

THE PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE ON 21ST CENTURY POLICING

Officer Safety and Wellness **Submitted Oral & Written Testimony Received by February 24,** **2015** **Presented Alphabetically by Last Name**

Primary Source Documents

This document contains all Primary Sources for oral and invited written testimony submitted to the Task Force for the listening session on Officer Safety and Wellness. Twenty-one documents are compiled alphabetically by last name when available or by the name of the organization when not provided. A complete list of submissions for A-Z is provided as an easy reference when looking for specific names or organizations.

Note:

*Oral presenters who submitted written testimony

**Invited written testimony

Oral Presenters Who Submitted Written Testimony:

1. Bernhard, Dianne: Executive Director-Concerns of Police Survivors
2. Bowman, Mark: Assistant Professor-Methodist University
3. Bryant, Bob: Chief-Penobscot Tribe
4. Canterbury, Chuck: National President-Grand Lodge, Fraternal Order of Police
5. Castor, Jane: Chief of Police-Tampa Police Department
6. Demings, Jerry: Sheriff-Orange County Fl
7. Eastman, Alexander: Lieutenant-Dallas Police Department
8. Floyd, Craig: Chairman/CEO-National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund
9. Freeman-Wilson, Karen: Mayor-Gary
10. Johnson, William: Executive Director-National Association of Police Organizations
11. Miller, Laurence: Clinical Psychologist-Boca Raton, Fl.
12. Orr, David: Sergeant-Norwalk, CT Police Dept.
13. Ramey, Sandra: Professor-The University of Iowa College of Nursing and College of Public Health
14. Thompson, Jonathan: Executive Director-National Sheriffs' Association
15. Violanti, John: Professor-SUNY Buffalo
16. Zakhary, Yousry: Director-Woodway Public Safety Department

Invited Written Testimony Submitted by February 24, 2015

1. Bueerman, Jim: President-Police Foundation

THE PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE ON 21ST CENTURY POLICING

2. Kunard, Laura: Senior Research Scientist-CNA Corporation
3. Major County Sheriffs' Association
4. National Association of Counties
5. National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE)

Testimony to the President's Task Force on Officer Safety and Wellness
Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.)
Voices from the Field
By Dianne Bernhard, Executive Director
January 23, 2015

Concerns of Police Survivors is a 30 year old organization with the mission of "Rebuilding shattered lives of survivors and co-workers affected by line of duty deaths, through partnerships with law enforcement and the community." C.O.P.S. represents over 32,000 law enforcement family members and affected co-workers who lost a law enforcement officer in the line of duty. C.O.P.S. assists these families from the time directly following the death, by providing peer support and assistance in navigating the various benefits that may be available to them. We also provide long term services to these families—for as long as we are needed. C.O.P.S. has 48 Chapters representing survivors from across the country and is funded in part by a BJA grant. We enjoy the wide support of federal and local law enforcement agencies and the private corporate community. Some of the services we provide include scholarships for the surviving children and spouses of these officers, and peer-support programs and retreats to address grief issues. These services are provided for spouses, parents, children, fiancé's or significant others, siblings, adult children, extended family and affected co-workers. C.O.P.S. will also pay for counseling as needed for the children of officers killed in the line of duty. We have heard from many attendees that the peer support they receive has saved their lives. Co-Workers who attend the program talk about how for the first time they were receiving help from others that understood the trauma they had endured and they were able to open up and get the help that they needed. Children of officers who are killed in the line of duty talk about being around kids just like themselves and that they could just be "normal" again, when at Kids Camp.

C.O.P.S. also provides training to law enforcement through our signature Traumas in Law Enforcement Training where we spend time talking about line of duty death, but then also spend two days training officers on maintaining their mental health addressing everyday traumas experienced by

officers. While most of society only hears of the depraved, violent criminal activity that occurs every day in our country, our officers witness the crime and the lasting effects first hand. This training provides officers useful strategies for countering their own trauma they experience by responding to these calls. We train on how being injured on the job can have an impact on an officer and their family. We also train on the subject not often discussed in law enforcement, police suicide. Specifically we address the need to proactively maintain mental health and wellness throughout an officer's career to avoid what we see way too often, an officer taking their own life. While there does not seem to be universally agreed upon statistics used to capture how often this is happening, from our experience in training law enforcement, we can certainly say the number is shockingly high and mirrors or exceeds the number who die in the line of duty.

The voices we hear from the field of law enforcement survivors constantly repeat that the effects of each officer lost are felt forever. From the young children who grow up without a dad or mom, to the spouses whose life plans have been permanently altered and who may now face the reality of single parenthood, the effects are very real. From the parents who never recover from losing their son or daughter, to the brothers and sisters who feel compelled to stand in to help the parents, spouse and children, the recovery is slow and sometimes never achieved. To the co-workers who have faced their worst fears, yet feel compelled to remain strong by taking care of others before themselves, the suffering is sometimes silent, but is very real. The list goes on and on....even one officer lost in the line of duty results in a rippling effect of grief through a community, an agency, and a family.

On behalf of law enforcement survivors, we have four recommendations for this Task Force. **First, we recommend a nationwide effort to take care of the mental health needs of current law enforcement officers.** We ask our officers to witness and intervene in the most unspeakable acts of violence and dysfunction in our society. There should be as much time spent on maintaining the emotional well-being of our officers as is spent on tactical training. What good can officers do if they

know how to handle one dangerous situation, but can't mentally withstand going out there the next day to do it again? These support programs should be viewed by law enforcement administrators as critical and as a priority. Through trainings, such as the C.O.P.S. Traumas in Law Enforcement trainings, other peer support trainings, and employee assistance programs administered by counselors trained in public safety culture, progress can be made.

Second, we recommend a vest be provided to every law enforcement officer and strong language in policies regarding mandatory bullet resistant vest wear. There should also be policies governing officer's driving and realistic driver training. Every officer should have access to a vest. Lack of funds should never be a reason an officer doesn't have basic protection. During my experience as a police officer with the Columbia, Missouri Police Department, my co-worker was shot in the chest from point blank range with a shotgun, and her vest most certainly saved her life. I am glad our agency could afford body armor. Again, lack of funding should never be a reason an officer doesn't have basic protection. Nationwide, we lose too many officers whose decisions behind the wheel of their patrol car were not focused enough on the officer's own safety. Officers often drive quickly toward a call with the noble goal of saving a life and, sadly, sometimes trade their own life before they ever arrive. Policies governing driving and training about the reasons behind these policies should be a strong focus of police administrators. We recognize that officers have to respond quickly to emergencies, but these officers should also be making these decisions through an educated personal lens, with their own safety a factor to also be considered.

Third, we recommend stiff penalties for those who assault or kill a law enforcement officer. In a time where there is much attention to be gotten by those who commit crimes shocking the conscious, there is an almost perfect environment for a cop killer to use the media to gain attention. Because our nation's criminals often see prison as a stop gap between times of criminal behavior and freedom, the only way to combat this behavior is there should be no consideration of parole, when an

officer is killed. There should be heightened penalties for assaults on police. While many in our society see being assaulted as part of the law enforcement “job,” as a country we have to combat this belief by sending a strong message to those who make this choice. Heightened penalties is one way to accomplish this. A consideration of the safety of our nation’s officers must also be included a part of a larger culture of community safety and national security. When we, as citizens, accept the harm being done to our officers as part of the “job,” we add validity to the offender’s actions.

Fourth, we recommend a nation-wide effort to reestablish law enforcement as the noble profession that we all know it is. Over the past 6 months, our survivors and country’s citizens have watched as law enforcement officers in general have been stereotyped and crucified in the media and many of our communities. Police memorials have been vandalized, even as recent as this past week in Colorado. All of law enforcement, even our nation’s best and bravest officers, have been called brutal, unprofessional and uncaring, while the vast majority of our nation’s officers would never consider being anything but professional, upholding the sanctity of their oath as one of their key values in their role as a public safety officer. Officers have been second-guessed and scrutinized by those who have months to consider all the possible actions an officer could have taken when the officer only had seconds to consider his actions. All of our nation’s officers have been put into one category and considered as a whole, when law enforcement officers are asked to always consider individual circumstances when making their decisions. Officers are never to stereotype others even as they are being stereotyped now by their vocal critics. The consequences of the constant negative attention being given to law enforcement are far reaching. Our nation’s future police officers are watching, and during a time when the recruitment of quality officers is already an increasing challenge, we can expect even more challenges. Without an effort to increase the public value of law enforcement and an effort to appeal to the civic duty of those considering a law enforcement career, we could see communities forced to

hire those looking for a job rather than those seeking a professional law enforcement career—the results of which could have a negative effect on our communities and our officers' safety.

The law enforcement survivors represented by C.O.P.S., expressed a very strong need to combat the negative attention being paid to law enforcement and to convey the sense of support really felt by the sometimes silent majority of our citizens. Law enforcement is indeed a noble profession and there is honor in the fact that these families' loved ones died in protection of us all. Therefore, on January 9th of this year, we led a grass roots effort in partnership with all of the major law enforcement organizations, to show our support to our nation's officers as part of our first annual Law Enforcement Appreciation Day (L.E.A.D.). Much support was garnered in many forms, from community rallies and statewide resolutions to school children making cards for their local law enforcement officers. L.E.A.D. was just one way our organization could support our fourth recommendation to you—which is a nationwide effort to reestablish law enforcement as the noble profession that it is. When the law enforcement profession is consistently given a position of honor and integrity by society, there will be less community acceptance of harm being done to our officers. These positive societal pressures will help keep our officers safe.

Thank you for asking for the input from Concerns of Police Survivors in this Task Force. In closing, we would like all to remember that each officer we talk about during this very important work is much more than a statistic, but is a part of a larger family and is important to us all.

**PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE ON 21ST CENTURY POLICING
LISTENING SESSION 02/23/15 – OFFICER SAFETY & WELLNESS**

SUBMISSION BY: DR. MARK D. BOWMAN

PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL BACKGROUND

Thank you for taking the time to consider my comments and recommendations on issues related to officer safety and wellness. I currently serve as an Assistant Professor of Justice Studies at Methodist University, Fayetteville, North Carolina. I retired from the Virginia Beach, Virginia Police Department as a Lieutenant, and while serving there completed my Ph.D. in Public Administration with a cognate in Industrial and Organizational Psychology at Old Dominion University. I am also retired as a Major from the U. S. Army, having completed 26 years of enlisted and commissioned active and reserve service; 18 of those years as a Special Forces Officer. I am an amateur triathlete and have finished two Ironman, four Half Ironman, and over 70 other international and sprint distance triathlons. I plan to complete my hundredth triathlon before I turn 66 in 2020. I have faced the challenges of safety and wellness while soldiering, policing, learning, and balancing professional and family responsibilities. For me maintaining fitness was not and still is not an easy task.

COMMENTS

Looking around on a visit to any mall in America will provide anecdotal evidence that our nation faces significant wellness challenges. There is also empirical evidence of widespread lack of fitness. The Centers' for Disease Control and Prevention Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey data from 2011 found that only 20.6% of Americans report that they engage in aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities at levels recommended in the *2008 Physical Activities Guidelines for Americans*.ⁱ Of those responding 59.6% reported meeting the aerobic guidelines and only 29.3% reported meeting the muscle-strengthening guidelines.

I have two frames of reference from which I view job related fitness; one as a Special Forces soldier and the other as a police officer. In spite of much rhetoric about the militarization of police forces in America I can assure you that acceptance of fitness standards is not a characteristic of the military that has been widely adopted by American police departments.

As a Special Forces soldier I was required to maintain very high levels of physical fitness. Never did I or any of my peers question the necessity of very high levels of physical fitness. Fitness is a widely accepted standard and practice in America's military. The U. S. Department of

Defense, TRICARE Management Activity surveyed active duty military personnel in 2011 and found that only 12.4% of active duty personnel were classified as obese. Physical activity was common place with 63.1% of active duty personnel reporting an average of 150 minutes of moderate physical activity and 25.9% reporting an average of 300 minutes of more of moderate physical activity each week. Army and Marine Corps personnel reported the highest percentages engaging in over 150 minutes of vigorous physical activity each week. Overall 96% of respondents reported passing their most recent physical fitness test.ⁱⁱ Health research in police cohorts reveals a very different picture.

There is a large body of research that has found an elevated incidence of a variety of diseases in police cohorts. Much of the recent research has focused on the ill effects of shift work. A study of two cohorts of the Buffalo, New York Police Department found that 55% of those officers working midnight shift had an elevated waist circumference. All police officers in those cohorts were found to be at higher risk for death from all causes, and specifically for cancers and diseases of the circulatory system. Mortality rates were higher for officers who started policing prior to age 25 and for those with longer periods of service.ⁱⁱⁱ While the study didn't specifically measure fitness, the finding of elevated waist circumference should lead a reasonable conclusion that fitness was also lacking in those cohorts.

In many ways the fitness related needs of the military and police departments are very different. I use the example of the military to illustrate an organizational response to the need for a fit workforce. It is possible to ensure that a large workforce is fit to perform individually and collectively. Police departments also have a need for a fit workforce that has been empirically validated.^{iv} Beyond what job analyses tell us, the findings in *Parker v. District of Columbia* (1988) lend significant weight to the assertion that police offices need to be fit.^v In that case the court held that the Police Department exhibited a pattern of indifference in allowing a physically unfit officer to engage in police activities. The officer in question was so unfit that he resorted to the use of a firearm to subdue a resisting suspect. The events that brought this Task Force to life should also illustrate the importance of physical performance.

In a recent survey of police chiefs in North Carolina, 91% of respondents believed that police officers should be required to meet physical fitness standards, but only 46% believed that all sworn personnel regardless of rank should be required to meet physical fitness standards.^{vi} Those police chiefs reported the top five reasons for not mandating fitness standards from most significant to least significant as:

- Administrators and senior staff could not meet the standards
- Overtime/pay costs related to fitness training
- Limited access to physical training expertise
- Employment law issues

- Injuries and worker's compensation issues

Police agencies routinely require police applicants to meet minimum fitness standards and usually to meet higher standards of fitness for graduation from basic law enforcement training. The ethical challenges of requiring police applicants and trainees to meet fitness standards while not requiring the same of currently serving officers should be readily apparent. Much of this Task Force's analysis has been focused on issues of procedural justice. If we want police officers in the field to treat people justly, then we must ensure that procedural justice exists within police organizations. We must demonstrate to police applicants and trainees that fitness is a police performance imperative, not an arbitrary and capricious initiation rite.

We all know that fitness is important for police officers to both perform and to mitigate the effects of stress. Knowing is not the challenge. The blunt truth of the matter is that we know that fitness is an imperative but choose to do little or nothing to meet that imperative. We ignore officers who are unfit and do them, their peers, and the people they serve a disservice. The challenge is in doing.

In my experience we are reluctant to do anything about fitness in police departments for one overarching reason: we are fearful of failure. Two characteristics of human physiology feed that fear. As we grow older from about the mid-30s we become less physically capable. Women of all ages generally possess less upper body strength than do men. That fear is also fueled by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The purpose of those laws is to ensure equal treatment and they have achieved that end. We have failed everyone equally.

The military is able to overcome fitness issues related to aging and gender by using fitness standards that are age and gender normed. Women are not required to perform at the same levels as men. Older service members are not required to perform as well as younger members. By using age and gender normed fitness standards the military is able to maintain a fit workforce. By recognizing the realities of human physiology the military is able to treat everyone fairly. Women in the military and soldiers in their 40s and 50s have clearly demonstrated through the last 13 years of war that the military's age and gender normed fitness standards have and will continue to serve America well.

Police agencies in America generally use job simulation tests that are not age or gender normed. This type of test generally consists of events such as a combination of running, climbing a fence, pulling a 150 pound dummy, etc.... that has a time standard that is the same regardless of the age or gender of the test taker. The Federal Bureau of Investigation used gender normed fitness standards for New Agent Trainees, but that was found to be a violation of Title VII in June 2014.^{vii} We must recognize the realities of human physiology if we are to develop and sustain a fit police workforce and treat police officers fairly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. The Department of Justice should fund a comprehensive job analysis to establish the essential cognitive and physical tasks of a police officer in America.** Very few police departments possess the expertise to conduct a valid job analysis. The cost of hiring a consultant to conduct a job analysis is beyond the means of most police departments. This would provide a much needed foundation for selection and training of police officers throughout America. A positive second order effect of this analysis would be a likely reduction in litigation for failure to adhere to the Equal Opportunity Commission's Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures.
- 2. The President of the United States should request that Congress amend Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act to allow public safety agencies in America to use age and gender normed fitness standards.** Legal constraints currently limit the ability of police departments to develop and sustain fit workforces. The only way to overcome that constraint is to change those laws.
- 3. The Department of Justice should fund a comprehensive study to validate age and gender normed fitness standards for police officers in America.** Much like conducting a job analysis, this task is beyond the capacity of all but a few police departments. The underling fitness constructs related to police performance must be identified.
- 4. The Department of Justice should fund a comprehensive effort to educate and train police leaders in how to develop and implement mandatory fitness standards for all sworn police personnel.** Fitness is an imperative in achieving just policing. This would move beyond knowing about fitness to meeting the imperative of police fitness.

ⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, May 3, 2013, "Adult Participation in Aerobic and Muscle-Strengthening Physical Activities, United States – 2011"

ⁱⁱ Department of Defense, TRICARE Management Activity, February 2013, "2011 Department of Defense Health Related Behaviors Survey of Active Duty Military Personnel"

ⁱⁱⁱ National Institute of Justice, March 2012, "Shifts, Extended Work Hours and Fatigue: An Assessment of Health and Personal Risk for Police Officers," by John M. Violanti, Ph.D.

^{iv} FitForce, Inc., 2010, "Physical Fitness Programming: What Every Smart Administrator Should Know"

^v *Parker v. District of Columbia*, 271 U. S. App. D.C. 15, 850 F.2nd 708 (U. S. App. D.C, 1988)

^{vi} Unpublished Master's Capstone Project, Methodist University, October 2012, "Why Are Physical Fitness Standards Not Mandated in North Carolina Law Enforcement?" by Jay Fortenbery

^{vii} *Bauer v. Holder*, No. 1: 2013cv00093 – Document 125 (E.D. Va. 2014)



United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

Nashville, TN Office:

711 Stewarts Ferry Pike, Suite 100
Nashville, TN 37214
Phone: (615) 872-7900
Fax: (615) 872-7417

Washington, DC Office:

400 North Capitol Street, Suite 585
Washington, D.C., 20001
Phone: (202) 624-3550
Fax: (202) 393-5218

**Testimony of Penobscot Tribe Police Chief Bob Bryant
The President's 21 Century Task Force on Policing
Officer Safety and Wellness Listening Session
February 23, 2015**

Members of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policy,

My name is Robert Bryant and I serve as Police Chief for the Penobscot Indian Nation in Maine and Chairman of the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) Law Enforcement Committee. I want to first thank you for this opportunity to address you and provide recommendations on issues surrounding officer safety and wellness as it relates to tribal law enforcement.

The Penobscot Indian Nation is a member of USET, a non-profit, inter-Tribal organization representing 26 federally recognized Indian Tribes from Texas across to Florida and up to Maine.¹ USET is dedicated to enhancing the development of Tribal nations, to improving the capabilities of Tribal governments, and assisting the USET Members and their governments in dealing effectively with public policy issues and in serving the broad needs of Indian people. On behalf of the Penobscot Indian Tribes and the Tribal Nations within the USET region, I offer you the following testimony to elevate the voice of police officers from across our Tribal communities.

I have spent my entire career as a law enforcement officer on Tribal lands and have had the opportunity to travel throughout the USET to learn and share with my fellow police officers. My personal experience as an officer and the vast information that I have gained throughout my travels has provided me with a strong understanding of the unique opportunities, challenges, and circumstances as an officer working in Indian Country. As officers, we all share the strong desire to serve alongside our community members to improve the overall well-being of our communities. Unfortunately, inadequate resources and issues related to trust between officers and tribal citizens limit our ability to perform our duties at the highest level.

The men and women serving as police officers across Indian Country are often asked to perform duties and responsibilities outside the norms of the profession due to inadequate resources. These duties often include tasks such as civil dispute mediation, social work, family counseling, substance abuse counseling, and grief counseling, as well as many others. As police officers, we perform these additional duties with limited training, resources, or compensation due to our dedication to the

¹ USET member Tribes include: Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, Aroostook Band of Micmac Indians of Maine, Catawba Indian Nation of South Carolina, Cayuga Nation of New York, Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana, Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians of North Carolina, Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians of Maine, Jena Band of Choctaw Indians of Louisiana, Mashantucket Pequot Indian Tribe of Connecticut, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe of Massachusetts, Miccosukee Tribe of Florida, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, Mohegan Tribe of Connecticut, Narragansett Indian Tribe of Rhode Island, Oneida Nation of New York, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township of Maine, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point of Maine, Penobscot Indian Nation of Maine, Poarch Band of Creek Indians of Alabama, Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe of New York, Seminole Tribe of Florida, Seneca Nation of New York, Shinnecock Indian Nation of New York, Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana, and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) of Massachusetts.

communities we serve. However, these obligations often come at the expense of the overall wellness, safety, and family needs of the officer.

Many of the same challenges identified in the 2001 Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) report still prevail across Indian Country. Tribal law enforcement agencies remain underfunded and understaffed, creating a paradigm of officer “burn out,” low morale, stress related illnesses, and lack of stress management resources. The result puts the safety and life of each police officer in jeopardy every time they put on their badge and walk out the door to serve their community.

When looking at Tribal law enforcement agencies across the nation, it is typical to have only one officer per shift with a ratio of not more than 2 officers per 1,000 residents. This low ratio is exacerbated when you factor in of the patrol of the large land bases of Indian reservations and complicated when you consider jurisdictional challenges. With violent crime across Indian Country double, and sometimes triple the national average, Tribal officer safety is of great concern due to the reality of these low staffing ratios.

To help address our issues of low staffing and inadequate resources, we continue to work to establish mutual aid compacts with local, county and state agencies to assist our officers. However, these efforts often fall short or do not have the intended result, which is to create true emergency response when officers are in need and there is concern for their safety. This was never more apparent than during an incident in January 2013, in which a Chitimacha Tribal officer was shot and killed by a suspect with a shot gun, after non-tribal officers, who had initially responded as back up, left the scene leaving the Tribal officer alone to defend himself.

Officers are expected to perform roles of several different professions when responding to and servicing citizens. We are expected to be the ones to respond to traumatic scenes of death and tragedies, but are also asked to remain calm to ensure that the “job gets done”. However, due to low staffing, we are asked to return to patrol without adequate personal support to work through the trauma. In comparison, many non-Tribal police departments now require mandatory time off for debriefing and/or counseling. Without access to mental health support, Tribal officers often suffer from undiagnosed post- traumatic stress, alcohol abuse, and failing physical and mental health. I have experienced this reality personally in my many years as a Tribal police officer. I recall vividly two specific incidents that involved individuals hanging themselves as the result of alcohol and drug addiction. With these scenes permanently etched into my memory, I have never received any type of debriefing or counseling. This is not because of a lack of willingness or desire by the Tribe to offer such support, but due to inadequate funding and resources.

Officer training remains insufficient throughout Indian Country. We are unable to send officers to off-site locations because of lack of replacement coverage for shifts and unable to afford the high cost of bringing the training to the reservations. Additionally, the training that is available lacks Tribal community values and ignores cultural considerations. This very same training is also prevalent in many of the state police academies that Tribal officers are required to attend so as to meet state certifications. The result in either case is training that does not properly prepare individuals for the unique challenges and circumstances of being a Tribal police officer. This inadequate training greatly impacts our quality of work and creates dissatisfaction and mistrust from the people we serve. When

this occurs, officers feel less appreciated, frustrated, and slowly become less engaged in the job they are asked to do.

In addition to the problems of inadequate funding and low staffing ratios, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is also stretched too thin with a limited number of drug agents that are available to function as a true drug enforcement program. With the current state of drug addiction and illegal drug trafficking in throughout Tribal communities, this is especially troubling. The Southeast Region of the BIA Drug Enforcement Program currently has seven drug agents that cover an area from Maine to Florida over to New Mexico with over one hundred Tribes. This reality has created a safe haven of sorts for drug dealers, leaving officers frustrated and being blamed by Tribal members for being ineffective in combating the drug epidemics that prevail in many of our communities.

As with any community, law enforcement agencies are asked to engage and partner with the communities and citizens that they serve. Such engagement and partnership promotes problem solving and solutions to the issues that hamper the progress and well being of our communities. This becomes difficult, if not impossible, with high officer turnover. Nowhere is the turnover rate higher than in Tribal law enforcement. This turnover is the direct result of the many issues I have outlined in my testimony today.

In the spirit of partnership toward the mutual goal of the mitigation and eventual elimination of these problems, I offer the following recommendations to the Task Force:

- Tribal law enforcement officer salaries must be competitive with neighboring municipal, county and state agencies.
- The authority and Tribal community knowledge of Tribal law enforcement officers must be respected by officers from local, county and state agencies. There are many instances in which Tribal officers are accused of impersonating law officers when they are off the reservation.
- Resources must be dedicated to Tribal law enforcement programs to adequately staff and resource strong Tribal law enforcement departments.
- A training program must be designed for the unique circumstances and realities of being a Tribal police officer in Indian Country.
- Police academies across the country need to incorporate a mandatory Tribal cultural sensitivity training component for all cadets.
- Law enforcement executives must receive training on the importance of mutual aid compacts with Tribal law enforcement. This should include grant incentives, with additional dollars awarded to those who do partner with Tribal law enforcement.
- Tribal law enforcement agencies must have financial resources to provide counseling and debriefings to officers who respond to serious and traumatic incidents.

- The Bureau of Indian Affairs needs additional appropriations to fulfill its fiduciary trust obligations by ensuring adequate funding of Tribal law enforcement program and to hire enough BIA drug agents to begin to truly address drug enforcement needs in Indian Country.

On behalf of the Penobscot Indian Nation and United South and Eastern Tribes (USET), I thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts, views, and recommendations with you today.

“Because there is strength in Unity”

02/21/15 @ 8:00 EST



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NATIONAL PRESIDENT

**NATIONAL
FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE®**

328 MASSACHUSETTS AVE., N.E.
WASHINGTON, DC 20002
PHONE 202-547-8189 • FAX 615-202-547-8190

JAMES O. PASCO, JR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TESTIMONY

of

Chuck Canterbury

National President,

Grand Lodge, Fraternal Order of Police

on

“Voices from the Field”

before the
President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing

23 February 2015

—BUILDING ON A PROUD TRADITION—

Good morning Chief Ramsey, Ms. Robinson and distinguished members of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing and thank you for allowing me to come before you a second time to share with you the "voices from the field" and the perspective of our membership.

Soon, the members of this Task Force will begin its final report and we expect it will contain recommendations for improving policing at all levels of government. I would like to take the opportunity today to offer the officer safety priorities of the FOP and would ask the Task Force incorporate them into their own report.

I spoke about the need to expand Federal hate crimes laws to include protection for law enforcement officers at the inaugural Listening Session, so I will not go into detail save to say that this is a very, very important issue for the officers in the field. Of the 47 firearms deaths in 2014, 19% were officers killed by ambush, by an individual or pair of individuals that were looking to kill a law enforcement officer. I have appended a brief description of each of those attacks in my submitted testimony. If their objective had been to kill a Muslim, a black man, or a transgender woman, they could

be charged under the hate crimes law. I see no reason why the same should not be true simply because they targeted police.

I hope that the Task Force will recommend that the Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP) grant program be reauthorized by Congress.

This program has a very simple goal – it proposes to increase the number of officers wearing soft body armor by providing matching Federal funding to purchase armor vests. There is no legislation, no government program, no grant that can erase the sad fact that law enforcement officers will die in the line of duty. And now, more than ever, we see our officers in the cross-hairs of these criminals. But this program can document more than 3,100 officers whose lives were saved because they were wearing soft body armor. How many other government programs can document their success so starkly?

The House has twice passed legislation by a nearly unanimous margin that would have created a “National Blue Alert” system for the local, regional and national dissemination of time-sensitive information to help identify a suspect in the event that a law enforcement officer is killed or seriously injured in the line of duty. Both times the bill was blocked by a single Senator, whose recent retirement I welcomed.

The legislation would leverage the current AMBER Alert system by using existing communications infrastructure to disseminate immediately sensitive information to enlist the public's help in identifying the whereabouts of a dangerous suspect. While more than 20 States already have some form of Blue Alert system, there are large gaps in the system and a national program is vital to fill those gaps.

Had the assassin who executed NYC Officers Ramos and Liu not taken his own life and took flight instead, a Blue Alert could have been issued to put the public on notice and enlisted their help in tracking down a cop-killer. The FOP has worked closely with Congress to change the bill so that a Blue Alert could also be issued in the event of a clear and imminent threat to a law enforcement officer or officers. I expect that legislation, now named in honor of those two officers, to be introduced in Congress this week and I hope that its enactment is one of the recommendations of this Task Force.

For the last 20 years, community-oriented policing has been at the very core of our nation's policing and crime-fighting strategy. But when crime rates are down, budgets shrink. There are less officers on the streets and those who are on patrol are answering calls for

service and are unable to engage in pro-active, community-oriented policing. Community-oriented policing is a labor intensive undertaking and cannot be done effectively with the reduced number of officers on the streets today. Since 2009, the Federal government's State and local law enforcement assistance programs like COPS and others administered by the Bureau of Justice Assistance have been drastically reduced.

This Administration and the law enforcement community has a lot of faith in the COPS Office and its mission. We also know that community policing works. I urge the Task Force to reaffirm our national commitment to the community policing strategy and call for the full funding of the COPS Office.

The brutal murder of NYC Police Officer Edward R. Byrne in 1988 was, like far too many attacks on law enforcement, an ambush that resulted in his death. But that killing, commissioned by an incarcerated drug dealer who wanted to burnish his reputation by killing a cop, led to the realization that our local and State officers and their agencies needed more resources if they were to protect the public and themselves. The Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistant Grant program, once established, quickly became the

cornerstone Federal crime prevention and crime-fighting program, enabling communities to target resources to their most pressing local needs. The inherent flexibility of the program allows States and local communities to address needs and fill gaps across the entire criminal justice system.

However, since FY10, the Byrne-JAG program has been reduced by over one-third, causing a serious contraction in the reach of Byrne-JAG funded programs across the States and territories. If additional reductions are made, successful programs will be pulled from the field and the partnership between Federal, State and local law enforcement will be further weakened. Hundreds of communities will lose a range of critical grant funding and their public safety will be compromised. I hope the Task Force will endorse the work this program has done to date and recommend it be fully funded.

Finally, I would like to endorse the testimony given by Chuck Wexler from PERF with respect to the importance of open communication and mutual respect between labor and management. Ongoing dialogue with the shared public safety goal is a must, even in the absence of collective bargaining. That said, dialogue between

the rank-and-file should compliment, not supplant, the collective bargaining process.

In closing, I would like to thank you for having me here today and I am pleased to answer any questions you might have.



CITY OF TAMPA

Bob Buckhorn, Mayor

Police Department

Jane Castor
Chief of Police

February 23, 2015

Thank you Commissioner Ramsey, Professor Robinson and the members of the Task Force on 21st Century Policing for allowing me to be a part of this process. My name is Jane Castor and I am chief of the Tampa Police Department. As my 31 year career is coming to a close, I must tell you that it is an honor to appear before you on such a relevant topic.

Historically, when we talk about reducing the number of officer deaths, we begin with a focus on training, officer safety methods and the equipment we provide our officers. All of these are necessary elements of safe policing, but I believe they just scrape the surface of the conversation that is needed to truly make our officers safer out on the streets.

From where I stand, there are three key points that, as law enforcement leaders, we should focus upon:

1. Real-time information for officers responding to in progress calls
2. Community relationships
3. Officer wellness

With the proliferation of cell phones, information moves at lightning speed.

Case and point: we recently had a high-profile theft at a busy mall. In the minutes following the event, more than 100 - 911 calls came in. This is the new normal for law enforcement. The affect is that officers are arriving on scene much quicker, while the offense is in progress. While this increases the chance of apprehension, it also places officers in increasingly dangerous situations.

To enhance officer safety in these situations, we must put information in our officer's hands at comparative speeds. We've been able to do this at the Tampa Police Department, in part, through a software solution that we helped develop. It provides officers with real time, actionable data on suspects, zone activities, hot spots, alerts and bulletins – without delay. We also monitor social media for information that may assist responding officers in staying safe as they come upon a scene.

I was once privileged to hear George Kelling, an author of *Broken Windows*, speak. One of his comments still resonates with me today. It was theoretically simple, but seemingly insurmountable from a practical standpoint. He stated that in every situation there are

people who have a piece of information: the victim, witnesses, suspects and even law enforcement. His projection was that the person who could bring all of those diverse pieces of information together would define success in law enforcement.

With that in mind, I would make two recommendations. There should be a dedication to the research and development of solutions to mine law enforcement databases for information that will not only reduce and solve crime, but keep our officers safe. Based on the rapidly changing technology, this cannot be a one-time endeavor, but rather a continual process.

In addition, we must continue to look for and publicize best practices in the use of social media. The more successful agencies have realized the significance of using social as a tool for preventing crime along with its phenomenal ability to allow us to connect with and inform our audience - the citizens we serve.

Community Relationships

In law enforcement, we are only as strong as our relationship with the community. If they trust us, they will call, text, tweet or message when something is amiss in their neighborhood. So, the question that begs to be answered is, how do we build that trust?

It begins with understanding ourselves and the citizens we serve. Dr. Lori Fridell, who is nationally recognized as an expert in biased based policing puts it very simply, “*all people have biases.*” As police officers, it’s critical that we recognize our own biases and make every attempt to set them aside when serving the public. The result will be twofold: officers will develop positive relationships with citizens and they will be safer in their day-to-day activities.

The course that she presents is entitled, *Fair and Impartial Policing*. Every law enforcement officer and key community leaders should be required to complete this training. It’s an important yet uncomfortable truth to admit your own biases. But officers need to understand that admitting it only makes them human, nothing more.

FBI Director James Comey said so poignantly in a recent speech that “racial bias isn’t epidemic in law enforcement any more than it is epidemic in academia or the arts.” He believes, and I agree wholeheartedly, that law enforcement overwhelmingly attracts people who are willing to risk their lives to help others and their mission is to help all people regardless of their race or station in life.

A few years ago, I received a call from the COPS office asking about our four-day manhunt for a suspect who killed two Tampa Police officers. They wanted to know how we managed to have a SWAT response to more than 400 tips without any public unrest. Unfortunately, I didn’t have a panacea for them then, nor do I now. I believe that the response from our community was based on years of building relationships of trust with our citizens. It’s certainly not a perfect process, and we always have room to grow but the bottom line is we are always working on it.

In 2013, we opened a new safe haven for kids known as the RICH House in a historically high crime neighborhood. I can tell you in the last 10 years, we attempted every known

tactic or strategy to combat the crime in that community. Last year, for the first time ever, crime dropped significantly. Without a doubt, that after school program made the difference. Officers connected with the kids and their guardians. The neighborhood could see the officers cared and that's what made the difference.

Like many other law enforcement agencies, we are constantly looking for ways to attract minorities and women into our organization. This year, we launched an initiative called Be The Difference. We went on a three-week tour of 32 African American churches. In the end, we recruited 629 people as either candidates for employment or to get involved with our department's community programs. It is imperative that our organizations reflect the community that we serve.

Another program that has helped our officers connect with citizens is *Front Porch Roll Calls*. We invite citizens to be part of the solution by holding roll calls in yards or at businesses near our hot spots or high crash intersections.

Studies shows that a person's opinion of law enforcement is not established by the action an officer takes, but how the officer treats them. Does the officer follow what we call the Golden Rule in Tampa, which goes like this "Everyone is treated with dignity and respect?" There is no exception to this rule, officers hear it from me the day they are sworn in and will continue to hear it throughout their careers. Every encounter an officer has is an opportunity to build a positive partnership in the community. It creates trust that must be the foundation of our relationship with our citizens. When I interact with our officers and supervisors, I always remind them to never lose sight of the power they have in their badges, the power to not only take away someone's freedom, but possibly their life. This power must be used wisely and only when necessary.

Officer Wellness

One of my favorite sayings is that the upside of policing is that you get to see things that no one else gets to see, the down side is that you have to see things that no one should have to see. Experiences that the human brain is not equipped to cope with because there is no point of reference. The beating death of a child, untold homicide scenes, the aftermath of deadly force, having to tell young parents that their child will not be coming home after pulling their broken body from the wreckage of an accident, or performing CPR on an officer who has been shot in the line of duty. The list is endless, but the response remains consistent – attempt to bury the memory and move on.

As a law enforcement executive, I have always felt that we fail our officers by not confronting, head on, the trauma they experience throughout their careers. This trauma has many affects, often times manifesting itself in unhealthy, if not deadly, responses. There is little other reasoning for the high incidences of substance abuse, divorce, and suicide that officers face.

It can lead to symptoms common with post-traumatic stress such as irritability or anger. If an officer is responding to calls for service in that mental state, the likelihood of a positive interaction is greatly diminished. These negative contacts undermine all the work agencies are doing to build relationships and trust.

To address these issues, we started the *First Responders Retreat*. The week long, in-house training involves educating officers on the physiological and emotional effects of trauma and EMDR sessions. The evidence-based method is most commonly used with combat veterans, but we have had great success with Tampa officers.

I believe it is the agency's duty to ensure officers have the tools to cope with the stress of their profession. If officers are of healthy mind and body, they will stay connected with why they chose this profession - to help and protect those who can't protect themselves. It will ensure officers are making good decisions while serving our citizens.

WRAP UP

The underlying mission of law enforcement has changed very little since Sir Robert Peel authored the *Principles of Law Enforcement* in 1829. Every officer can find their direction in those nine basic truisms. What has evolved throughout history are the tasks that law enforcement has become responsible for performing. As services continue to be cut, officers have become the de facto mental health practitioners, social workers, and the front line dealing with those suffering with substance abuse. As a result of officers taking on these new tasks, they also absorb a higher level of frustration and anger from citizens for our inability to solve these issues. We simply can't do it alone. They require societal solutions.

Law enforcement has not always had a noble history, there have been specific actions that we as a profession must acknowledge and own, vowing to never repeat. One of the ways this lesson is instilled and passed along is the training program that began with Commissioner Ramsey. The Holocaust training reminds officers of the role that some officers played in carrying out atrocities, while others risked their lives to stand strong against those who violated the basic tenants of human decency and equality. In Tampa, we use the course to remind officers that our role in society requires that we defend the constitution and protect and serve all members of our community equally, never being tempted or averted by the personal or political agendas of others.

As a whole, I believe police officers do an amazing job with the multitude of issues they are called upon to handle, most of which have no clear cut solution. This is because in most instances officers try to make decisions based on the best interest of the community that we serve. Of course, this is not to say that we are always correct. But we must be very careful to avoid holding all officers accountable for the inappropriate actions of a few. This trend, if left unchecked, will compromise the safety of our officers and of the very citizens we have sworn to protect.

Citizens should feel free to critique and criticize officers, and we must be open and accepting of that criticism. However, it should be based on fact. Thankfully, the average citizen has no idea what is involved in dealing with the criminal element. This means we are doing our job well as the thin blue line between law abiding citizens and criminals. At the same time, we are creating a disconnect. It's impossible for citizens to know what challenges an officers must face on a daily basis. While body worn cameras will provide an eye opening experience for the majority of our citizens, there is no tool that will be a cure all for police and community relations, but it is an important step toward more transparency.

Along the same lines, every agency should have a robust Citizen's Academy, where the community can learn firsthand how officers are trained, the need for specific equipment, and how it is used. We end our course with a ride-along, as there is nothing more enlightening than walking in an officer's shoes for an evening.

Lastly, I would like to publicly thank Director Comey for the thoughtful way in which he opened the door for discussion on police and race relations. As stated previously, law enforcement must be held accountable. But as we continue to discuss the role that law enforcement plays, there must be meaningful and frank discussions about crime in America and the responsibility that must be taken if we are to make any meaningful headway. We can all agree that past inequalities, societal oppression and economic disadvantages contribute to crime and disorder. Law enforcement did not create these situations, but we can be an important part of the solutions. We must all be willing to work together to make the necessary improvements, which will lead to safer communities and a safer working environment for officers. It is my hope that the door Director Comey cracked is not slammed shut, but opened wide so everyone can be seen and heard.

Jerry L. Demings
Orange County Sheriff (Florida)
President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing Testimony
February 23, 2015 – Washington, DC

Good morning Commissioner Ramsey, Professor Robinson and all members of the Task Force. It is indeed an honor and privilege for me to provide testimony to the sixth public listening session on the topic of Officer Safety and Wellness. Particularly my comments will include recommendations for the Task Force to consider in the area of Officer Safety.

As I provide testimony today, I believe it is necessary to first establish the perspective from which I speak. This is my 34th year as a law enforcement officer working in the local communities of Metropolitan Orlando. I have been a chief executive for 16 of those years and have experienced line of duty deaths of my officers or deputies nine times during that period. In fact, February 11 marked the one year anniversary of the death of one of my deputies, Deputy Jonathan Scott Pine, who was feloniously shot and killed by a burglary suspect. He left behind a wife and three children under the age of seven. In May of this year, Deputy Pine's name will be added to the list of more than 20,000 names on the National Law Enforcement Memorial here in the nation's Capitol.

The first step in improving officer safety and wellness is to understand the range and scope of hazards police face in the line of duty. According to the Officer Down Memorial Page, as of February 18, 2015, line of duty deaths are down 7% in 2015, with auto-related deaths the same as last year. So far in 2015, officer deaths by gunfire are down 80%. That is good news considering the trend from last year. According to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, preliminary data indicates that 126 law enforcement officers died in the line of

duty in 2014, a 24 percent increase from 2013 when 102 officers were killed. For the first time in many years, firearms-related fatalities accounted for 50 deaths, increasing by 56% from 2013 when 32 officers were killed.

On average, over the last decade, there have been approximately 59,000 assaults against law enforcement officers each year, resulting in approximately 15,000 injuries. I share these numbers because in order to have a comprehensive discussion about officer safety, we must first understand what we are dealing with. The conversation should not only be about those who have died, but must also focus on those who live and what can be done to prevent injury to officers. I believe it is wonderful that the Task Force is having listening sessions to hear about best practices from around the nation that could improve officer safety.

As a career lawman, I subscribe to an edict that “there is no substitute for training and experience” in striving for optimum officer safety. Fundamentally, I believe that many of the deaths and/or injuries to law enforcement officers can be prevented through training that is both realistic and repetitive. The use of simulation technology should be seriously considered in modern day police training. We should immerse our officers in training that realistically depicts what they are likely going to experience in real world situations. Training academies should focus on role-plays and scenario-based training utilizing technology that can give officers immediate feedback on both their success and failures in officer safety. My agency, the Orange County Sheriff’s Office, entered a partnership with our local law enforcement training academy (Valencia College) to acquire and house a simulator. Deputies and officers use training ammunition or simulated firearms in animated scenarios that require them to make split-second decisions. The goal is to teach them skills that would help keep them safe in high risk situations. Repetitive training is important for officers to remain proficient in the use of defensive tactics.

Therefore, it is recommended that agencies conduct high liability training several times each year for all officers. It is also recommended that agencies invite representatives from the media to participate in training scenarios using simulation. Perhaps this will give both the media and members of the public a better perspective on the complexity of “split-second” decision-making by law enforcement officers.

In that each year a significant number of law enforcement officers die in vehicle-related accidents, we must talk about what can be done to prevent or reduce traffic related deaths. One of the promising initiatives is the “Below 100” Campaign that began in 2010. The number of officers who died in the line of duty has not been below 100 since 1944. The campaign was developed by the International Law Enforcement Educators and Trainers Association with the goal of reducing line of duty deaths. It is being embraced by many law enforcement agencies throughout the nation and is based on five tenets: Wear your seatbelt, Wear your vest, Watch your speed, WIN – What’s important now, and Remember that complacency kills. This curriculum is being taught by law enforcement trainers and should be institutionalized in their various training segments and organizational culture. These five tenets are simple easy to remember tips for 21st century officers. Reminding officers to wear their seatbelts and vests may sound simple, but the research is clear that many officers are injured because they don’t do these five things. Many of the officer-involved traffic crashes are caused by officers who are driving too fast for conditions. This causes preventable injury to the officers and citizens; it results in tremendous liability to agencies and is avoidable. The Police Chief magazine reports that 37 percent of all law enforcement fatalities between 1997 and 2006 were caused by vehicle-related accidents. Sadly, I must say that of the nine officers who died in the line of duty under my watch as a chief executive, two of them died in preventable automobile crashes (Officers Robert

Montgomery and Tanja King). Their names are on the Memorial Walls in Florida and Washington, DC. Consequently, in 2014, we instituted a “Below 100” training program at the Orange County Sheriff’s Office. Our goal is to improve deputy driving behaviors, reduce deputy injury due to traffic crashes and to improve overall officer safety. In addition, we have invested in new vehicles with collision avoidance technology such as backing sensors and cameras, and lane directional indicators.

It is recommended that as agencies replace their fleet of vehicles, serious consideration should be given to the purchase of vehicles with collision avoidance technology.

Since the events of September 11, 2001, our nation has remained under the threat of domestic terrorism and it is law enforcement that has the dubious responsibility of combating terror. According to the FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, sovereign citizens pose a growing domestic threat to law enforcement. They are individuals who are extremists without established leadership with core beliefs that the U.S. government has no authority or jurisdiction over them. This movement is alive and flourishing throughout the nation. In fact, on February 8, 2015, several of my deputies encountered an armed individual who had made it known to others that he was anti-government and would shoot it out with the police if he encountered them. After being notified that the subject was in violation of a domestic violence injunction by attempting to make contact with a former girlfriend, Orange Deputies responded to the parking lot of a Publix and immediately encountered multiple rounds of gunfire. Fearing for their safety, the deputies returned fire and mortally wounded the individual.

According to the Orlando Sentinel, over the past decade, more than a dozen police officers and members of the anti-government movement have died nationwide in gun battles. Last year, the

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism at the University of Maryland found that a study of U.S. police officers determined sovereign citizens to be the greatest threat to police. It is recommended that more first responder training be provided on the topic of domestic terrorism and in particular, the sovereign citizen movement.

Lastly, the sum total of law enforcement experiences provides a great body of knowledge that can be shared for training purposes. The International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Sheriffs Association and the Police Executive Research Forum are representative organizations that provide excellent research and training opportunities for modern day policing.

In summary, this discussion was not intended to be all-inclusive about what should be done to improve officer safety across the nation; instead, this was designed to scratch the surface and focus the discussion of key recommendations on promising strategies to reduce line of duty deaths and injuries.

- Develop training that is realistic and repetitive to include simulation technology;
- Conduct high liability training several times each year for all officers;
- Invite media participation in simulation training to enhance transparency and build trust;
- Conduct “Below 100” training;
- Invest in new vehicle collision avoidance technology; and
- Increase first-responder training on domestic terror, specifically the sovereign citizen movement.

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Written Testimony of Lieutenant Alexander L. Eastman, MD, MPH, FACS

Dallas Police Department

The Trauma Center at Parkland

The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center

Before The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing

February 23, 2015

The Newseum

Washington, D.C.



Commissioner Ramsey, Chairwoman Robinson, members of the President's Task Force: Thank you for the invitation and opportunity to present my perspective on Law Enforcement Officer Safety in 2015. I hope that you'll find it to be a relatively unique perspective given my particular background.

Background

Currently, I serve as a Dallas Police Department lieutenant, assigned to our SWAT Unit as its lead medical officer and the Deputy Medical Director for the entire Dallas Police Department. In this role, I am not only an operational law enforcement officer but also responsible for the many aspects of the operation of a major, urban law enforcement agency that have a health or medical component. My office includes a wide variety of programs from all of our operational medicine providers to advising Chief David O. Brown on a number of issues from law enforcement officer (LEO) suicide prevention to guiding parts of our most recent Ebola response. In addition to our work with the Dallas Police Department, we provide both operational and consultative support to the Office of The Director of Police at The University of Texas System Police (UTSP). The UTSP provides law enforcement and campus safety support for the sixteen campuses that encompass The University of Texas System.

In addition, I am also a practicing trauma surgeon; board certified in general surgery with added qualifications in surgical critical care. I serve as the Chief of Trauma Surgery at The Trauma Center at Parkland and Assistant Professor of Surgery at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. In this role I perform direct patient care, teach, do research and lead the more than 1,000 Parkland employees who in some way touch the trauma patient service line.

For the last decade, my professional (and sometimes very personal) life has been focused on exploiting this unique interface of trauma surgery, public health and law enforcement to make not only the job of being a U.S. LEO more safe but also improving the overall safety of our communities as well.

Hemorrhage Control Training and Equipment for LEOs

Despite improvements in equipment, tactics and trauma care, law enforcement remains one of our country's most dangerous occupations. Over the last decade or so, there has been increasing efforts and interest in teaching law enforcement officers some of the techniques pioneered by the U.S. armed forces with regards to the care of the injured. These techniques, known collectively as the Tactical Combat Casualty Care program (TCCC), have helped lower the battlefield fatality rates to the lowest levels in the history of warfare[1]. Many of these improvements were, and remain, the results of a vigorous review of injuries sustained and care provided on the battlefield in recent conflicts. Recognizing that LEOs are in no way at war, some of the medical techniques pioneered on the battlefield translate very well into helping our nation's LEOs "Save Our Own" during those times when serious injury occurs. And from a community

policing perspective, there's no finer example of a police department engaged in the community when the LEO applies his own equipment to save the life of a civilian. In November 2013, the Dallas Police Department conducted department-wide deployment of a Downed Officer Kit (DOK) and its associated training. Since the deployment of the DOKs, which contain a Special Operations Forces Tourniquet—Wide tourniquet (SOFT-W), an Olaes modular bandage and a roll of QuikClot Combat Gauze, twelve lives have been saved with two of them being our own officers. These techniques are safe to use in nearly all policing settings. In fact, the University of Texas System Police has made DOK deployment and training mandatory for all officers.

For the most part, successful programs have focused on training and equipping the LEO with advanced hemorrhage control capabilities. While this may sound complicated and scientific, the investment lies at around \$50.00 per officer and maybe a half day or so of training. Imagine that for a relatively small cost, police departments could provide their LEOs with the ultimate insurance policy—one that would ensure that they would have the knowledge, skills and equipment to intervene upon what we believe to be the most common cause of preventable death. In addition, this is the best kind of training as it is not only applicable to the injured law enforcement officer but also to the officer responding to the active shooter or other intentional mass casualty event.

The Hartford Consensus

Immediately following the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting and ultimately driven by the response to the Boston Marathon Bombing, the American College of Surgeons (ACS) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) convened a consensus committee of experts designed to improve survivability from active shooter / intentional mass casualty events. In addition to the ACS and FBI, representatives from the Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCCA), the United States Department of Homeland Security, the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) and the 17th Surgeon General of the United States met and developed what would come to become known as The Hartford Consensus[2]. While a detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this testimony, The Hartford Consensus has encouraged law enforcement agencies to embrace hemorrhage control as a core law enforcement skill and to move this skill and associated integration with fire/rescue/emergency medical services agencies to the forefront of community-wide active shooter preparedness and training. Time is critical in these situations and in order to maximize lives saved, patients cannot wait until conditions for medical providers to respond are ideal.

As an original and continuing participant in the Hartford Consensus, the members of the MCCA have led the way in implementation of LE-based hemorrhage control programs. In a late 2014 survey of MCCA Chiefs of Police, 42 of 70 member agencies had implemented some sort of hemorrhage control training program. These 42 programs have trained and equipped nearly 200,000 LEOs that now provide this hemorrhage control coverage to more than 65 million Americans. The application of LE-based

hemorrhage control programs, originally an officer safety initiative to “Save Our Own” now makes communities all across our nation much more safe places to live. In the eyes of many, this is the ultimate community policing program.

The Need for Scientific Data

As a trauma surgeon at an academic, level I trauma center, part of the quest to further the scientific mission of improving the care of the injured involves the analysis of vast amounts of data with regards to injuries, care of the injured, the processes involved and in the many ways to improve all of the above. Presently, there is no system to track law enforcement officer injuries in The United States. While many point to the FBI’s Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA) database, the information contained there is relevant to many of the law enforcement specific aspects of these incidents but does not contain the granular, medical detail from which improvements in medical care for injured officers or improvements in officer safety can be gleaned. In order to make the job of policing more safe, a nationwide repository for LEO injuries sustained is desperately needed. A robust database of this nature, analyzed by medical providers and scientists involved in law enforcement, would allow for recommendations in tactics, training, equipment, medical care and even policies/procedures that are grounded in that interface between scientific evidence, best medical practice and sound policing.

Peer Review in Law Enforcement

When errors are made in medicine, patients often pay the ultimate price. In surgery, these can be unforgiving and can even result in death. Yet, each week, in Departments of Surgery around the world, these errors are discussed openly. They are brought to light and lessons learned delivered to every surgeon who will listen in order not to repeat those mistakes. This process is called “peer review” and it has been credited in large part with making the practice of medicine much safer. The peer review model has been applied to commercial aviation and several other high risk sectors with great success. Because the process is protected from legal discovery in the medical profession, it allows for a frank, honest, open and candid discussion to facilitate improvements in patient care. In the book American Policing in 2022: Essays on the Future of the Profession, the idea of peer review for law enforcement agencies was discussed in some detail[3]. Arising from this publication, a national “near-miss” database and reporting system is currently being deployed by The Police Foundation in Washington, DC. Improving officer safety and changing the practices that continue to place us at risk can only be fueled by a sound review process that is protected from legal discovery. We must take a hard look at and learn from those times when things do not go exactly as we plan.

Recommendations

In summary, I would offer The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing the following recommendations:

- 1) Ensure that hemorrhage control training and the provision of hemorrhage control equipment is required at every U.S. law enforcement agency.
- 2) Embrace recommendations of Hartford Consensus as national policy.
- 3) Develop and implement a national, comprehensive database for law enforcement officer injuries and treatment.
- 4) Facilitate legislative protections and national policy to develop a robust peer review/ error management program in U.S. law enforcement.

Conclusions

It is a pleasure and a calling to serve both as a law enforcement officer and a caregiver of law enforcement officers. I am humbled and honored to have been given this opportunity to represent both groups today. The interface between medicine, public health and law enforcement has great potential not just as the source for many novel officer safety programs but also to harness those programs and transform them into true community resources. My most sincere thanks to the Task Force, Commissioner Ramsey, Chairwoman Robinson and the President for the opportunity to speak to you this morning.

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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE
ON 21st CENTURY POLICING
The Officer Safety and Wellness Listening Session
Presented by
Craig W. Floyd, Chairman and CEO
National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund
February 23, 2015**

For the past 30 years, our nonprofit organization, the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, has been devoted to telling the story of policing in America and making it safer for those who serve. Our vision is to inspire every citizen to value law enforcement. One of the best ways we can show our officers how much they are valued is by doing everything possible to ensure their safety and well-being. Let me offer my deepest thanks to this Task Force for making officer safety and wellness such a high priority.

I would like to begin by offering some facts and figures that should help to frame the issue we are here to discuss. There are now 20,267 names on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial here in Washington, DC. Those names belong to federal, state, local, tribal and territorial law enforcement professionals who have died in the line of duty. The first known line of duty death occurred on October 22, 1791; a Columbia County (NY) Sheriff named Cornelius Hogeboom. Sheriff Hogeboom was shot and killed serving a writ of ejectment. Of the 20,267 officers on the Memorial: 11,255 (55 percent) were killed by gunfire; 5,785 (29 percent) died in traffic-related incidents; and 3,227 (16 percent) died due to other causes.

The 1920s were the deadliest decade in law enforcement history, with an average of 242 officer fatalities each year. The deadliest year was 1930, when 301 deaths occurred; and the single incident that resulted in the greatest loss of life was September 11, 2001, when 72 officers were killed as a result of the terrorist attacks. An ominous milestone occurred in 1944, the last year that fewer than 100 officers died in the line of duty.

Our records show that over the past 10 years, the United States has averaged 146 line-of-duty deaths annually, which equates to one officer fatality every 60 hours. The FBI has reported that more than 57,000 officers are assaulted each year by criminals (based on the 10 year average from 2004-2013). And, based on reporting by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than 100,000 law enforcement professionals are injured in the line of duty on an annual basis.

As troubling as these statistics are, the number of line-of-duty deaths among officers has actually dropped dramatically since the 1970s, a decade that saw an average of 231 officer deaths each year. This means that the average annual number of line-of-duty deaths this past decade (146) is 37 percent fewer than it was in the 1970s, and this drop occurred at a time when the number of officers serving this dangerous profession more than doubled.

Some of the factors that are thought to have played a role in this officer fatality reduction include: increased use of soft body armor; better training; less-lethal weaponry; tougher criminal justice; an overall drop in violent crime; improved emergency medical care; and a greater emphasis on officer safety.

We still have a lot of room for improvement when it comes to officer safety and wellness, however. Just consider the experience in Canada. Three years ago, I attended their nation's annual memorial service. They honored just one fallen officer who had died in the line of duty during the prior 12 months nationwide. The last two years, Canada has lost fewer than 10 officers annually. In a conversation I had with Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair, he cited the following as just some of the reasons for Canada's outstanding officer safety record:

- **A “Guaranteed Arrival” program that emphasizes the need for officers to reach their call for service safely above all else—he indicated this had reduced traffic crashes at his department by 70 percent.**

- **Mandatory seatbelt and vest wear policies for officers.**
- **Sensors in vehicles checking speed and seatbelt usage, along with in-car cameras—officers know they are being monitored for safety policy compliance.**
- **An aggressive education campaign that shows officers what happens in a crash with and without seatbelts.**
- **An Officer Safety Committee that meets once a month.**
- **An aggressive public education campaign that promotes Canada’s “Move Over/Slow Down” laws.**

The following are some troubling officer safety and wellness concerns that our organization has identified:

- In 2014, 24 percent of the officers killed in the line of duty were not wearing body armor (down from 31 percent in 2013).
- In 2014, 32 percent of officers killed in auto crashes were not wearing seatbelts (down from 54 percent in 2013).
- In 2014, 55 percent of the officers who died in auto crashes were killed in single-vehicle crashes (up from 52 percent in 2013).
- In 2014, 15 officers were shot and killed in ambush-style attacks, triple the number in 2013.
- There has been a 30 percent increase in the number of officers killed by drunk drivers since the 1980s.
- Job-related heart attacks claimed the lives of 125 officers over the past 10 years, including 14 in 2014.

- According to the FBI's "Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted Report" for 2013, 149 cop killers from 2004 thru 2013 were out on parole, probation or some other form of judicial supervision when they murdered a law officer.

I want to take a moment to express my personal appreciation to Attorney General Holder for making officer safety and wellness one of his Administration's top priorities. One of the initiatives he launched was the National Officer Safety and Wellness Group, of which I am proud to be an active member. Among some of the recommendations raised by members of the Group include:

- **Create an environment that rewards officers for safe behavior.**
- **Must have unified safety messages with buy-in from the unions.**
- **Establish a national clearinghouse for best practices.**
- **Emphasize a safety message daily (e.g., wear your vest, wear your seatbelt, drive slower and safer, and never take any assignment for granted).**
- **Establish a hands free policy for use of phones and other devices while vehicles are in motion (make Bluetooth devices available to employees).**
- **Use blank screen technology where the laptop shuts down when vehicle gets to a certain speed.**
- **Agency heads/supervisors should lead by example.**
- **Get buy-in from elected officials—show them cost-benefit data.**
- **Establish an officer safety committee comprised of union and management representatives.**
- **Hire a safety officer.**
- **Take a data-driven approach to safety—"If it matters, measure it."**

- **Bring families into the safety messaging.**
- **Change the culture. Do not accept/tolerate injuries and fatalities as “just part of the job.”**

The COPS Office at the Department of Justice has funded a study our organization is currently doing into calls for service that resulted in officer fatalities. We are looking at cases from the last five years. Among some of the initial troubling findings are: officers failing to wait for backup and entering dangerous situations alone; many officers crashing their vehicles while rushing to assist a fellow officer; and officers being killed with their own weapon.

Finally, I want to highlight some of the innovative officer safety and wellness initiatives our staff has uncovered at agencies around the country as part of a study we are doing with the Bureau of Justice Assistance. We call it, “Destination Zero.” At an awards dinner this coming May, we will be honoring the top safety and wellness programs that we have found. Among the 75 innovative ideas already being considered are:

- **A “Fit Deputy” fitness program in Orange County (FL) that covers not only physical fitness, but nutrition, financial health and stress reduction.**
- **An “Arrive Alive” program launched by the Prince George’s County (MD) Police Department, which has significantly increased officer seatbelt use.**
- **Deployable speed humps designed to slow vehicles entering crash scenes.**
- **Tactical Emergency Casualty Care (TECC) Kits or the similar Downed Officer Kits (DOKs), which provide officers with tourniquets and other life-saving equipment.**

The best news of all is that more attention is being placed on officer safety and wellness than ever before. A cultural change is occurring and I thank this Task Force for your leadership.



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

1620 EYE STREET, NORTHWEST
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006
TELEPHONE (202) 293-7330
FAX (202) 293-2352
TDD (202) 293-9445
URL: www.usmayors.org/uscm

Statement

By

Karen Freeman-Wilson
Mayor of Gary
Chair, Working Group of Mayors and Police Chiefs
The United States Conference of Mayors

Before the

Task Force on 21st Century Policing

February 23, 2015

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this afternoon. You are charged with developing recommendations that will be critical to the future of our cities and of our nation, and it is my honor to be with you today to provide some recommendations on behalf of the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

I serve as chair of the Conference's Working Group of Mayors and Police Chiefs which developed a set of recommendations for improving police-community relations that we presented to all of the mayors and to your Co-chairs – Chuck Ramsey and Laurie Robinson – and to your Executive Director – Ron Davis – one month ago during the Conference's Winter Meeting here in Washington. Commissioner Ramsey, doing double duty once again, was also a member of our working group.

I believe you have all seen our report, in which our recommendations are grouped into six broad areas:

1. Building police-community trust,
2. Improving police department practices,
3. Ensuring timely and accurate communications,
4. Conducting independent investigations,
5. Addressing racial and economic disparities, and
6. Providing national leadership.

I would like to officially submit a copy of our report for the record of this listening session.

In some instances, our recommendations go beyond the purview of mayors and police chiefs and call for actions by the broader community in cities and in the nation as a whole, and by the federal government. This reflects our belief that

improving police/community relations is not solely a law enforcement responsibility. The entire community – business, the not-for-profit community, civic and social organizations, the faith community, police, and government at all levels – must be involved to assure not just public safety, but justice and, equally important, a sense of justice in the community.

The topic for this panel, labor-management relations, addresses a critical component of what we must be doing to build trust between the police and the communities they serve. While the leadership and direction must come from the mayor and police chief, it is primarily the actions of police officers on the streets, interacting with community residents on a daily basis and responding when an incident occurs, which will determine how successful we are in building and maintaining that trust.

First of all, let me register our agreement with the important principles that Chuck Wexler has articulated:

1. Focusing on finding common ground
2. Engaging in open communication and seeking input from one another
3. Handling disagreements with respect and professionalism
4. Understanding and respecting one other's roles and responsibilities, and
5. Recognizing the link between promoting officer safety and wellness and building strong police-community relationships.

I believe our role as mayors is to provide our police departments with the resources they need to get the job done. Those resources can be money or equipment, or something less tangible, such as creating an atmosphere that makes it easier for our officers to get the job done. We need to look at policing from various perspectives as we work to create a climate that allows the police to do their jobs. This includes the perspectives of the officers and their unions, the police department as a whole, the city government, and the justice system as a whole.

In Gary I use my convening power as mayor to involve the whole community. I address the big picture and work with our chief to relate it to law enforcement. I work closely with the chief and his command staff to improve policing practices of concern. We try to provide a consistent message, which is that the overwhelming majority of police officers are doing a great job. We make it clear that we support our officers and what they do, so long as they follow our established protocols. But we also make it clear that, when something appears to have been done wrong, we will investigate it and act on the findings of that investigation.

With every tragedy comes an opportunity, and what has happened in Ferguson and Staten Island and Cleveland and Brooklyn has to be seen as an opportunity for us all, and especially for America's mayors. We believe mayors are uniquely equipped to lead community conversations about the relationship between police and the community, and we believe these conversations must involve the whole community.

As mayors we have to embrace this opportunity to create a dialogue that will serve our cities for generations to come, a dialogue about race relations and poverty, and about how we in government will engage the community every day of the year – including those days when the police must be involved.

We hope you will find these thoughts and our recommendations helpful as you draft your report to the President and the nation. The Conference of Mayors stands ready to contribute to your important task in any way we can, and I stand ready today to answer any questions you might have. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you.



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Testimony of William Johnson

**Executive Director, National Association of Police
Organizations**

**“Officer Safety & Wellness Listening Session”
President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing**

**Newseum
Washington, D.C.**

February 23, 2015

Professor Robinson, Commissioner Ramsey, and members of the Task Force, thank you for inviting me to speak today. My name is Bill Johnson, and I serve as the Executive Director of the National Association of Police Organizations, "NAPO". NAPO represents over 241,000 sworn law enforcement officers from across the country and I am here today to testify on behalf of NAPO's members.

I especially appreciate this opportunity to provide information to you on the topic of "Officer Safety and Wellness," as our members' safety and wellness will be significantly impacted by this panel's recommendations. Our members, rank-and-file police officers from across the United States, continue to perform their duties admirably in the most dangerous environments. They deserve every resource available to stay safe and in good health while working under extremely difficult circumstances.

Due to time limitations, I will focus my remarks on: workplace due process; labor/management partnerships; safety equipment; and officer stress. I hope we can continue this dialogue later, as these important topics deserve a prolonged and robust conversation.

To begin, NAPO continues to fight for a nationwide law enforcement officer bill of rights to ensure procedural due process for our law enforcement officers. Due to the enormous responsibilities they exercise, sworn law enforcement officers are held to an extremely high standard of personal and professional conduct. However, many officers are denied the same basic due process rights that other citizens enjoy.

Throughout the country, many states lack coherent guidelines and procedures for law enforcement departments to follow to protect law enforcement officers' due process rights when they are under investigation. In fact, in only about half of the states, do officers enjoy some legal protections against false accusations and abusive conduct. This leaves hundreds of thousands of officers with limited or no due process rights. Officers, like any other persons, can be expected to treat others the way they are treated themselves. If officers are consistently exposed to a corrosive climate of suspicion, distrust, second-guessing and heavy-handed or arbitrary discipline, then we cannot feign surprise when those same officers accrete a similar worldview of

the social environment outside the department. On the other hand, everyone benefits when a sense of fairness, mutual respect, and benefit of the doubt is recognized as not just being expected *from* officers, but as being owed *to* them as well.

A law enforcement officer bill of rights would require that law enforcement departments establish effective procedures for receipt, review, and investigation of complaints against law enforcement officers. If disciplinary action is foreseeable, officers would be notified of the investigation, the nature of the complaint, and the recommendations of the investigators. Furthermore, officers would be guaranteed the right to reasonable limits on time, duration and location of interrogations. The imposition of discipline would be reviewable by a neutral third party. The officer would also enjoy the same right to counsel that other citizens in our nation expect and enjoy.

These are basic rights of a citizen in a free society that fairness demands must be afforded to police officers as well. In addition, implementing a law enforcement officer bill of rights, with its attendant processes for the receiving and handling of complaints, would assure individuals that management takes community concerns seriously and conducts fair inquiries. This would bring transparency to the process, and assist in the development of trust between police officers, their employing agencies, and the communities they serve.

Recommendation: Establish a national law enforcement officer bill of rights to ensure procedural due process.

Additionally, it is critical for management to effectively communicate goals and initiatives, as well as understand the rank-and-file perspective. The mutual communication of these goals and perspectives can be most efficiently achieved through the medium of recognized unions and associations. It is difficult to build trust when unions and associations are demonized and belittled. If the union leadership were not accurately conveying the views of the officers on the street, they would be swiftly ousted by their own membership. It is therefore both wise and practical for agency management to recognize, and work with, the representatives of the rank-and-file officers, who are actually carrying out the policies of the agency.

Recommendation: Encourage agency leaders and the public to recognize and take advantage of the benefits of police unions and associations.

Moreover, it is important to the life of any police organization to develop and select leaders from the rank-and-file. Simply by virtue of the job they do, they understand better than anyone else many of the challenges that are faced by officers in the communities they serve. Selecting leaders from the rank-and-file will contribute to effective labor/management partnerships in the future. An effective partnership between labor and management can allow an environment of mutual respect and understanding to thrive, which will be translated to work in the field.

Recommendation: Select leaders from the agency's own rank-and-file, as these officers have the best understanding of the challenges faced in their communities, as well as the most promising methods of building mutual trust.

As our officers work to build relationships with their communities, they must be provided every protection necessary to ensure their safety. NAPO has worked tirelessly to reauthorize and fully fund the Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP) grant program. As members of this panel are aware, the BVP program helps state and local law enforcement agencies purchase bullet resistant body armor for officers working in the field. While many officers are protected by bullet-resistant body armor, an alarming number of officers, many in small departments across the United States, are not afforded this same protection due to local budget constraints. This program must be reauthorized and fully funded in order to ensure officers are equipped and protected as they perform duties in very dangerous environments, where individuals are increasingly willing to attack officers.

Recommendation: Ensure every officer is equipped with properly fitted and current body armor.

NAPO recognizes that the Department of Justice, in funding the purchase of body armor, requires receiving agencies to have on the books a "mandatory wear" policy. Similarly, most if not all agencies also have in place policies requiring the use of seat belts whilst operating vehicles. Obviously, NAPO supports the goal of greater use of body armor and seatbelts. However, it is important to note that even a "mandatory" policy does not and should not be

equated with a “zero tolerance” method of enforcing that policy. No one of us is smart enough to conceive of every possible circumstance in which an officer will find herself. There are some circumstances where it is reasonable for an on-duty officer to remove her seatbelt or body armor. Cases we have seen, and which quickly come to mind, include the situation where a wounded officer cannot survive the wait for an ambulance, and other officers place their wounded comrade in a police car and quickly drive him to the nearest emergency room, providing direct pressure on the gunshot wounds the whole way. The officers providing first aid could not physically do so if they were confined by the normal wearing of seat belts. The policy is technically violated, but it would clearly be unjust to enforce it in such a circumstance. Similarly, an officer removes his body armor vest and dives into a harbor to save a drowning woman. Keeping the vest on would impair his own ability to swim. Again, technically the policy is violated, but justice would require recognition that a higher goal is served thereby.

Finally, failure to wear a bullet resistant vest or seatbelt should not impact a surviving family member’s ability to receive Public Safety Officers’ Benefits Act (“PSOB”) death benefits. The purpose of the PSOB is to provide sustenance for the surviving family members of an officer killed in the line of duty, not to discipline an already deceased officer, nor to attempt to deter by fear other officers from violating a local policy. The better approach, NAPO believes, would be to amend the PSOB policy to provide that when an officer loses his or her life, and was in compliance with vest and seat belt usage policies, the death benefit would be enhanced for the survivors. This would help achieve the goal of utilization of safety equipment, while at the same time not penalizing innocent survivors for the failures of a now-dead family member.

Recommendation: Officers’ families should not be penalized by the inappropriate application of mandatory wear policies.

NAPO is also working to expand the PSOB program to include coverage if an officer’s death resulted from the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Officers are forced to deal with a career’s worth of human misery, weakness and sorrow. The abused child, the adolescent rape victim, the mother killed by a drunk driver, the baby hit by stray bullets, the grandmother beaten half to death for a few dollars. These aren’t stories in the news for the officers involved. They do not have the luxury of turning away, they have to respond to the situation and take

responsibility for it. This is what passes for “normal” in their work world. The work that officers do each day and the environments in which they are placed take a huge toll on the human mind, body, and soul. Many of our officers suffer from PTSD. While we continue to work diligently to ensure these officers receive the help, treatment, and support they need, if an officer’s death is the result of PTSD, that officer’s family should receive PSOB death benefits.

Recommendation: An officer’s family should receive PSOB death benefits if the officer’s death was a result of PTSD.

I appreciate the opportunity to share these insights with you, and urge you to carefully consider them moving forward, as our officers will be impacted by your recommendations more than any other group. I look forward to answering your questions.

STRESS IN POLICING: SYNDROMES AND STRATEGIES

**Laurence Miller, PhD
President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing
Washington, DC, February 23, 2015**

As a police supervisor, would you allow an officer to go on patrol with a deficiently maintained vehicle? Would you let him or her walk into a crime in progress with an unserviced duty weapon? How about a malfunctioning radio, or even an ill-fitting utility belt or uncomfortable pair of shoes? You know the answer. The tools of law enforcement get banged, bruised, and worn out, and they need to be periodically checked and fixed. Yet, ironically, far less attention is often paid to the care and maintenance of what is arguably every officer's most valuable resource: their brain.

Accordingly, in order to provide effective, science-based interventions for law enforcement stress syndromes, it is crucial that we understand the effects of different kinds of stressors, as well as the range of well-validated behavioral, administrative, and mental health strategies that can lessen their impact on the men and women in policing. I am honored to have the opportunity to begin this discussion here today.

Daily stresses involve the numerous interactions that police officers have with citizens in their patrol communities. Ninety percent of what an officer does every day involves dealing with people, ranging from casual conversations to dangerous confrontations. Training in behavioral self-control, communication skills, and verbal de-escalation strategies can help officers defuse many hostile scenarios that might otherwise erupt into a deadly force encounter. At the same time, such training gives the officer a sense of mastery in dealing with a wide variety of interpersonal scenarios, and this confidence in one's own skills and abilities is itself a powerful antidote to stress.

Chronic or **cumulative stress** builds up over time, and may include both work and personal issues. A supportive family system can buffer the impact of work stress, while satisfaction with one's career can offset the corrosive effects of a difficult home life. But when both systems start to fray, the individual's coping abilities are stretched to the limit. Police officers are notorious for bottling up feelings and they typically avoid seeking help, usually out of fear of appearing weak or incompetent.

Unfortunately, these suppressed emotions may eventually punch through the officer's defenses in the form of alcohol abuse, domestic violence, overly aggressive policing, deteriorating work quality, or officer suicide. Law enforcement leaders can create a subtle but powerful healing environment for their troops by destigmatizing, encouraging, and supporting access to mental health services for officers in distress; sometimes, by setting the example themselves.

Critical incident stress refers to acute life-and-death encounters, such as officer-involved shootings, in-custody deaths, injury or death of a fellow officer, or responses to particularly disturbing homicide, child abuse, or disaster scenarios. In such cases, aside from the standard internal investigation of such incidents, a separate and confidential referral should be made for a post-incident mental health check-up, and, if necessary, for follow-up services, such as critical incident stress debriefing or individual counseling.

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a specific clinical syndrome that occurs in response to a severe stressor or combination of stressors, and involves a characteristic set of symptoms including intrusive re-experiencing, numbing and avoidance, heightened arousal, and impairment in cognitive or emotional functioning. Fortunately, PTSD as a permanently disabling syndrome is actually uncommon and can

be made rarer still by appropriate early mental health intervention and peer support following a traumatic event.

However, if you ask most rank-and-file cops what their greatest source of stress is, they typically won't cite the gritty everyday hassles and dangers of law enforcement. These, they mostly accept as expected parts of their police role. What really bugs them are the **organizational stresses** that emanate from the top brass within their own law enforcement agencies, what they perceive as confusing or unsupportive messages from the very people they expect to be on their side. Thus, to encourage productive and ethical work performance from their troops, police leaders must learn and practice effective organizational management and communication skills. Constructive discipline is not inconsistent with respectful treatment of police personnel; in fact, it may depend on it. Setting the example for ethical and honorable behavior begins at the top.

