public service of police officers, firefighters and emergency responders by supporting the families of public safety officers who are lost to trauma-linked suicides was signed into law by President

Biden today. The Public Safety Officer Support Act [passed](#) the Senate earlier this month and the House companion [passed](#) the U.S. House of Representatives in May.

“With this important legislation now the law of the land, we’re finally taking meaningful action to honor and support surviving family members of police officers, firefighters and emergency responders that tragically died by suicide after experiencing work-related trauma or exposure to traumatic events while serving their communities,” said Duckworth. “I’m so proud to have worked with Senator Cornyn and advocates to get this done so these families can receive the support their loved ones earned through a life of service—just as surviving family members already are eligible for when a public safety officer dies from heart disease or COVID in the line of duty, or as the United States Military does in designating nearly every servicemember suicide a line of duty death.”

“This will ensure public safety officers experiencing PTSD and families coping with the tragic loss of a loved one to suicide can get the support they deserve,” said Cornyn. “I applaud my colleagues for passing this important legislation, and I’m grateful to see it signed into law.”

The Public Safety Officers’ Benefits (PSOB) program provides financial support to the families of firefighters, police officers, chaplains and emergency medical technicians who die in the line of duty or who have been permanently disabled as a result of a physical injury. Duckworth and Cornyn’s [Public Safety Officer Support Act](#), which they introduced in February, improves the PSOB program to reflect the reality that law enforcement officers, firefighters and emergency responders face a heightened risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorders that may lead to trauma-induced suicides, and that surviving family members of public safety officers that end their lives also face an elevated risk of self-harm as a result of a loved one’s loss being compounded by severe financial harm and significant emotional distress.

The Public Safety Officer Support Act will:

- Create an avenue for officers to seek disability benefits for PTSD by directing the PSOB to designate work-related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and acute stress disorder as a line of duty injury for eligible officers as well as those who are permanently disabled as a result of attempted suicide.
- Allow families of officers who die by trauma-linked suicide to apply for death benefits by directing the PSOB to presume that suicides are a result of job duties in certain traumatic circumstances where there is evidence that PTSD or acute stress disorder would be the cause of the injury.

The Public Safety Officer Support Act has been endorsed by a wide range of leading law enforcement and mental health agencies and organizations: U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ); National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG); National District Attorneys Association; Fraternal Order of Police (FOP); National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO); Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association (FLEOA); Sergeants Benevolent Association; National Sheriffs Association; Major County Sheriffs of America; National Border Patrol Council; United States Capitol Police Labor Committee; Blue H.E.L.P.; The Wounded Blue; National Narcotics Officers Associations' Coalition; National Prison Council; International Association of Police Chiefs (IACP); AFSCME; International Union of Police Associations; American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP); American Psychological Association (APA); National Association for Children's Behavioral Health; International Society for Psychiatric Nurses; Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute; Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance, SMART Recovery; Kennedy Forum; Inseparable; National Council for Mental Wellbeing; National Association for Rural Mental Health; American Mental Health Counselors Association; National Association of Social Workers; Postpartum Support International; National Association of State and Mental Health Program Directors; American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work; Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies.