

While we need to do much more, today's bill starts to lay down the law to achieve real change for Americans. We are doing it Jersey style. They will catch up with us.

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I will close by just saying this is a piece of legislation that many of us have been working on for some time, so we are pleased to see that it is finally seeing the light of day. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

I am just proud that I played a small role in passing this legislation. Obviously, I am the sponsor, but we had Mr. PASCRELL from New Jersey and every time I went around to the Democratic side to talk about particular bills, he would grab me and talk to me about the BOSS and SWIFT ACT. Mr. PASCRELL actually made a good bill better, and we appreciate him so very much.

Again, without Chair RODGERS, Ranking Member PALLONE, and the ranking member of the subcommittee, my partner, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, this never would have gotten done.

Our constituents will benefit from this. You know what, this is a great example of how Congress should intervene.

Again, we passed it out of the House. We have got to lobby the Senate to get this done as soon as possible.

I want to thank the staff. We couldn't do it without the staff, that is for sure, on both sides of the aisle working out the details. Energy and Commerce is famous for working together and protecting our consumers.

Madam Speaker, I urge passage of this particular bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. TENNEY). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3950, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

RECRUIT AND RETAIN ACT

Mr. HUNT. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 546) to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to authorize law enforcement agencies to use COPS grants for recruitment activities, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 546

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Recruit and Retain Act".

SEC. 2. IMPROVING COPS GRANTS FOR POLICE HIRING PURPOSES.

(a) GRANT USE EXPANSION.—Section 1701(b) of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (34 U.S.C. 10381(b)) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (5) through (23) as paragraphs (6) through (24), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (4) the following:

"(5) to support hiring activities by law enforcement agencies experiencing declines in officer recruitment applications by reducing application-related fees, such as fees for background checks, psychological evaluations, and testing;"

(b) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—Section 1701(b)(23) of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (34 U.S.C. 10381(b)(23)) is amended by striking "(21)" and inserting "(22)".

SEC. 3. ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.

Section 1701 of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (34 U.S.C. 10381) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (i) through (n) as subsections (j) through (o), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after subsection (h) the following:

"(i) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—Not more than 2 percent of a grant made for the hiring or rehiring of additional career law enforcement officers may be used for costs incurred to administer such grant."

SEC. 4. PIPELINE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM.

Section 1701 of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (34 U.S.C. 10381) is amended by inserting after subsection (o) the following:

"(p) COPS PIPELINE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM.—

"(1) ELIGIBLE ENTITY DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term 'eligible entity' means a law enforcement agency in partnership with not less than 1 educational institution, which may include 1 or any combination of the following:

"(A) An elementary school.

"(B) A secondary school.

"(C) An institution of higher education.

"(D) A Hispanic-serving institution.

"(E) A historically Black college or university.

"(F) A Tribal college.

"(2) GRANTS.—The Attorney General shall award competitive grants to eligible entities for recruiting activities that—

"(A) support substantial student engagement for the exploration of potential future career opportunities in law enforcement;

"(B) strengthen recruitment by law enforcement agencies experiencing a decline in recruits, or high rates of resignations or retirements;

"(C) enhance community interactions between local youth and law enforcement agencies that are designed to increase recruiting; and

"(D) otherwise improve the outcomes of local law enforcement recruitment through activities such as dedicated programming for students, work-based learning opportunities, project-based learning, mentoring, community liaisons, career or job fairs, work site visits, job shadowing, apprenticeships, or skills-based internships.

"(3) FUNDING.—Of the amounts made available to carry out this part for a fiscal year, the Attorney General may use not more than \$3,000,000 to carry out this subsection."

SEC. 5. COPS GRANT GUIDANCE FOR AGENCIES OPERATING BELOW BUDGETED STRENGTH.

Section 1704 of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (34 U.S.C. 10384) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(d) GUIDANCE FOR UNDERSTAFFED LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES.—

"(1) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

"(A) COVERED APPLICANT.—The term 'covered applicant' means an applicant for a hiring grant under this part seeking funding for a law enforcement agency operating below the budgeted strength of the law enforcement agency.

"(B) BUDGETED STRENGTH.—The term 'budgeted strength' means the employment of the maximum number of sworn law enforcement officers the budget of a law enforcement agency allows the agency to employ.

"(2) PROCEDURES.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Attorney General shall establish consistent procedures for covered applicants, including guidance that—

"(A) clarifies that covered applicants remain eligible for funding under this part; and

"(B) enables covered applicants to attest that the funding from a grant awarded under this part is not being used by the law enforcement agency to supplant State or local funds, as described in subsection (a).

"(3) PAPERWORK REDUCTION.—In developing the procedures and guidance under paragraph (2), the Attorney General shall take measures to reduce paperwork requirements for grants to covered applicants."

SEC. 6. STUDY ON POLICE RECRUITMENT.

(a) STUDY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct a study to consider the comprehensive effects of recruitment and attrition rates on Federal, State, Tribal, and local law enforcement agencies in the United States, to identify—

(A) the primary reasons that law enforcement officers—

(i) join law enforcement agencies; and

(ii) resign or retire from law enforcement agencies;

(B) how the reasons described in subparagraph (A) may have changed over time;

(C) the effects of recruitment and attrition on public safety;

(D) the effects of electronic media on recruitment efforts;

(E) barriers to the recruitment and retention of Federal, State, and local law enforcement officers; and

(F) recommendations for potential ways to address barriers to the recruitment and retention of law enforcement officers, including the barriers identified in subparagraph (E).

(2) REPRESENTATIVE CROSS-SECTION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall endeavor to ensure accurate representation of law enforcement agencies in the study conducted pursuant to paragraph (1) by surveying a broad cross-section of law enforcement agencies—

(i) from various regions of the United States;

(ii) of different sizes; and

(iii) from rural, suburban, and urban jurisdictions.

(B) METHODS DESCRIPTION.—The study conducted pursuant to paragraph (1) shall include in the report under subsection (b) a description of the methods used to identify a representative sample of law enforcement agencies.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 540 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall—

(1) submit to the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives a report containing the study conducted under subsection (a); and

(2) make the report submitted under paragraph (1) publicly available online.

(c) **CONFIDENTIALITY.**—The Comptroller General of the United States shall ensure that the study conducted under subsection (a) protects the privacy of participating law enforcement agencies.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HUNT) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. IVEY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HUNT. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on S. 546.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. HUNT. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the Recruit and Retain Act before the House today. The Recruit and Retain Act is about helping our men and women in blue. This legislation passed the Senate by unanimous consent, and I am proud to sponsor and lead this bill in the House along with my fellow committee member across the aisle, Representative GLENN IVEY.

Our police departments are struggling with crisis-level recruiting shortages.

Here in Washington, for example, the Metropolitan Police Department has the lowest number of officers it has had in the past 50 years.

Another example, since 2019, the Chicago police force has lost 3,300 officers as of October 2022, and it has only replaced about half of those departures.

Some small towns that don't have as many resources are even having to shutter their police departments entirely.

We cannot stand by and let this continue to happen across our country, and this is why we need the Recruit and Retain Act.

Currently, the DOJ provides grants to State, local, and Tribal governments to hire law enforcement officers under the COPS Hiring program. The Recruit and Retain Act would leverage the COPS Hiring program to ensure the program is responsive to the latest hiring challenges that law enforcement agencies are experiencing nationwide.

This bill would reduce the cost of onboarding new officers, specifically fees associated with background checks, psychological evaluations, and other testing. It will also alleviate administrative burdens and clarify application guidance to ensure grants are accessible to all law enforcement agencies. It will create new opportunities for law enforcement to build trust and

interest in law enforcement careers with local youth.

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Lastly, the bill will require research into the latest data and uncover new insights into law enforcement recruitment and retention trends across the country.

This bill does not authorize new funds or create new grant programs, and it only allows existing COPS grants to be used for recruiting and retaining police officers.

I am proud to say this bill has been endorsed by the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, Fraternal Order of Police, Major Cities Chiefs Association, Major County Sheriffs of America, National Association of Police Organizations, National Sheriffs' Association, and others.

When our police departments are well funded and maintained, our communities are safer. Americans are safer. Let's support our cops. Let's help attract the best and the brightest to the law enforcement profession. That is so important in the environment our police officers live and work in every single day in this country.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the Recruit and Retain Act, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. IVEY. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of S. 546, the Recruit and Retain Act. H.R. 3325, the identical House version of the bill that I am co-leading with Congressman HUNT of Texas, passed the Judiciary Committee last week.

The Recruit and Retain Act addresses two key goals that are central to Police Week, recruiting young people who want to become law enforcement officers for the right reasons, and relieving the financial burden of recruiting and retaining law enforcement officers by assisting law enforcement agencies with the costs of the recruitment and application process.

The Recruit and Retain Act is supported by the Fraternal Order of Police, National Sheriffs' Association, Major Cities Chiefs Association, Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, National Association of Police Organizations, Major County Sheriffs of America, and several other organizations.

Recruiting and retaining highly trained law enforcement professionals is of the utmost importance. Our ability to attract and develop the best, brightest, and most compassionate and dedicated men and women of diverse backgrounds is vital to the health and well-being of our Nation.

Keeping our residents safe and promoting better community relations will lead to safer streets and better policing. We must incentivize hiring and retaining the people who will do the best job of safeguarding our communities through wise use of the most up-to-date law enforcement techniques.

For quite some time, law enforcement agencies nationwide have been facing a challenge in their efforts to maintain an appropriately staffed police force. Due in part to changing demographics, they have experienced high rates of resignations and retirements of law enforcement officers.

The 2021 Police Executive Research Forum Workforce Survey of law enforcement agencies revealed a 5 percent decrease in the overall hiring rate, an 18 percent increase in resignations, and a 45 percent increase in retirements from responding agencies.

The Recruit and Retain Act would establish a new model for the productive recruitment of future law enforcement officers who want to join police forces for the right reasons. Enhancing recruitment of qualified law enforcement officers who are dedicated to the highest principles of policing may also reduce an agency's attrition and resignations over the long term.

Through the bill's Pipeline Partnership Program, students will benefit from age-appropriate teachings about the rule of law, the value of law in an ordered society, and the centrality of the law enforcement and judicial systems, including the role that law enforcement officers play in maintaining these values within our society.

With age-appropriate introductions to the concepts of law and its importance coming from law enforcement officers and teachers in a friendly setting, some students may choose to join law enforcement, while others may become inspired to pursue careers as lawyers or public servants in other areas of government.

An introduction of law enforcement through schools would, in some ways, be similar to a Junior ROTC program for older students who may become interested in law enforcement careers without a contractual commitment. It could increase the number of candidates entering the law enforcement recruitment officer pipeline for desirable reasons.

The Pipeline Partnership Program would initially be deployed in a small number of jurisdictions, similar to a pilot program, and its positive outcomes could subsequently encourage other jurisdictions to replicate it.

The Recruit and Retain Act will also reduce the administrative costs of recruiting and retaining officers by assisting with the expenses of application fees, such as those for background checks, psychological evaluations, and testing. Funds would be made available to defray the costs of hiring applicants and rehiring officers, taking the burden off of strained law enforcement agencies.

Additionally, our bill directs the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study to better understand the factors that influence recruitment and loss of law enforcement agencies. This study will also recommend practices that will help reduce barriers to addressing these issues.

Importantly, the GAO study will assess recruitment, retention, and retirement factors experienced by law enforcement agencies nationwide in communities of all sizes, including those in rural areas which, in some contexts, receive less attention when law enforcement policies are evaluated and developed.

To facilitate those initiatives, rather than allocate additional funds, the Recruit and Retain Act would allow jurisdictions that receive COPS grants to utilize funds from those grants for the purposes outlined in the bill, with some limits and restrictions.

The bill also includes an annual list of \$3 million of COPS grant funds that can be used to connect students with law enforcement officers and agencies through the Pipeline Partnership Program. Although this is a very modest sum, it is sufficient for the creation of this program in a limited number of States and municipalities to test this concept.

By implementing these projects in limited locations across the Nation, the Recruit and Retain Act will help States and localities make informed decisions about adopting the program and its law enforcement recruitment procedures.

Madam Speaker, I thank, again, Congressman HUNT for his leadership on this legislation. It is for these reasons that I support S. 546, and I urge my colleagues to support this important bill, as well.

In closing, Madam Speaker, the Recruit and Retain Act initiatives, taken together, will serve as a de facto pilot project for many localities, large and small, urban and rural, that struggle with law enforcement recruitment and retention. Law enforcement agencies will be able to benefit from each other's experience when replicating initiatives created by this legislation's innovative solutions.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting S. 546, the Recruit and Retain Act, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HUNT. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HUNT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 546.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. HUNT. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS AND CONDEMNING EFFORTS TO DEFUND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Mr. JORDAN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 106) expressing support for local law enforcement officers and condemning efforts to defund local law enforcement agencies.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 106

Whereas the brave men and women in local law enforcement work tirelessly to protect the communities they serve;

Whereas local law enforcement officers are tasked with upholding the rule of law and ensuring public safety;

Whereas local law enforcement officers selflessly put themselves in harm's way to fight crime, get drugs off the streets, and protect the innocent;

Whereas defunding police narratives vilify and demonize local law enforcement officers and put them at greater risk of danger;

Whereas local law enforcement officers take an oath to never betray the public trust;

Whereas the local law enforcement community protects our streets, acknowledges the rights of all Americans, and keeps citizens safe from harm;

Whereas local law enforcement officers are recognized for their public service to all, knowing they face extremely dangerous situations while carrying out their duties;

Whereas a healthy and collaborative relationship between local law enforcement officers and the communities they serve is essential to creating mutually respectful dialogue; and

Whereas local law enforcement officers deserve respect and profound gratitude: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress—

(1) recognizes and appreciates the dedication and devotion demonstrated by the men and women of local law enforcement who keep the Nation's communities safe;

(2) extends its gratitude to all local law enforcement officers and their families for their sacrifice and service; and

(3) condemns calls to defund, disband, dismantle, or abolish the police.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. JORDAN) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. IVEY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. JORDAN. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Con. Res. 106.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Mr. JORDAN. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he might consume to the gentleman from the great State of Mississippi (Mr. EZELL), who is a sponsor of the legislation).

Mr. EZELL. Madam Speaker, my resolution expresses our support for the men and women who serve our communities in local law enforcement. These brave officers work tirelessly to protect and serve, putting their lives on the line regularly to uphold the rule of law.

As a former sheriff and a 42-year career law enforcement officer, I have seen what these men and women go through. I know the toll taken by the long hours, the sleepless nights, and the time spent away from family. I know what it is like to console the grieving families of victims after horrendous crimes and tragic accidents. I have seen things most Americans will, thankfully, never have to experience.

When others run away, our law enforcement officers are trained to run toward danger, to fight crime, and to protect the innocent. Far too often they don't make it back. Mississippi has not been spared from these tragedies.

In December of 2022, Bay St. Louis Police Sergeant Steven Robin and Officer Brandon Estorffe were shot and killed while conducting a welfare check on a woman and a child sitting in a parked vehicle. Last June, Madison Police Officer Randy Tyler was shot and killed while responding to a hostage situation.

Moreover, this January, George County Sheriff's Deputy Jeremy Malone was shot and killed during a traffic stop on a rural highway.

These men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice represent the best of our State and our Nation. Fallen heroes like these officers are being honored this week during National Police Week.

Madam Speaker, there is no better time for us to pass this resolution and make it clear we stand with law enforcement than this week, while thousands of local law enforcement officers and their families are gathering here in our Nation's Capital.

My resolution does just that. It expresses our gratitude for the selfless service of local law enforcement and the importance of a healthy relationship between law enforcement and the communities they protect.

It also condemns attempts to undermine that relationship through rhetoric about defunding and abolishing the police. These narratives demonize local law enforcement officers and encourage hostility toward law enforcement. Ultimately, they put both officers and the general public at greater risk.

We have seen targeted, ambush-style attacks on law enforcement officers, including one as recently as this Sunday. Agencies across the country are struggling to hire and keep talented officers as they are vilified for deciding to serve their communities.

At the same time, we have seen disturbing increases in crime, especially in cities like Washington, D.C., and Americans' fear of crime is at its highest level in 30 years.