In recognizing the potential benefits of mental health services for policing, it is also important not to oversell it and to respect its limitations. Not everyone needs counseling for every problem, and even the most comprehensive program of stress management won't eliminate police misconduct by immature, impulsive, or corruptible cops. But the vast majority of officers who feel they are treated fairly within their own agencies, whose efforts to seek help are encouraged and supported by their supervisors, and who view this support as an indicator of their agency's respect and concern for their welfare – these officers will usually reciprocate in their daily patrol efforts, will be less likely to express their frustrations on the street, will be more willing identify the miscreants who spoil it for everyone else, and will generally be motivated to uphold the **culture of honor** that most police agencies strive to maintain.

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LAURENCE MILLER, PhD

Laurence Miller, PhD is a clinical, forensic, and police psychologist based in Boca Raton, Florida. He is a consulting psychologist with the West Palm Beach Police Department, the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, the Florida Highway Patrol (Troop L), and several other local and regional law enforcement agencies. Dr. Miller conducts critical incident and fitness for duty evaluations, as well as providing clinical treatment services to officers and their families and consultation to law enforcement management. Dr. Miller is a forensic psychological examiner for the Palm Beach County Court and serves as an independent expert witness in civil and criminal cases. He is an adjunct professor at Florida Atlantic University and Palm Beach State College, and is the author of over 400 print and online publications, including the textbook, *Practical Police Psychology: Stress Management and Crisis Intervention for Law Enforcement*, and the *Practical Police Psychology* column on the PoliceOne.com website.

President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing

Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

U.S. Department of Justice

Testimony of David R. Orr

Submitted February 23, 2015

Good Morning Commissioner Ramsey, Professor Robinson, and distinguished members of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. I am honored and humbled by this opportunity to speak to you about the issue of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as it relates to those in my profession. I bring to you the perspective of a front line supervisor tasked with the duty of watching over those performing the job every day. The community that I serve, Norwalk Connecticut, is a 45 minute drive or a short train ride from New York City. Norwalk is a small and diverse working class city located on the coast of the Long Island Sound.

As a Union leader I represent and advocate for my membership in collective bargaining, labor rights, and discipline. However, I often find myself performing the duties of a peer counselor to my colleagues during stressful times in their professional or personal lives. This would include those stressful times following a critical incident at work where death has occurred. Occasionally, these incidents can be so severe that they burn a lasting impression into the mind of the most seasoned veteran cops. I'm talking about multiple casualty incidents, heinous murders, torturings, deaths of children, and any other real tragedy the details of which

you wouldn't want to talk about at the dinner table. As cops we all know that those outside of our profession love to hear a good war story. This is evidenced by the countless number of TV shows and movies that glorify cop life and culture. People love to hear the story of the car chase, the big arrest of the bank robber or the murderer, or the life that you saved, but nobody wants to hear the story told by the Newtown Officer who responded to Sandy Hook Elementary and entered the First Grade classroom to find an entire class full of six year old children murdered by a deranged young man with an assault rifle. Nobody wants to know about the scene inside of a home in Cheshire, CT, in 2007 where Jennifer Hawke-Petit and her daughters Michaela, 11, and Hayley, 17, were raped, doused with gasoline, tied down, and murdered. This is the part of our job that no one wants to hear about, and that's understandable. Unfortunately, the reality is that horrible tragedies will continue to happen, and police officers will continue to respond to them.

We as officers will continue to voluntarily insert our bodies and minds into these events in an effort to help. Most of us will emerge and find a way to cope with what we've experienced, but some will not. Some will be scarred so deeply that the course of their lives will change indefinitely. For these officers it is our duty to ensure that the necessary services and coverage are provided for the wounds inflicted on their minds, just as if those wounds had been inflicted on their bodies.

In the United States only 32 states currently provide adequate mental health coverage under worker's compensation. The State of Connecticut is one of the 18 remaining States that does not currently recognize a mental health injury, including PTSD, as a compensable injury under its workers compensation laws. The only exception to this is for medical benefits for

police officers and firefighters who, while in the line of duty, witness the death of one of their own.

After the incident at Sandy Hook Elementary, many of the officers who responded to the school and investigated the aftermath of that devastating tragedy suffered from intense PTSD. Had they suffered a physical injury, they would be covered under workers compensation, but since their injuries were mental in nature and those who died were not police officers, there is no coverage. Their claims under worker's comp were rejected. They were forced to go back to work or lose their jobs. Many did not get the mental health care that they needed, nor did they get sufficient time off from work to recover.

A police officer who is at work and suffering from PTSD raises serious public safety concerns. Police officers can encounter extremely stressful and dangerous situations in the course of their work. Officers who are suffering from PTSD can present a danger to themselves or to others, or they may be rendered ineffective in performing their essential work functions. Without worker's compensation coverage for work related PTSD and the protections that are offered under the workers compensation act, officers might be unwilling to admit that they have PTSD. This can have serious consequences for the officer both professionally and personally, and can present a significant civil liability for their employer.

In the weeks following Sandy Hook I, along with hundreds of other police officers from around the State of Connecticut, volunteered to work and cover shifts for the Newtown Police Department. We would travel to Newtown PD, attend their roll call, take a Newtown PD radio, and either respond to calls for service using a GPS system or roadmap, or we would man one of

the dozens of security or traffic posts that were setup throughout the town. We responded to help because we could see that our brother and sister officers in Newtown needed it. They were exhausted physically, and even more so emotionally.

So, I am now respectfully asking that you do the same for those officers who are suffering from job related PTSD, and that you deliver to the President in your report on March 2nd the message that I have tried to convey to you today. That PTSD is a real problem in policing, that it cannot be ignored, that it should be covered under worker's compensation in every State in this country, and that our first responders are deserving of that coverage. Thank you for your time this morning, and for allowing me to speak to you on this topic.

Sandra I. Ramey PhD, RN

The University of Iowa College of Nursing and College of Public Health

Over the past 2 decades, my research has primarily focused on issues related to risk and morbidity for cardiovascular disease (CVD) with work conducted within approximately 17 police departments. This work includes finding that CVD is 70% more prevalent in police retirees compared to counterparts in the general population with almost double the prevalence of hypercholesterolemia and hypertension as non-police counterparts ¹. We also have studied officers' daily physical activity ² and the effect of work shift on sleep quality and duration ³.

Analysis of these and other study results has culminated in the decision to develop an intervention to build resilience to stress in police. Recently, we conducted 2 pilot studies funded by 1) the Department of Justice and 2) NIOSH (through the Healthier Workforce Center for Excellence at The University of Iowa.) The purpose of these studies was to test protocols for an intervention to build resilience. While an intervention to build resilience is not a "magic bullet," it does address many of the risk factors and health issues documented in law enforcement over the past 3 decades, especially those related to stress. Recent events have compounded the need for resilience training.

Currently, there is a need in police agencies all over the country to improve community relationships. From the public view, *police need to make the best decisions possible and perform at their very best in every situation they encounter* and of course most officers strive for this goal as well. Given the intrinsic character of policing, changing *stressors* within the environment is not a viable option. It is however, possible to teach officers to *modify how they react to stress*. This is referred to as "*resiliency or*

self-regulation.” The problem is that presently, there is no consistent training within the profession to equip officers or their families with the skills to modify responses to stress.

Recent research suggests positive outcomes from stress resiliency training applied to military personnel working under combat and special-forces missions in the Army and the Navy, funded by the Department of Defense ⁴⁻⁷. This training has recently been expanded to the Army Wellness centers and made accessible to 200,000 soldiers and their families. Given similarities in exposure to stress, it is reasonable that these programs may also benefit sworn police personnel. Improvement in performance, including the ability to self-regulate and improve decision-making, are expected outcomes of resilience programs. Results of our recent pilot studies further support the feasibility and effectiveness of this type of intervention tested in 4 districts of the Milwaukee Police Department.

Our pilot and the military projects utilize a program called *The Resilience Advantage* developed at the HeartMath Research Center at the Institute of HeartMath, a small, nonprofit corporation located in Boulder Creek, CA. The program involves a 2 to 3 hour class followed by 4 booster classes delivered weekly and use of an application or practice device to improve resilience to stress.

Outcome measures include improvements in psychological measures of stress, blood pressure and heart rate variability (HRV) measured by coherence levels. Simply stated, HRV is the measurement between heartbeats and considers the contributions of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems ⁸⁻¹¹. Coherence is a state measurement of heart rate variability. Previously, a regular heart rhythm was thought to be optimal. However, we now know that some variation in the heart rate is actually

optimal and is indicative of health. This is important because low HRV places officers at risk for sudden cardiac death and all cause mortality. HRV is highest when we are young and decreases with age. However, it is possible to improve HRV through some types of resilience training.

Our pilot study results reflect improvement on several psychological measures including the Impact Events Scale (a measure of PTSD) and significant improvement in diastolic blood pressure ($p=0.02$). The coherence percentage increased significantly as well ($p<.001$). A concerning finding was the high prevalence of low HRV in officers compared to age determined norms. However, post intervention many of the HRV values improved which is exactly what we hoped to see.

We reviewed the daily heart rate activity via heart rate monitors worn by officers during 24-hour cycles at work and on the off day ($n= 40$ officers.) We found the mean heart rates for these officers to be alarmingly high, even during sleep; for example, one officer's mean heart rate was 100 bpm.

While promising, this intervention still requires further testing for effectiveness in larger sample sizes and with a different delivery mode that can make this intervention accessible to all agencies in the US. Applications are now available for iPad and iPhone to deliver this content and to practice building coherence improvement with use of a sensor that fits smartphones and tablets. Using this method would also make data accessible to the researcher to track officer practice and progress via a Cloud account.

The next steps are to 1) test this intervention in a larger group of officers with the iPad delivery mode, 2) apply the lessons learned in the pilot studies, 3) evaluate the Em wave Pro software as an efficient and cost effective way to measure HRV and 4) develop

a toolkit accessible by all law enforcement agencies.

A caveat to all of this is we must continue to look at the cost benefit analysis for every newly developed intervention. Interventions like this one have the potential to save taxpayers millions of health care dollars and money currently spent on stress related disability. Recent research suggests that teaching officers practical techniques and practices that allow them to better self-regulate and modify their physiological responses in the moment stressful situations are taking place has significant benefits for both the individual officers and the organization. With proper support, the department can expect reduction in health-care utilization and costs, increased officer retention and job satisfaction, and improvements in the quality of police encounters with citizens. This training could be offered at the Academy with reinforcement provided to officers at in-service sessions to maintain baseline health.

In conclusion, I know it is the hope of the Milwaukee Police Department and the University of Iowa that this current effort to move toward intervention research will benefit law enforcement nationwide by giving officers the tools to improve resiliency to stress, work performance and the officers' quality of life.

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NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

JONATHAN F. THOMPSON
Executive Director

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY BY
THE NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION
TO THE
WHITE HOUSE TASK FORCE ON 21ST CENTURY POLICING**

INTRODUCTION

The National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) submits that the Sheriffs of America are essential partners in any effort to increase the trust and confidence of the American people in our criminal justice system and to improve policing in the 21st Century. The NSA represents the 3,080 Sheriffs in the United States, almost all democratically elected by the people, and each one serves as the chief law enforcement officer of their respective county or parish. As a result, the Office of Sheriff is the law enforcement agency most directly accountable to the people we serve. Sheriffs also are the only law enforcement officers in the nation providing the full line of services, including jail operations and courtroom security; this broad range of responsibilities allows us to provide a unique set of observations on the challenges of building trust and legitimacy with the people we serve.

Today I offer this testimony on behalf of the NSA, a non-partisan, non-profit organization dedicated to raising the level of professionalism in the areas of criminal justice and public safety. In lengthy conversations with Sheriffs from across the country, NSA has identified these issues as critical in the conversation on officer safety and wellness.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

In the post-9/11 world in which we all live, law enforcement at every level has been called to support homeland security efforts. We've heard time and again that "homeland security starts with hometown security." More than anyone, law enforcement understands the need to ensure that security. We respond to thousands of unique calls every day that can include missing children and seniors, domestic violence, animal cruelty, metal theft, public health concerns, mentally ill persons, traffic safety issues, violent crimes, and more. But, state and local resources have been stretched thin by the ever-increasing demands on top of the regular calls for service.

Inconsistent Messaging from the Federal Government

Through the 287(g) program, Secure Communities, and now the Priority Enforcement Program, we are tasked with enforcing Federal immigration law while simultaneously being told the Department of Justice will ignore flagrant violations of Federal marijuana laws. We are told to use our limited resources to help the Federal government identify illegal aliens but receive no support when our agencies are sued for those actions. Congress creates programs like the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) to reimburse local agencies for the costs of housing illegal aliens but the President consistently tries to eliminate the program. Even with Congressional support for SCAAP, the reimbursement falls woefully short of covering the true costs. Our Sheriff's Offices cannot continue to carry the Federal burden on immigration nor should the costs of ignoring Federal marijuana laws be borne by our communities. *The Federal government must support our state and local law enforcement by taking responsibility for the Federal role of immigration enforcement and consistently enforcing Federal law as it relates to drug laws. To continue abdicating those obligations does a disservice to communities across the country by forcing valuable resources to be diverted away from local concerns.*

Congress must also do its part to support law enforcement. While many individual Members of Congress have shown unwavering support in recent years, funding for law enforcement programs has been dramatically cut since 2008. In some cases, like the COPS Hiring Program, funding has been cut year after year; in other cases, like the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program, Congress cannot find the will to reauthorize programs. These are programs that help local agencies hire additional personnel or provide matching funds to equip an officer with a bulletproof vest. *It is unacceptable for Congress to shirk its responsibilities in appropriately funding and authorizing programs that support state and local law enforcement.*

Addressing Mental Health Concerns

Beyond the burdens placed on law enforcement by the Federal government are the realities of our mental health system. Any deputy or officer on the street can tell you that mental illness plays a significant role in many calls for service. According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than one-quarter of all adults will experience at some point in their lives mental illness and half of them will go untreated; despite this, many of our nation's mental institutions have been closed in recent decades. As a result, more and more mentally ill persons will end up in jails and prisons.

As a nation, we must provide resources to treat the mentally ill, rather than allow them to cycle in and out of the criminal justice system. That cycle places significant burdens on personnel, budgets, and facilities without providing any benefit to the community. And, law enforcement interactions with an untreated mentally ill person is, at best, challenging. *We must provide law enforcement with fully funded training to appropriately manage those individuals with untreated mental illness. And we must ensure that community resources, mental healthcare beds, and criminal justice alternatives are available to help the mentally ill.* Mental illness is not a crime, nor should we continue to treat it as such.

Comprehensive Examination of the Criminal Justice System

This Task Force has been convened to look specifically at law enforcement in the 21st Century. But law enforcement does not exist in a vacuum nor should it be examined in one. To fully

understand law enforcement in the 21st Century, it is imperative to look at all facets of the criminal justice system and the ways in which they interact. Equally important is to examine the tools—physical and technological—used by law enforcement to uphold the law and individuals seeking to break the law. Social media tools and applications are having a dramatic impact upon the safety of our police personnel, and the communities they protect. For example, one application simply and easily allows anyone with a smart phone to track and stalk the location and behavior of police and law enforcement personnel. While on the surface that may sound reasonable, we have heard from countless NSA members that their officers are alarmed that they are prey rather than those seeking to break the law. We applaud the creativity of the companies and individuals of this country. It is they who are creating jobs and growing our capabilities. However, we are deeply concerned that we are on a slippery slope to disarming our abilities to prevent crimes.

From 2013-2014 more than 123 law enforcement persons were killed in the line of duty. Of those it is widely believed and statistically shown that 28 were stalked by their killers. The recent deaths of Officer Rafael Ramos and Officer Wenjian Liu in New York City broke the Nation's heart. Two men who swore to uphold the law were, without provocation, murdered. The possibility this type of application played a role in these murders is frightening to the men and women in uniform. Our military leaders would not permit a sworn enemy to have and use similar applications to track and potentially harm our forces. Neither should our elected leaders, and most importantly the corporations and organizations that build our nation permit the use of these new applications.

We cannot deny that anyone seeking to do harm to our law enforcement personnel are doing so to undermine our society. Those who break the law must remain our primary focus of policing in the 21st century. For 228 years our society has steadfastly upheld the principle that we are a nation of laws, and the “rule of law” determines how a civil society succeeds. That philosophy is what our members, their deputies and their staffs are committed to doing.

It is too easy to focus the blame of the criminal justice system's shortcomings on law enforcement. Our deputies and officers stand as the face of the criminal justice system every time they put on a uniform. But we have seen in recent tragedies how focusing the blame solely on law enforcement can have deadly consequences. We cannot continue to allow the media and the public to blame law enforcement for the shortcomings of an entire system.

Our law enforcement professionals deserve better. They deserve a Federal government that listens and supports their efforts to protect our communities. They deserve the equipment and training that will help keep them safe. We cannot continue asking our deputies and our officers to do more with less. Doing so places their lives in danger and threatens the safety of our communities.

Our communities deserve better, too. Through elections, Sheriffs are directly accountable to their communities. Sheriffs understand how important it is to ensure good community relations and know that we must always work to continue building those relationships. Sheriffs know that our communities expect high levels of professionalism from our deputies and we strive every day to provide that.

CONCLUSION

The 3,080 Sheriffs of the United States are invested in the counties and parishes they protect. The National Sheriffs' Association appreciates the opportunity to provide input to this honorable Task Force. I urge the Task Force to remember that law enforcement does not exist in a vacuum and that we must look at the entire criminal justice system if we are to fully address the problems that exist. We must ensure funding and support for critical law enforcement programs because their impact cannot be overstated. Anything less is a slap in the face to the law enforcement community.

Police Suicide: Recent studies and prevention suggestions

John M. Violanti, PhD

A good amount of research evidence suggests that, as a group, there is an elevated rate of suicide within law enforcement. One would expect that the law enforcement suicide rates would be lower than they are, given that they are an employed, healthy and psychologically tested group (McMichael, 1976). Certainly, they should be lower than the U.S. general population, since this reference group includes the institutionalized, mentally ill, and unemployed.

We recently conducted national level studies on police suicide:

1. Police suicide via web surveillance -55,000 web articles (O'Hara & Violanti, 2009; O'Hara, Violanti, Levenson & Clark, 2013):
 - An estimated 141 police suicide were counted in 2009
 - An estimated 112 police suicides were counted in 2012
 - Both male and female suicides appeared to occur at a similar rate, averaging 92% and 6% respectively across the two studies.
 - Suicides appeared to cluster in the 40-44 year age group more than in 2013 than in previous years.
 - A rather large increase in suicide was seen in officers with 15-19 years of service in 2012 compared to 2009.
 - Firearms remained the most prevalent means of suicide (91.5%).
 - Personal problems appeared to be the most prevalent personal reason (83%) with work associated legal problems ranking second (13%).

- Approximately 11% of suicides were military veterans.
2. A second national epidemiological study utilizing the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH/CDC) occupational mortality database for the years 1999, 2003-4 and 2007 (Violanti, Robinson & Chen, 2014):
 - **For total law enforcement-** a significantly higher proportionate mortality ratio (PMR) for law enforcement suicide than was seen. (264 suicides; PMR=169, sig. $p<0.01$, 95% CI=150-191- represents a 69% increased suicide risk over the general U.S. working population).
 - **Detectives/criminal investigators** – (115 suicides; PMR=182, 95% CI= 150-218, $p<0.01$ - represents an 82% increased suicide risk).
 - **Corrections officers-** (73 suicides; PMR=141, 95% CI=111-178, $p<0.01$ - represents a 41% increased suicide risk).

Potential prevention strategies

1. International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and COPS symposium suggestions.

- Start at the top by recruiting leaders who care about the mental wellness of their officers- A “Duty of Care” (Jones, 2006).
- Establish and institutionalize effective early warning and intervention protocols to identify and treat at-risk officers
- Audit existing psychological services and determine whether they are effective in identifying early warning signs of mental wellness issues

- Invest in training agency-wide on mental health awareness and stress management
- Begin mental wellness training at the academy, and continue the training throughout officer careers, with a particular emphasis on first-line supervisors.
- Include family training to reinforce and invest in those critical family connections.
- Change the police culture by reducing fear and stigma associated with mental illness

2. **Gatekeeper Approach:** QPR Suicide Training for Law Enforcement- QPR stands for “Question, Persuade, and Refer” (Quinnett, 2014). QPR is a simple educational program that teaches officers how to recognize a mental health emergency and how to get a person at risk for suicide the help they need. It is also an action plan that can result in lives saved. Research and evaluations to date have shown positive results. QPR is taught across police agencies.
3. **Psychological Autopsy (PA):** A retrospective method to police suicide prevention-The major objective of a psychological autopsy is to establish whether specific variables constitute risk factors for suicide among police officers. The psychological autopsy (PA) is well established as the means for obtaining comprehensive retrospective information about victims of completed suicide (Robins, Murphy, Wilkison, Gassner & Kayes, 1959).
4. **IAT: An experimental police suicide prevention strategy.** Suicide Implicit Association Testing (IAT)-Hesitancy of police officers to seek help makes it essential to detect suicide ideation on a different level than self-reports (Violanti, Mnatsakanova, & Andrew (2013). The IAT measures subconscious levels of identification with life or death. An implicit below conscious level association with death may represent one of the final steps

in the pathway to suicide that is activated when a police officer is deciding how to respond to extreme or chronic distress (Nock, 2009; Nock, et al., 2010). More research is needed to help clarify the operational usefulness of IAT methods and their validity over time.

Conclusion

In summary, we described some recent research and potential prevention strategies for suicide among law enforcement personnel. Future research should include etiologic studies should evaluate occupational factors and precipitants that lead to increased risks. Police work serves as a fertile arena for suicide precipitants, including relationship problems, culturally approved alcohol use, firearms availability, and exposure to psychologically adverse incidents.

Contextually, police work is likely a probable part of the causal chain of suicide. We may be better informed if we know the state of preventive strategies already in force in departments and whether or not they are working.

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Testimony of Yousry “Yost” Zakhary
Director, Woodway, Texas, Public Safety Department
Past President, International Association of Chiefs of Police

Before the Task Force on 21st Century Policing
Listening Session: Officer Safety and Wellness
February 23, 2015

Commissioner Ramsey, Professor Robinson, Director Davis, and members of the Task Force on 21st Century Policing, thank you for inviting me to testify today. My name is Yost Zakhary and I am the director of the Woodway, Texas, Public Safety Department and the immediate past president of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP).

I began my career as a law enforcement dispatcher with the City of Woodway, Texas, in 1979. I am still there today and am currently the chief and director of the Public Safety Department. One of my main duties as chief is to ensure the safety and well-being of my officers. This means making sure they have the proper training and equipment they need to do their job safely, accurately, and efficiently, so they can return home to their loved ones after their shift.

During my time as President of the IACP from 2013 to 2014, officer safety and wellness was one of my top priorities, and it has always been the IACP's main priority. It is the position of the organization that no injury to or death of a law enforcement professional is acceptable.

Being a law enforcement officer has always been a stressful and dangerous job, but currently the law enforcement community is up against even greater pressures, challenges, and violence. Police officers face and witness profound danger on a daily basis. We put our lives on the line every day to confront crime and violence in our communities. We do this because we took an oath to safeguard our fellow citizens. We believe in that oath and feel an allegiance to and pride for the citizens we protect and the communities we serve.

Each year, there are more than 50,000 assaults on law enforcement officers, which result in more than 14,000 officers being injured each year. This past year, 126 officers were killed in the line of duty. Firearms-related incidents were the leading cause of death among law enforcement officers in 2014. Firearms-related fatalities accounted for 50 deaths, increasing 56 percent from 2013, when 32 officers were killed.¹ Violent ambush-style attacks on law enforcement officers also increased. In 2014, 15 officers nationwide were killed in ambush assaults, matching 2012 for the highest total since 1995.

It is imperative that we provide the proper training and equipment to our officers to help prevent more fatalities and injuries from firearms and ambush attacks. Officer safety is an all-hands task; not only is it the responsibility of a chief, it is also the responsibility of the government, state, and local government leaders, and community members, to ensure the safety and well-being of its officers who have dedicated their lives to protecting their communities.

Sadly, and perhaps surprisingly to many, a number of American law enforcement officers do not have the proper equipment, like body armor, available to them on a routine basis or their equipment is not completely up to date. This is in part attributable to the shrinking budgets of state and local governments and their law enforcement agencies.

¹ "Research Bulletin: Law Enforcement Officer Deaths: Preliminary 2014," National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, <http://www.nleomf.org/assets/pdfs/reports/Preliminary-2014-Officer-Fatalities-Report.pdf>, (accessed February 17, 2015).

Equipment like body armor or bulletproof vests are critically important to a police officer's survival and well-being. There's no denying it, vests save lives, so it is imperative that all law enforcement officers are outfitted with properly fitted bulletproof vests. The Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP) Grant Program is a critical resource that enables state and local law enforcement jurisdictions to purchase these lifesaving vests. It is imperative that this program continues to get reauthorized and receive adequate funding.

What many people don't realize is broad reaching effects from when an officer is killed or even wounded. Not only does the officer suffer, but so do the officer's family, friends and police colleagues. The death of a law enforcement officer has a shocking impact upon the agency and the community as a whole. The unique effects can range from reduced productivity and low morale among officers to public fearfulness and sorrow. There is also the potential for strained relations between the community and the law enforcement agency.

In addition to the human costs, there are financial and operational costs to consider. The U.S. Department of Justice – Bureau of Justice Assistance - Public Safety Officers Benefits Program, provides \$323,035 in death and education benefits to survivors of fallen law enforcement officers. The average cost of a bulletproof vest is \$800 to \$1,000. That's roughly 323 vests that could be purchased with money saved, if more departments had assistance in purchasing vests for their officers.

The loss of one officer in a small agency can have a crippling effect upon manpower and the agency's ability to deliver services, not to mention the devastating blow that it inevitably has on fellow officers, friends and colleagues. While larger agencies are less vulnerable to manpower disruptions, they too experience devastating emotional blows that can disrupt operations and services.

The death or injury of an officer creates a wide variety of unanticipated and very costly expenditures for the agency. Possible expenditures include medical bills; funeral expenses; workman's compensation and death benefit payments; increased insurance premiums; sick leave; retirement system costs; legal fees; civil judgments; replacement and retraining expenses; and overtime pay. Viewed solely in a financial light, the effects of an officer's death can have significant consequences.

Law enforcement executives understand that recent events have given rise to questions about the 1033 program and its value to law enforcement agencies and the communities we serve. For these reasons, the IACP is committed to working with the White House, the Department of Justice and all agencies involved in this important, and timely, review of the 1033 program.

In addition to having access to proper equipment, law enforcement officers need to be able to receive regular training to deal with the myriad of issues they encounter, including hostage situations, mental health calls for service, active shooter incidents, domestic violence incidents,

and many more. On that note, the IACP is in the process of developing policy guidelines for preventing and protecting against ambush attacks.

Vehicular accidents are another leading cause of law enforcement deaths. In 2014, killing 49 officers. Thirty-five officers died in automobile crashes, nine officers were struck and killed outside their vehicle, and five officers were killed in motorcycle crashes. Traffic-related fatalities increased 11 percent from 2013, when 44 officers were killed.² I have witnessed too many deaths of fellow officers for something as simple as not wearing their seatbelts. Crashes can be preventable—and that is why we need to ensure that our officers have proper training on vehicular pursuits, refrain from distracted driving, and wear their seatbelts. In addition, far too many law enforcement officers have been injured or killed outside of their vehicles while conducting traffic stops or investigating crashes. That is why law enforcement is working hard to educate the public about the Move Over initiative. When motorists see emergency vehicles, they need to slow down and move over.

Physical wellness is a huge part of officer safety. A fit officer will be able to serve his or her community better, as well as provide better support to his or her fellow officers. It is imperative that chiefs promote wellness within their departments and encourage their officers to get regular physical checks and exercise frequently. The IACP's Center for Officer Safety and Wellness can be a resource for law enforcement in this area. The Center promotes physical health and wellness. As part of the Reducing Officer Injuries initiative, IACP released the "Impact of Fitness and Weight on Injuries" fact sheet and the *Reducing Officer Injuries Final Report*, which highlight the importance of physical wellness. Recently, IACP also released two resources examining the importance of officer nutrition: a pocket guide for patrol officers providing healthy on-the-go meal options, and a fact sheet written for law enforcement leadership to encourage nutrition guidance and education as part of formal and informal departmental training.

Law enforcement officers are not immune to mental health issues. Our jobs often place us in the middle of highly traumatic situations, and this can cause a lot increased emotional stress and trauma for officers. While there are no definitive statistics on the number of law enforcement officers who take their own lives annually, estimates put that figure at roughly double the number of officers killed in the line of duty each year by felonious assaults or traffic-related injuries.

In a profession where strength, bravery, and resilience are revered, mental health issues and the threats of officer suicide are often topics few are willing to address or acknowledge openly and candidly. That is why the IACP, in conjunction with the COPS Office, held a National Symposium on Law Enforcement Officer Suicide and Mental Health. The result of the symposium, was the report *Breaking the Silence on Law Enforcement Suicides*. This report, included in the appendix, is designed to prevent and mitigate the destructive effects of

² "Research Bulletin: Law Enforcement Officer Deaths: Preliminary 2014," National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, <http://www.nleomf.org/assets/pdfs/reports/Preliminary-2014-Officer-Fatalities-Report.pdf>, (accessed February 17, 2015).

emotional trauma, mental illness, and officer deaths by suicide on a police community; to successfully intervene when officers confront mental health crises, mental illness, or suicidal behavior; and to provide effective event response protocols when an officer dies by suicide in an agency. It is also intended to create a culture of change that normalizes mental health issues for law enforcement officers, so that seeking mental health support can be viewed as positively as an officer seeking help for a physical ailment.

Lastly, it is imperative that all departments provide guidance to their officers, especially the new recruits coming in. Not only do they need to be provided with the proper equipment and training, but they also need guidance in the areas of both physical and mental health. In addition, each department should be sure to clearly demonstrate that it has certain rules and procedures in place. To many officers, their department is like their family. They experience many difficult and challenging things with their fellow brothers and sisters, but in no way does that mean that a department will defend misconduct. All officers should be held accountable for their actions, and this means that every department must establish Internal Affairs policies to deal with potential misconduct. If misconduct occurs, the agency should already have measures in place to investigate and address such behavior. The intake process for filing complaints must be accommodating for the individual registering the complaint so they feel comfortable. In addition, the individual filing the complaint should be kept up to date on the status of his or her complaint. If an agency has a strong internal police disciplinary system in place that is well-designed and carried out by well-trained internal affairs investigators, it will send a strong ethical and professional message to all staff, both sworn and civilian.

The recent IACP report, *Building Trust Between the Police and the Citizens They Serve: An Internal Affairs Promising Practices Guide*, which was funded by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, stresses the value of best practice disciplinary systems to both the department and the community in helping to build a high degree of trust between citizens and police. As much as the community wants to see officers rewarded for excellence, they also want to see officers held strictly accountable for any misconduct—particularly serious misconduct.

It is important to note that internal Affairs investigations, however, should be but one component of a systemic approach to ethical conduct. If law enforcement executives hire the appropriate staff, deliver ethics training, establish an early intervention system, and properly supervise staff, all of which build trust within their communities, the Internal Affairs process may be necessary only in rare instances.

Again, thank you for convening this very important listening session and for the opportunity to express my views on officer safety and wellness. It is imperative that we provide the proper support for law enforcement officers. We put our lives on the line on a daily basis to protect our communities, and ensuring that we have the proper equipment, training, and support so that we can be both mentally and physically fit will make us even better at our jobs.

I welcome any questions from Task Force members.

President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing
Listening Session on Officer Safety and Wellness
Written Testimony of Chief Jim Bueermann (ret.)
President, Police Foundation
February 17, 2015

Introduction

The Police Foundation is pleased to submit testimony on Officer Safety and Wellness to the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. Over the past several years, the Police Foundation has participated in many sessions of the Attorney General's *Officer Safety and Wellness Working Group* in which a key focus is reduction of officer deaths through reduced shootings of police officers, and vehicle crashes involving officers, and increased officer health and wellness. The number of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty is generally following crime trends overall, the data reveals that we continue to see major threats to officer safety in ambush-style and premeditated assaults as well as areas of stubborn resistance to intervention such as motor vehicle accidents. Unknown to us is how many officers are injured each year as a result of accidents or assaults that could have led to death were it not for the growing advancement of medical treatment and trauma care. Just as troubling is the lack of awareness and data reflecting the toll that the policing profession can take on an officer and his or her family over the course of a typical career.

Reducing Officer Deaths

The law enforcement profession lags behind similar professions in understanding the causes and contributing factors to law enforcement officer deaths, be they from accidents or intentional harm. As a result, we are seriously deficient in our ability to assess and identify factors that can be addressed in order to prevent future deaths. In late 2014, with funding from DOJ's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, the Police Foundation (along with its partners including the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training, and the National Law Enforcement Memorial) introduced the Law Enforcement Officer Near Miss Reporting System (www.LEOnearmis.org) – an anonymous system for law enforcement personnel to enter “near miss” data that is used by the system to compare to other incidents that may appear dissimilar, but share common factors not otherwise known.

Over the past several decades, near miss reporting systems have taken hold across numerous industries including aviation, fire services, medicine, mining, and nuclear power and have been attributed at least in part, to significant reductions in accidents and serious events (see e.g., Wald, 2007, *New York Times*). One study noted that self-reported, “sleepy, near misses may be dangerous precursors to an actual accident” (Powell, et al., 2007). While the Law Enforcement Officer Near Miss Reporting System holds great promise to identify common factors across incidents from across the profession, it must rely on anonymous reporting because there is no requirement for agencies to submit these reports and no national or federal agency required to conduct such an analysis. While the FBI's Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted

(LEOKA) Program provides valuable information, reporting is not mandatory, data is limited, and a significant time lag exists between the occurrence of the incident, analysis and reporting.

In addition to analysis across all incidents, including near misses and officer deaths, we must recommit to studying violent encounters - the suspects, the officers and the circumstances that bring them together – in order to expand our understanding of what factors turn a non-violent encounter into a deadly incident and how to prevent this from occurring. In the late 1990's and up to the early 2000s, researchers completed a series of studies with funding support from the National Institute of Justice to study "the felonious killings of officers through an interactive and integrative approach. The study would address the psychology of the offender, the behavior of the officer and the circumstances in which the officer lost his or her life." (Pinizzotto, Davis, and Miller, 2006) The research was based on official records from the involved agencies, forensic reports, and interviews with witnesses and the offenders, many of whom were incarcerated at the time of the interviews. This research provided incredible and previously unidentified or underappreciated circumstances and behaviors that, as a result of the findings of this research could now be addressed through training, policy and procedure. As training on these concepts was delivered through Bureau of Justice Assistance funding, officers reported to the trainers and the Bureau that lives had been saved as a result of the training and a greater understanding of the circumstances that create a deadly mix. We are not aware of any similar research having been conducted since these studies were concluded, and yet many of the circumstances and procedures have changed since the time of the original studies.

One example of excellent training informed by this research and still be delivered to law enforcement today is the Bureau of Justice Assistance's VALOR Program – a program that trains officers in these types of circumstances, assists them in identifying armed gunmen, and provides them with survival skills and knowledge honed from the work of tactical medics who have learned battlefield techniques for saving lives after a traumatic injury. The training delivered through VALOR has produced excellent results, with many officers commenting that the training had immediately been useful and quite possibly saved their life or the life of a partner. We can think of no better outcome from any training than this. The Justice Department and Congress should be acknowledged for supporting VALOR.

As a result of all of the studies described above, steps were taken to attempt to keep officers focused on three primary areas of vulnerability – awareness, image, and mindset. A key factor to be considered in the context of all three of these areas is exhaustion. In 2011, the Police Foundation published research funded by the National Institute of Justice to examine the impacts of shift length on officer safety, health, performance, and quality of life. There were two key safety findings in that research; first that officers working 10-hour shifts got, on average, over 180 hours more sleep per year compared to those on 8-hour shifts. We also found that officers reported being more sleepy and less alert on their shifts when they worked 12-hour shifts as compared to 8-hour shifts (Amendola, et al., 2011a, 2011b).

Last, the issue of technology and equipment must be addressed. While we see equipment manufacturers such as the Ford Motor Company devising new technologies to save officer lives – such as alarms that sound when the new Ford Police Interceptor vehicle is placed in “surveillance” mode to protect an officer who may be distracted while working in her or his vehicle, we can do much more to support the research and development of new technologies that can save lives. Similar to research conducted in the fire services, we must understand and test new technologies that can protect officers and attempt to solve safety challenges with improved technologies. Examples include understanding the benefits of certain colors and markings on officer clothing and vehicles to make them more visible on the roadways, creating emergency lighting that can be seen by motorists while eliminating the “moth effect” that causes motorists to steer towards the lights as opposed to away from them, sensor technologies that monitor fatigue and alert officers to onset of distraction or sleep as necessary while driving, and as we add more technology to patrol vehicles, we should understand the impact of this additional equipment in the vehicle from an officer safety perspective, looking at tactical issues as well as hazards created when a vehicle with an equipment-laden passenger compartment is involved in a collision. This has historically been the role of the National Institute of Justice’s Science and Technology Directorate, however funding for such research, testing and demonstration has been dramatically reduced over the last 10-15 years.

Recommendations:

- Congress and the Department of Justice should provide funding to further law enforcement community efforts designed to study law enforcement near misses and preventable error, to improve law enforcement officer safety.
- Congress, the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation should provide increased support to the LEOKA Program, with consideration of incentives for agencies committing to 100% reporting of deaths and assaults, the collection of additional data regarding each incident, and making the anonymized data available in near real time to third party organizations capable of conducting additional or more timely analysis.
- Congress and the Department of Justice should provide increased support for NIJ-funded research and evaluation of law enforcement operations, in addition to funding for research on officer safety issues, such as that conducted by Pinozzotto and Davis, with ongoing emphasis on research, development and testing related to law enforcement technologies that may enhance, or diminish, officer safety.

Preventing Officer Suicide & Dealing with Trauma

In addition to the risks officers face from accidents and assaults, there are other risks that are far less obvious. These “silent killers” include the incredible stressors and pressures that exist in police work and often take a very significant and serious toll on those who serve and protect. From involvement in critical incidents such as shootings, to exposure to horrific scenes and evidence stemming from crimes such as homicides and child sexual

assault, officers face trauma directly and vicariously every day. These exposures and other stressors may lead to depression and anxiety and can also lead to post-traumatic stress disorder. Recently published research on suicide uncovered alarming statistics. For example, Violanti, et al. (2014) examined the occupational mortality data of the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH/CDC) and discovered that law enforcement had a significantly higher proportionate mortality ratio (PMR) for suicide than was seen in the general U.S. working population, representing a 69% higher risk for suicide than other occupational groups. In spite of considerable research on the prevalence of officer suicide in recent years, very little attention has been paid to field-based prevention. Our profession must confront these issues head on, committing to additional research into the nature and causes of the stressors and trauma faced by officers – directly and vicariously, the protective or resiliency factors that can play a mitigating role, and commit to the evaluation of responses and preventative measures.

Recommendation:

- Increased research, evaluation, training and technical assistance should be provided to law enforcement agencies in establishing wellness programs and addressing the mental health needs of officers and their families, to include research into resiliency factors, field-based prevention efforts, and prevalent yet not well understood sources of mental health depreciation, such as vicarious trauma.

Internal Procedural Justice and Legitimacy

The concepts of legitimacy and procedural justice have gained considerable momentum in recent years as a key strategy that can enhance community policing outcomes and satisfaction with the police and justice system. Indeed, procedural justice and legitimacy are consistent with the goals and desired outcomes of community policing. These same concepts may also produce similarly positive results within the workplace, as noted by a growing body of literature within the business, human resources and organizational ethics communities. Ultimately, however, we must enhance our understanding as a profession about the relationship between external and internal legitimacy and procedural fairness and whether it is achievable over the long term to have external legitimacy if the level of internal legitimacy – acceptance of police leaders' moral authority to lead – is not achieved. In other, possibly related contexts, such as branding for example, it is understood that organizations must build brand acceptance and understanding internally before the same can be done externally. As generations Y and Z begin to grow within the workforce and become even more prominent in our communities, they're expectation and demand for procedural fairness and legitimacy will require that agency management and operations can answer that call in order to be successful in the future. While the concepts of procedural justice and legitimacy are becoming more widely understood and accepted, there remains a significant lack of understanding, in practical terms, about the steps and processes required to implement and sustain. Additionally, we must continue to conduct research in these areas, not only to further understand the benefits, but also to understand the possible disadvantages, such as the potential for increased mental fatigue among managers operating in environments with strict adherence to procedural justice.

The Police Foundation has completed research on the impact of internal procedural justice on various forms of police actions like arrests. This study, also funded by the National Institute of Justice, was conducted in the Seattle Police Department and demonstrated that even minimal training of officers in procedural justice concepts and modeling by supervisors can have an impact on procedurally just interactions with residents (Owens, Weisburd, Alpert, and Amendola, in progress).

Recommendation:

- Additional research, evaluation and technical assistance and training should be provided through the Department of Justice to develop a better understanding of procedural justice and fairness and legitimacy.

In closing, as we consider what we can do to improve officer safety and wellness, we must not overlook our responsibility to provide support to survivors of fallen officers. When tragedy does occur and a public safety officer makes the supreme sacrifice, we must honor the pledge that we made to officers and their families with the passage of the Public Safety Officers Benefits Act of 1976 (the Act). As President Ford said when he signed the bill into law, “There is no way that we can fully compensate for this loss of life in our public service, but we have a clear obligation to help as much as we can. This act demonstrates the esteem of a free society for those whom it entrusts with our public and personal safety.” (President Gerald R. Ford, 1976) Not only is our safety dependent on the willingness of these men and women to put themselves in harms way and also risk the moral and financial security of their families, but the very democracy that promises a free and just society based on the rule of law is also dependent upon their choice to enter and continue in public service. For this reason and others, it is essential that we keep our promise provide the relatively modest support to the surviving family members of officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice. When a surviving family member must file a claim for federal death benefits, providing that benefit in the most expeditious manner should be second to no other administrative priority in the Department of Justice, which administers the Public Safety Officers Benefits Program (PSOB). Keeping the promise must be reflected in our handling of these claims – expeditiously and transparently – and providing spouses, children, parents, coworkers and others with the peer support and counseling they require to rebuild their shattered lives.

We thank you for allowing the Police Foundation the opportunity to provide its views on this very important priority.

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Testimony for the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing

Testimony of Laura L. Kunard, Ph.D., Senior Research Scientist, CNA Corporation, Arlington, VA and Chicago, IL | former Director, Center for Public Safety and Justice, University of Illinois, Springfield, IL | kunardl@cna.org | 312-208-5260

Officer Safety and Wellness

Topic areas selected: *Stress Management and Internal Procedural Justice*

Overall health and well-being is critically important for our nation's law enforcement officers. Healthy officers are safer officers. While many factors contribute to officer health and well-being, this testimony focuses on two that are not discussed often enough: stress management and job satisfaction. There is much evidence to suggest that police officers on the whole are less healthy than non-officers.¹ Recent studies of police officers note the prevalence of depression and suicidal thoughts,² concerns about shift-work and injury³ and common undiagnosed sleep disorders.⁴ These findings, along with countless others, underscore the importance of a renewed focus on officers' stress management techniques as well as increased job satisfaction through internal procedural justice.

Stress management and mental health are topics in need of more candid discussion in our nation's policing circles. Police officers by and large acknowledge that they have chosen a high stress profession, but many lack effective coping strategies.⁵ Officers are often afraid to seek assistance with regard to stress management and mental health because of the stigma associated with such assistance. Many officers believe that seeking help to manage stress or treat a mental health issue will lead to the end of their careers. We *must* change the culture of policing around these issues. There are some hopeful signs that officers are valuing their overall health, such as officers participating in yoga practice⁶ and other models of resilience including meditation⁷ and

mindfulness training⁸ which aim to manage stress successfully.

In addition to the obvious sources of stress police officers face – dangerous situations, death, terrible human conditions – officers may also face stress in the workplace in the form of the support (or lack thereof) they receive from coworkers and supervisors and the fairness (or unfairness) of personnel policies and processes. The policies within police organizations matter – they set the tone for culture of the workplace and ultimately affect officer attitudes, performance in public, and burnout rates.⁹ In the past few years discussion about organizational change within police agencies has focused on the notion of *internal procedural justice*. When procedural justice is discussed in policing contexts, it often focuses on *external procedural justice*, or police officers’ interactions with members of the public, for example, when making a traffic stop. The process of that interaction – word choice, tone of voice, body language – is instrumental in a community member’s ultimate level of satisfaction with the encounter and sense of trust in the police. Research demonstrates that procedural justice often matters more to people than distributive justice (the ultimate outcome of an encounter, in this example receiving a traffic ticket or not).¹⁰

The same concepts apply when we look at interactions between officers and supervisors. The procedural justice concept is often defined by four main “pillars”: (1) fairness and consistency of rule application; (2) voice and representation in the process; (3) transparency and openness of process; and (4) impartiality and unbiased decision making. When we imagine a typical officer-supervisor interaction in which the officer is requesting a change in assignment, the four pillars are easy to identify. Let us consider the notion of voice, which is especially important because human beings want to be heard, especially during interactions with authority figures like our supervisors. In the example we consider here, the process by which the

supervisor makes a decision about the change requested by the officer is critical to the officer's satisfaction with and acceptance of that decision, and the officer's sense of trust in his or her own agency. Does department policy allow for the officer's voice to be heard on the issue? Or does it allow for the supervisor to make a snap decision without hearing the officer's reasons for the request? Such seemingly small considerations, when written into policy, shape whether employees feel they are working for an organization that exhibits *organizational justice*. In fact, research shows that organizational variables such as procedural and distributive justice (the distribution of *things* – in our example, a new assignment) are better predictors than demographic characteristics of officers' job satisfaction and turnover intention.¹¹ Relationships among coworkers are also important; officers who feel respected, especially by their supervisors, are more likely to accept departmental policies, comply with them voluntarily and experience increased job satisfaction overall.¹² It is worth noting that there is a direct relationship between organizational justice (internal procedural justice) and police-community relations, for two reasons: 1) when officers feel fairly treated and when they respect and trust their organization, they reflect this attitude when they have encounters with community members, and 2) when the public perceives that police organizations treat their employees fairly, they will be more likely to feel that they will be treated fairly as well.

Policies addressing discipline are central to the discussion of internal procedural justice. Officers should be afforded voice in the policies and procedures that govern their performance and they must feel fairly treated in matters of internal discipline as well as civilian review board proceedings.¹³ Listening to one another and seeking to understand others' viewpoints are shared responsibilities of police officers and supervisors in every discussion. It is important to note that non-sworn law enforcement agency staff members must also feel that they have voice in the

processes of policymaking that affects them.

Recommendations

Achieving higher levels of police officer wellness requires a shift in organizational priorities. Police leaders should strive for a cultural evolution toward stress management, resilience, overall wellness (physical *and* mental health) and internal procedural justice.

Provide and encourage stress management training and other mental health opportunities. Striving for culture change within police agencies requires law enforcement leaders (formal and informal) to create opportunities to normalize the conversation about stress management and mental health. Leaders who acknowledge the need for mental health care should be applauded. Chief Richard Biehl in Dayton, Ohio, for example, has openly discussed the importance of giving officers tools to cope with stress, stating “If you’re on the job for 25 years — or five years — your better have more in in your tool belt than your service weapon, Taser, pepper spray. ... Traditionally we have done a poor job of preparing them for the human tragedy and suffering they will face.”¹⁴ Leaders who not only provide opportunities for, but also *encourage* officers to participate in wellness activities (perhaps by participating themselves) would go far in shifting culture. Making stress management an organizational priority by providing training and opportunities to participate in yoga classes and peer counseling programs, for example, would begin to normalize the conversation about mental health in law enforcement.

In addition to the established efficacy of some stress management training programs,¹⁵ evidence suggests that reliable law enforcement peer-to-peer assistance and counseling models can be effective.¹⁶ There are several advantages of peer counseling compared with assistance from mental health professionals, such as psychiatrists and psychologists: there is less stigma attached to seeking assistance from a peer; peer counselors are familiar with the demands of

police work and are relatable to those seeking assistance; peer counselors are more accessible than traditional professional counselors who often require advanced scheduling for an appointment; finally, police officers may favor peer counseling over traditional therapy due to the absence of power imbalance between the participants.¹⁷ While peer counseling is not a new idea in policing, it is one that should come out from the shadows and be recognized as a critical part of everyday police work.

Review agency policies and procedures through the lens of procedural justice. Many departments do not revisit, review and rewrite the policies as frequently as they should – and often it takes a high profile incident, such as a high speed car chase or a use of force incident to propel them to adopt revisions. More frequent policy reviews are certainly a good idea, but reviewing each and every policy through the lens of procedural justice is an even better one. Law enforcement professionals at all levels should participate in such reviews and revisions – thereby demonstrating internal procedural justice – and all policies should be revisited with the key concepts of procedural justice in mind: fairness, voice, transparency and impartiality. As noted above, officers’ perceptions of agency fairness directly impact their levels of stress. Striving to embrace organizational justice is a stride toward lower stress, positive attitudes and healthier officers. Policy matters. Recognizing that fact will build trust in policing – within law enforcement agencies and within the communities they serve.

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Written Testimony by the Major County Sheriffs' Association to the White House Task Force on 21st Century Policing – 6th Listening Session Officer Safety and Wellness

The Major County Sheriffs' Association (MCSA) appreciates the opportunity to submit a written testimony to the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, and to contribute ideas and concerns shared by Sheriffs from across the country. Our Nation's Sheriffs have a number of important and unique perspectives to offer in the name of advancing the national discussion of modern policing. Under the topic of *Officer Safety and Wellness*, Sheriffs can speak to a number of specific concerns and have in fact been continuously engaged on these issues over the past several months – key areas are examined below.

Reducing Officer Deaths

The death of a law enforcement officer – particularly one in the line of duty – constitutes one of the most serious and difficult issues that a law enforcement agency, police or Sheriffs' department, Sheriff or Chief could ever have to deal with. Unfortunately, it is one of the unpleasant and frequent realities of modern law enforcement. When discussing officer deaths, several issues necessitate review, as they illustrate the fundamental factors that can ultimately contribute to deaths and injury in the line of duty.

At a base level, the daily job of the law enforcement officer on patrol – in a squad car, on a bike, mounted on horseback, riding a motorcycle, or simply walking the beat – is one of danger and uncertainty. While many jobs across the country are inherently dangerous and carry significant hazard – such as mining, farming, commercial logging or petroleum extraction – it is the factor of ***uncertainty*** that makes the job of law enforcement particularly dangerous and difficult. The unpredictability of danger also ensures that officers must always maintain an elevated position of awareness and concern, which can be mentally and emotionally taxing. And, uncertainty is the one element that training and best practices cannot completely account for.

This uncertainty manifests itself in several ways – from the uncertainty of particular situations to the unpredictability of human beings. For example, officers respond to calls – often times alone, with backup distant, without complete situational context, without total understanding of the personalities involved or knowledge of the physical layout of the premises entered. They do not have the benefit of knowing every threat that lies around each corner, hides in every closet or resides in every vehicle on the road. All of these uncertainties can add elements of danger – and in order to maintain safety, officers must make sense of these previously unknown elements quickly, in addition to addressing the purpose of the initial call or complaint. This is why suspects are asked to do even the most simple of precautionary tasks, like keeping their hands where an officer can see them.

Moreover, once an officer arrives on scene, situations can, and often do, change instantly – going from managed stability to intense disorder in seconds or less. Examples make the point. A suspect may pull a vehicle over calmly when signaled, giving all indications of compliance – and then suddenly back the vehicle in reverse as the officer approaches. As another illustration, a compliant suspect may be calm and composed at first – and then suddenly lunge for an officer,

and try to pull that officer's duty sidearm. The speed at which these situations can change is especially alarming – mostly underappreciated by those who have not been in such situations personally – and can have irreversible and life-altering consequences, to include irreparable physical injury or, in the worst case, death.

What really makes the job of law enforcement uncertain is that officers primarily interact with human beings, a species that is by nature unpredictable, often resistant and sometimes violent. Furthermore, officers are expected to interact with people when they are already in an alarmed, agitated, aggravated or aggressive state. And, the regular influence of alcohol, illegal narcotics or unaddressed symptoms of mental illness commonly adds further layers of unpredictability. Certainly, not every incident or call carries existential danger or involves hostile individuals – but more often than not, they do. Individuals who know they have broken a serious law – and especially suspects who may be wanted for serious crimes – will often take any desperate chance to continue evading authority.

There are ways to mitigate the potential for violence against law enforcement officers, or to lessen the severity of violence when it occurs – including: basic protective compliance measures; de-escalation methods of communication; alternative patrolling strategies and patterns that decrease backup and response times between available units; increased use of protective uniform equipment; and increased use of partner patrolling, especially in certain areas and at certain times. Even simple things like having radios that can be easily accessed with minimal use of hands or holsters that allow for a quicker draw of a lethal or non-lethal duty weapon can mean the difference between life and death for an officer on patrol.

But even these tools have limits and no solution is fool-proof. Even the best designed and manufactured equipment can malfunction, and situational factors can prevent or hinder an officer from being able to use key life-saving equipment when needed. Again, the factor of time remains critical – particularly in a rapidly escalating struggle or confrontation, when every second to detain a violent individual and establish officer and public safety counts. Also, situational factors – such as an officer being physically overwhelmed by a suspect, or multiple suspects – swiftly renders some tools completely ineffective. And in the worst cases, all precautionary methods, equipment, training and experience have little effect, such as when law enforcement officers are explicitly targeted for assassination with no warning and virtually no ability to defend themselves – like the 2014 shootings of NYPD officers Wenjian Liu and Raphael Ramos. This incident poignantly and perfectly illustrates the often highly dangerous and unpredictable nature of modern law enforcement.

Additionally, the ability of a department to test and/or implement some of these methods depends on resources, threat dynamics and other resource considerations; some departments simply do not have the resources to procure or receive the best equipment to promote officer and unit safety. Sheriffs have been consistently and vocally championing the values, benefits and needs for law enforcement use of specialized protective equipment that is overwhelmingly used to protect officer lives, even though there are common, but uninformed misperceptions about how and why that equipment is obtained and used.

Training and Equipment

For the purposes of both officer and public safety, patrol officers must assume or anticipate any potential scenario or outcome. This is the crux of preparedness – more specifically, being prepared for what *could* happen (even if not desired or likely), based on the dynamics and conditions at hand and lessons learned from past experiences. It is also the underlying reason why law enforcement officers use certain tactics and tools – to include certain types of defensive equipment that have seen successful use by U.S. military troops in combat theaters abroad.

The primary purpose of this defensive equipment – whether discussing a set of handcuffs, bulletproof vests, ballistic helmets, steel-toed boots, elbow and knee pads, riot shields or armored vehicles – is to enhance officer safety and community safety; in fact, armored vehicles have been used repeatedly by numerous departments in the recent past for both officer and community safety. Even equipment that is more offensive in nature – such as pepper spray, tear-gas, non-lethal projectiles and firearms – are used by law enforcement to neutralize or contain a threat or diffuse a situation in the most expedient manner possible with a minimum of collateral impact and damage. Additionally, law enforcement leaders use their best judgment and experience to employ these tools when appropriate (many of which are only effective for special circumstances and not daily, routine patrolling), as we are sensitive to community concerns about appearance and policing profile. Looking ahead, Sheriffs would recommend that one way to help reduce officer deaths is to find ways to consistently reauthorize and support Federal initiatives designed to provide departments with protective gear, such as bulletproof vests or other forms of ballistic protection. Sheriffs would also recommend that national level leaders help state and local law enforcement communicate to the larger public why certain tools and tactics are employed in certain circumstances.

Unfortunately, the tactics and tools are not always enough. Training, establishment of best practices and review, application of lessons-learned and field experience are critical, and can go a long way to properly preparing the law enforcement officer for the challenges of the job. In fact, law enforcement agencies spend significant portions of time and budget on mandatory education and instruction of all stripes – to include: personal and community engagement practices, communication and de-escalation exercises, situational awareness drills as well as safety, sensitivity and tactical training.

However, these methods of practice and preparedness can only go so far. Even the best training – that ingrained “muscle memory” instruction, the type of training that develops instinctive response and execution – has limitations because it simply cannot account for the innumerable situational variables that exist in the real world. Put another way, not every situation and how it may quickly evolve can be anticipated, developed in a training manual or taught in class. In fact, every day, officers must make immediate judgment calls – often with little warning or lead-time – based on how a particular situation may be developing. These decisions are often split-second and more instinctive than conscious. Training and proper protocols may be successfully applied to part of a situation – but in many cases, safety and security requires improvisation, going beyond the training if that training is no longer appropriate to the circumstances at hand. Whether engaged in a high-speed chase (which typically requires the utmost level of attention, focus and reflex), detaining a resisting suspect or trying maintain control of an increasingly

restive crowd, officers often have to make instantaneous, on-the-spot adjustments outside of what training suggests in order to preserve safety and stability.

The other issue with training is related to time, personnel availability and resource management – simply, as important and valuable as training may be, departments can only manage to dedicate so much time to instruction and training, given the needs and duties of active patrolling, investigations, corrections and support operations. Additionally, with continued budgetary pressures, constant needs to maintain effective law enforcement in high-crime regions, limited travel dollars to send officers to training academies or appropriate toward in-house training, some departments have a difficult time filling necessary training and leadership instruction gaps, however critical they may be to strengthening safety and department professionalism.

Unfortunately, despite the most committed and concerned efforts to train and prepare officers, it is because of these unpredictable realities that incidents involving officer deaths tragically occur.

A few noteworthy numbers add statistical context and reinforce this broader set of points. On yearly average, a police officer dies roughly every 58 hours. For example, according to the Officer Down Memorial Page, in 2014, there were a total of 123 American officer deaths as well as 29 police K-9 deaths in the line of duty.ⁱ Of that 2014 total, 47 deaths were due to gunfire, 2 died as a result of assault, 26 the result of automobile accidents, 4 due to motorcycle accident, 5 were struck by vehicles, 10 were killed because of vehicular assault and 5 died in the course of vehicular pursuit.ⁱⁱ Thus far in 2015, there have been 14 deaths in the line of duty.ⁱⁱⁱ This number is roughly on pace thus far with 2014, considering there were 11 and 4 line-of-duty deaths for months January and February, respectively.

While those numbers may seem relatively low to some audiences, the potential for fatalities could be much higher, given the number of officers that are assaulted while performing their duties. According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, in 2012, 52,901 officers were assaulted while performing their duties; of the 52,901 officers who were assaulted, 14,678 (27.7 percent) sustained injuries.^{iv} Of course, given even the slightest change in many of these instances, an assault, especially more serious assaults, could easily result in death. At the very least, they could result in significant lasting, personal injury.

It is important to note that law enforcement agencies across the country have developed, and employ, a wide range of thorough systems and methods to address officer health and wellness following critical incidents, particularly those incidents involving duty-related deaths. While specifics from department-to-department vary, the majority of modern law enforcement agencies maintain multiple protocols and procedures – many of which must be carried out according to law – when any officer is involved in a duty-related death. Usually, the exact nature of the incident will determine the exact set or sequencing of post-incident protocols, but most departments follow many, if not all, of the following steps: full investigation of the duty-death incident (for officer deaths, deaths in custody, or incident-related deaths of suspects or civilians); transfer of officers from patrol; extensive counseling; psychiatric evaluation; prosecutorial review and time off.

Finally, as Sheriffs are the only elected law enforcement leaders in our Nation, we take considerable time and effort to ensure that policing within our communities directly answers the

concerns and wishes of our community residents. This approach helps build a tighter bond and set of mutual safety and security goals between us and the public we serve – as a result, our communities are partners with us in the fight against crime, drugs, gangs and other threats that imperil both law enforcement officers and our communities. This is a strategic approach that we would recommend to best ensure enhanced officer and community safety.

Our Nation's Sheriffs offer the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing these insights and suggestions hoping to add a degree of thought and clarity to this set of concerns. We are sensitive to the complexities of all of these issues, but we also recognize that finding true and complete solutions to these challenges will involve a comprehensive and shared effort. MCSA will always be concerned with policy-making based on expediency. We hope this effort will help strengthen the bonds between law enforcement agencies and the communities their officers are sworn to protect – and to provide the American public with a greater sense of what the average law enforcement professional confronts and contends with on a daily basis.

End Notes

ⁱ <http://www.odmp.org/search/year?year=2014>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.odmp.org/search/year?year=2014>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.odmp.org/search/year>

^{iv} http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/leoka/2012/officers-assaulted/assaults_topic_page_-2012



**THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES
WRITTEN TESTIMONY
SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD
PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE ON 21ST CENTURY POLICING**

Founded in 1935, the National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents the interests of county governments before Congress and federal agencies. **NACo is pleased to submit recommendations to the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing on the topic of reducing officer deaths due to shootings and suicide and promoting the mental and physical health of law enforcement officials.**

Counties play an instrumental role in our nation's justice system. In the U.S., there are 3,105 county police and sheriff's departments that ensure the safety and security of our nation's citizens.ⁱ Each year, counties spend over \$70 billion on justice and public safety services, of which \$30.2 billion is spent on police and sheriff's departments, \$23.3 billion on correctional facilities and \$16.7 billion on county courts and legal services.ⁱⁱ Annual county expenditures in the justice and public safety arena surpass investments in health (\$69.7 billion), transportation and infrastructure (\$52.2 billion) and county management (\$25.6 billion). As evidenced by the large investment in justice and public safety, counties recognize the importance of building and maintaining safe and secure communities.

We are pleased to make the following recommendations:

I. TO REDUCE OFFICER DEATHS BY SHOOTING, BULLET-PROOF VESTS SHOULD BE SUPPLIED TO LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL.

NACo's first recommendation to reduce officer deaths by shooting is to increase the utilization of bullet-proof vests. In December 2014, Wythe County, Virginia's Sheriff's Office supplied its officers with bulletproof vests. A grant through the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) Bulletproof Vest Partnership grant program covered roughly half the cost of the vests which has afforded this small county with a population just over 29,000, five new bullet proof vests for its sheriff's deputies.

Utilizing bullet-proof vests for law enforcement would decrease officer deaths by shooting. Federal grant programs, like those utilized by Wythe County, help counties secure protective equipment and helps to save lives. Further, full funding for programs like the Bulletproof Vest Partnership helps counties across the nation protect their officers. As of December 2014, the BVP program has aided more than 13,000 jurisdictions purchase over 1.1 million vests.ⁱⁱⁱ Additionally, flexible federal grant programs like the Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) can help counties acquire life-saving tools like bulletproof vests.^{iv}

II. MENTAL AND PHYSICAL WELLNESS PROMOTE OFFICER SAFETY

County governments play an important role in maintaining public safety and promoting health. Local sheriff departments typically fall under the jurisdiction of the county. Additionally, counties operate and fund many health departments that provide a variety of services including behavioral and mental health services. The Federal government should provide technical assistance and funding to counties of all sizes to support community-based local programs that facilitate mental and physical health for law enforcement and the community at-large.

Some counties have recognized that emergency services personnel, including law enforcement officers, may experience unique stresses due to the nature of their profession. Law enforcement deaths by suicide do not often come to the forefront of public discussion and may be considered taboo. This is especially true in the law enforcement community as many officers and sheriff's deputies believe consulting a mental health professional may deter future promotions within organizations.

Many sheriff's departments employ a chaplain whose general mission includes professional and personal support while on duty. For example, Sarpy County, Nebraska's chaplains serve within the County Sheriff's Office and provide confidential counsel to law enforcement officers on a variety of issues including stress, marital problems, family relations and social problems.^v In Ventura County, California, the County sponsors a Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) program that is "dedicated to providing support services in the aftermath of a critical incident and reducing stress among emergency services personnel."^{vi} Ventura County's CISM program provides education, post-incident support and referrals to their emergency personnel following a critical incident and also regularly provides support services to reduce stress within this population.

Supporting mental health also comes in the form of preventative and educational training. For example, Spokane County, Washington's Sheriff's Department offers training on preventing law enforcement suicide, stress management and conflict resolution. The training is a comprehensive model for law enforcement suicide prevention and intervention designed to provide law enforcement officers with insight into anxiety and stress and provide healthy coping patterns.^{vii} Efforts like these empower law enforcement officers with knowledge and can provide support and encouragement to those seeking further professional assistance.

In addition to law enforcement specific programs, there are also community-wide efforts to promote mental wellbeing. Efforts to discuss and prevent suicide are taking place at the county level. In Douglas County, Colorado the sheriff's department is part of a local alliance that works on a community-wide approach to suicide prevention.^{viii} The Douglas County Sheriff's Office is an active member of Douglas Arapahoe Suicide Prevention Alliance which is comprised of twenty local government and community organizations that implement comprehensive, community-wide initiatives for preventing suicide in Douglas and Arapahoe Counties.^{ix} This type of initiative highlights the benefits of partnership and also the need for mental wellness.

In addition to supporting strong mental health for our law enforcement officers, many counties also employ physical training programs to ensure a physically ready and capable law enforcement workforce. In San Diego County, California, the county sheriff's department offers a voluntary physical training program to prepare applicants for the sheriff's academy.^x The workout program is strictly voluntary but comes highly

recommended to applicants who are in the background check process. This type of pre-employment training helps ensure a capable workforce.

On-the-job fitness programs have also proven to reduce officer injury and promote the physical health of law enforcement personnel. In 2010, Sheriff Larry Ashley of Okaloosa County, Florida initiated a comprehensive wellness program which has resulted in reductions in overall officer injury, reduced workers' compensation claims and better general health.^{xi} In the past, Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office had required its deputies to meet physical fitness standards for hiring and now they must maintain those standards. In the policy statement that accompanied this new requirement, it recognizes that "good physical and mental health are essential attributes of a professional law enforcement officer."^{xii} In one year, injuries to sheriff's deputies decreased from 55 in 2012 to just 39 in the same period in 2013.

Clackamas County, Oregon has taken the concept of physical (and mental) wellness and expanded its reach to the entire county workforce.^{xiii} The Clackamas County Wellness Program is part of the Department of Employee Services and provides numerous programs and classes that invest in county employees' wellbeing, both physical and mental. As a county program, county sheriff's personnel are eligible to participate. Components of the program include: exercise, food, de-stressing, education, medical self-care, financial fitness and wellness-focused newsletters.

The nation's 3,069 counties are employing creative methods to address homicide by shooting, suicide prevention and promoting mental and physical health. These are just a few examples of how counties across the country are serving and protecting those who protect the community.

III. CONCLUSION

Local sheriff's departments provide important public safety services that protect our communities. In recognition of law enforcement's dedication to public service, counties can and do provide a wide range of services that touch this community.

NACo looks forward to working with the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing to study, discuss and develop best practices to keep our public safety officials safe

from harm while also protecting the health and wellbeing of our communities and their residents.

ⁱ Nat'l Ass'n of Counties, *Why Counties Matter*, (2012), http://www.naco.org/Counties/countiesdo/Pages/Why-Counties-Matter2_4.aspx.

ⁱⁱ *Id.*

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://ojp.gov/bvpbasi/>

^{iv} *Id.*

^v <http://www.sarpy.com/sheriff/chaplaincy.html>

^{vi} <http://www.vchca.org/ems/critical-incident-stress-management>

^{vii} <http://www.spokanecounty.org/sheriff/training/>

^{viii} <http://www.dcsheiff.net/yess/suicide-prevention/>

^{ix} <http://www.dasuicideprevention.org/home.html>

^x <http://www.joinsdsheriff.net/prepare-le-physical.html>

^{xi} <http://fsmf.com/newsletter-7-13/index.php?type=1&article=fitness>

^{xii} <http://www.sheriff-okaloosa.org/wp-content/pdfs/newsreleases/2010/Dec.%2030%20-%20-%20%20Wellness%20%20News%20%20Release.pdf>

^{xiii} <http://www.clackamas.us/wellness/>

Testimony
National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE)
Before the President Barack H. Obama Task Force on 21st Century Policing
February 18, 2015

Co-Chairperson Charles H. Ramsey, Co-Chairperson Laurie O. Robinson, and members of the Task Force, we bring you greetings on behalf of the Executive Board and members of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives – NOBLE.

It is an honor for NOBLE to provide written testimony on specific recommendations for the task force to consider in the following areas:

- Reducing Officer Deaths
 - Shootings
 - Suicide
 - Vehicle operations
- Stress Management (PTSD)
- Physical Fitness
- Training and Safety Equipment
- Internal Procedural Justice
 - Treatment of officers
 - Fair discipline process
- Labor / Management Partnerships

NOBLE's testimony comes from the perspective of a Law Enforcement Organization that has been in existence for nearly 40 years. NOBLE has nearly 60 chapters and represents over 4,000 members worldwide that is comprised of chief executive officers and command-level law enforcement officials from federal, state, county, municipal law enforcement agencies, and criminal justice practitioners. NOBLE's mission is to ensure EQUITY IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE in the provision of public service to all communities, and to serve as the conscience of law enforcement by being committed to JUSTICE BY ACTION.

Task Force Recommendations

Reducing Officer Deaths – Shootings, Suicide, Vehicle Operations

The proliferation of illegal firearms throughout America, arguably, is the dominant external stable impacting the safety of Police Officers. However, attempts to reduce that threat to officers causes spasmodic emotions and bitter constitutional diatribe themed as attacks on ones' "Right to Bear Arms".

The December 20, 2014 assassination of New York City Police Department Detectives Wenjian Liu and Rafael Ramos, calamitously, is an apropos remnant of the nations' broken and fragmented firearm sale and possession policies. Where "straw buyers", without hindrance, populate urban cities with deadly weapons; and where firearm possession is a presumptive right, rebutted only upon a felonious act that merit law enforcement intervention.

An equally troubling scourge that causes pain and devastation to the law enforcement community is the demise of law enforcement officers as a result of suicide. Each year more law enforcement officers commit suicide than killed by criminals and, a multitudinous of co-workers struggling to contemplate at-risk behavior signs missed that could have forebode the tragic consequences. Oftentimes, alcoholism, financial stress, martial or relationship discord is a contributing culprit. However, a well trained professional law enforcement agency will also factor in the cumulative stress of police work when attempting to understand causality.

While stringent firearm laws and robust suicide prevention measures are no panacea, its embrative components add to the wellness of law enforcement officers. In other words, we have an obligation to ensure we are deploying law enforcement officers who have a sense of safety and security in their work environment and are mentally supported to effectuate professional police services.

Recommendations – Shootings

In light of tenacious opposition, NOBLE recommends commonsense measures such as, limiting the quantity of hand guns purchased and within certain time periods; requiring the reporting of lost or stolen handguns within 24 hours; judicial approval for persons with a history of domestic violence and a presumptive prohibition of mental health patients, absent a medical doctor endorsement.

Additional recommendations are listed below:

- Training and exposure to tactical/predictive policing strategies and methodology.

- Enhanced RMS and 9-1-1 systems integration with DMV, probation departments, BOLO files, call history information, NCIC, etc.
- Training on scenarios to determine individual and force multiplier strategies before engagement.
- Collaborative call dispatching/notification strategies in high crime and rural areas where there are overlaps in multi-jurisdictional areas.
- Forensic/tactical crime scene reconstruction in officer involved shootings and officer involved assaults to enhance knowledge of best practices for shoot-don't-shoot situations and less than lethal force applications.
- More intensive surveillance and probationary oversight on past offenders with high propensity for violence and assault.
- Additional training and review on procedures associated with domestic violence calls.
- Research and development in the areas of protective body armor for additional flexibility and projectile stopping power.

Recommendations – Suicide

NOBLE provides the following recommendations:

- On-going officer awareness training to assist in the identification of at-risk officers.
- Quality readily available health professionals with a trustworthy and confidential referral network.
- Mandatory behavioral assessments performed every 3 to 5 years. Additional assessments are recommended in high stress assignments such as SWAT, Narcotics, Sex and Youth Crime, etc.
- Family oriented seminars to provide information on stress indicators on law enforcement families and possible coping strategies such as stress relieving techniques.
- Work load re-assessment to include overtime and extra duty job hours.

Recommendations – Vehicle Operations

NOBLE provides the following recommendations:

- Additional training in defensive driving (incidental and non-incidental to accident involvement).
- Additional training and department adoption of chase policies and emergency response procedures.
- GPS speed tracking indicators in patrol cars and integrated with 9-1-1 dispatch centers.
- Public hotlines to report erratic and unprofessional driving.

- Re-assessment of seat belt restrain systems to include seat belt extenders, quick release seat belt options, and electronic/operational indicators recording seat belt use.

Stress Management (PTSD)

Police officers ceaseless exposure to traumatic occurrences has consequences that can impact one's work performance, yet identifying which officers are more susceptible is extremely difficult. Perhaps the most prevalent and unfortunate risk is the uncanny ability to lose compassion for and understanding of the community you serve. Police officers fitting this profile are walking "time bombs".

Law Enforcement Agencies must be creative, such as working with unions to rotate officers assigned to stressful communities; publicly rewarding officers who are intimately involved in solving community conditions and ensuring all command personnel are trained to identify at-risk factors that may "snowball" into major complications or community unrest. And lastly, support an Agency report culture that continuously reinforces the advantages reporting is to the community, the Agency, and the police officer.

NOBLE provides the following additional recommendations:

- Consideration of specific assessments of police hires from military deployments after initial traumatic incidents in police department.
- Engagement with health care providers to enhance coverage of behavioral and mental disorders.
- Collaboration with treatment centers and behavioral professionals to identify best practices and solutions in respective communities.

Physical Fitness

From 1983 to 1993, a study was conducted by the Cooper Institute for Aerobics Research that randomly sampled approximately 1,700 officers from different law enforcement agencies across the country. The results show that when compared with the general population, officers' average fitness levels are below normal in the areas of aerobic fitness, body fat, and abdominal strength and average in upper-body strength and lower-back flexibility. The data shows that law enforcement officers are less fit in most areas than at least half of all U.S. citizens despite the fact that the physical demands of their profession require that they be more fit than the average person.

NOBLE provides the following recommendations:

- Physical fitness incentives for exercise and body weight parameters associated with optimal health.
- Nutrition and health lifestyle departmental endorsements throughout agencies.

- On duty physical fitness allowance.
- Collaboration with local and national fitness center chains for discounted law enforcement memberships.

Training and Safety Equipment

It is critical that law enforcement reevaluate its training methodologies to ensure that they reflect the 21st century needs and incorporate cultural competency training for police officers that is part of recruit and in-service training.

NOBLE recommendations are the following:

- Technology and innovation seminars to departmental personnel for operational suggestions and personnel buy in.
- Educational and training incentives via foundations, grants, etc. to promote higher education and training.

Internal Procedural Justice - Treatment of Officers and Fair Discipline Process

Procedural justice is the idea of fairness in the processes that resolve disputes and allocate resources.

Internal procedural justice recommendations:

- Progressive discipline review by internal and external advocacy units.
- Corrective action parameters subject to legal review.
- Mandatory external agency investigation in high profile incidents and officer involved shootings.
- Treatment of Officers:
 - Review and assessment of post incident status of officers to include demotions, reassignment, work schedules, etc.
 - Transparency policy to include complaint hotline for retaliatory practices.
- Fair Discipline Process:
 - Collaborative review by internal and external Office of Professional Standards and civil review boards to identify inconsistent practices and policies.

Labor / Management Partnerships

NOBLE recommends strategic retreats and planning sessions with legal, business, government, civil rights, and non-profits to collaborate on positive outcomes on labor/management issues.