



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SENS. GILLIBRAND AND CRUZ, REPS. MIN AND WEBER INTRODUCE BIPARTISAN BILL TO EXPAND BENEFITS FOR PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS

Legislation would amend the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program to speed up benefit determinations and extend benefits to permanently disabled officers currently excluded from the program

Washington, D.C. - Today, U.S. Senators Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Ted Cruz (R-TX) introduced the bipartisan *Officer John Barnes and Chief Michael Ansbro Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program Expansion Act of 2026*. This critical legislation would amend the existing PSOB program to speed up benefit determinations and extend benefits to additional public safety officers. Representatives Dave Min (D-CA-47) and Randy Weber (R-TX-14) introduced companion legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives.

"Public safety officers risk their lives every day to keep our communities safe. When tragedy strikes and an officer loses their life or becomes permanently disabled in the line of duty, we must look out for them and their family," said Senator Gillibrand. "I'm proud to introduce this legislation, and I will keep working across the aisle to make sure first responders and their families receive the support they deserve for their sacrifices."

"Officer John Barnes was critically wounded during the Santa Fe High School shooting and flat-lined twice while protecting students and teachers. Nearly eight years later, he is still waiting for the benefits he earned through his sacrifice. This delay is unacceptable. My bill ensures our brave law enforcement officers receive timely and fair support when they need it most," said Senator Cruz.

"The Public Safety Officers' Benefit Program ensures that peace officers can go to work knowing their families will be in good hands if the unthinkable happens and they are severely injured or killed in the line of duty," said Rep. Min. "For too long, the families of fallen officers have been denied the benefits they are owed because of bureaucratic backlogs and outdated rules. This bipartisan bill makes sure we are following through on the duty we owe to our law enforcement agents, who risk their lives every day, by setting firm timelines for benefit determinations and expanding eligibility to officers who are partially but permanently disabled. When first responders answer the call without hesitation, the federal government must do the same."

"I will never forget what Santa Fe, Texas endured almost eight years ago. When evil walked into Santa Fe High School, Officer John Barnes showed extraordinary courage. What he should not have had to endure was waiting more than seven years on Washington bureaucracy for an answer. That is wrong," said Rep. Weber. "The Officer John Barnes and Chief Michael Ansbro Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program Expansion Act of 2026 sets clear deadlines, expands eligibility to officers who are permanently disabled and unable to return to duty, and improves the process so families are not left waiting for years. When someone puts on the badge to protect our communities, we have a responsibility to stand with them and their loved ones."

Congress established the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance's (BJA) Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program in 1976 to provide death benefits to survivors of officers who have died in the line of duty. Since then, PSOB has been amended to provide disability and education benefits and to expand benefit eligibility.

Despite these amendments, beneficiaries often experience delayed adjudication of death and disability claims. Additionally, not all public safety officers who become permanently disabled as a result of a line of duty injury are able to receive benefits under the program's current eligibility rules. Gillibrand and Cruz's legislation would help expand eligibility and speed up benefit determinations.

Specifically, the bill would:

- Extend PSOB eligibility and partial benefits to officers who are permanently, but not totally, disabled and are unable to perform any gainful work as a public safety officer as a direct result of the injury
- Require the BJA to complete a death or disability determination within 270 days of receiving a complete claim
- Expedite processing for officers already certified for benefits through the World Trade Center Health Program (WTCHP) or the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund (VCF)
- Direct BJA to implement GAO recommendations to establish updated program processes and administrative procedures

This legislation is endorsed by over 30 organizations and unions, including: the Sergeants Benevolent Association of NYPD, National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO), FDNY EMS Local 2507 Uniformed EMTs Paramedics & Fire Inspectors Union, Firefighter's Association of the State of New York, NYLEAP, Nassau County Superior Officers Association, Voices Center for Resilience, Town of Brighton Police Department, NYPD Captains Endowment Association, Port Authority Police Lieutenants Benevolent Association, Police Benevolent Association of the New York State Troopers, New York State Association of Chiefs of Police, Port Authority of NY & NJ Detectives Endowment Association, Peace Officers Research Association of California, Pittsford Volunteer Ambulance, Inc., United States Deputy Sheriff's Association, California Association of Highway Patrolmen, Uniformed Firefighters Association of Greater New York, Friends of Firefighters, Police Chiefs' Association of Orange County, City of Syracuse New York Fire Department, Village of Tuckahoe Police, National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition (NNOAC), City of Utica Fire Department, and Riverside Sheriffs' Association.

"My father Michael Ansbro, who had served as Chief of the New York City Transit Police Department, passed away more than two and a half years ago as a result of cancer that he developed after being exposed during his time at Ground Zero on September 11th and the months that followed. Over the years, my family and far too many New York City firefighters and other first responders have unfortunately experienced delayed adjudication of death and disability benefit applications," said Uniformed Firefighters Association President Andrew Ansbro. "On behalf of our members, I'd like to thank Senator Gillibrand and her colleagues in the House and Senate for introducing this important legislation to ensure that all of our first responders and their families receive the support they need. I am also grateful that if passed, this bill will expedite benefits processing for 9/11 first responders already certified through the World Trade Center Health Program and the Victim Compensation Fund."

"On May 18, 2018, my fellow officers and I ran toward danger to protect our community in Santa Fe. I was gravely injured in the line of duty, and while the physical wounds have been life-altering, the years-long wait for a determination on the benefits my family and I were promised has been incredibly difficult. No officer who puts their life on the line should have to spend years navigating bureaucratic delays just to receive the support they have earned. I am deeply grateful to Senator Cruz and Senator Gillibrand for fighting to ensure that officers and their families receive timely decisions and the certainty they deserve. This legislation is about accountability, fairness, and honoring the commitment our nation makes to those who serve, and I hope to see it become law," said Officer John Barnes.

"The National Fraternal Order of Police strongly supports the Officer John Barnes and Chief Michael Ansbro Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program Expansion Act, which will help the program make timely claim determinations, increasing accountability, and providing interim benefits so families are not left waiting during bureaucratic delays," **said Fraternal Order of Police National President, Patrick Yoes.** *"The FOP appreciates the leadership of Senators Gillibrand and Cruz leadership in ensuring the families of our fallen officers are provided the support they need."*

"The Public Safety Officer's Benefits Program is a vital lifeline for officers and families who have just experienced a horrible tragedy, providing much-needed death, disability, and education benefits. Unfortunately, the current state of the Program does little to instill confidence in officers and their families that the federal government will do its part to take care of them," **said Bill Johnson, Executive Director of the National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO).** *"The Officer John Barnes and Chief Michael Ansbro Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program Expansion Act of 2026 would make vital improvements to the program and ensure that the survivors of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty and officers catastrophically injured in the line of duty are provided every available resource and benefit in a timely and transparent manner. NAPO stands with Senators Gillibrand and Cruz in support of this important bill and thanks them for their efforts on behalf of our nation's law enforcement community."*

"The Officer John Barnes and Chief Michael Ansbro Public Safety Officers' Benefit Program Expansion Act provides significant and needed reforms to the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program that will ease the burdens faced by disabled officers and the families of fallen officers when applying for earned PSOB benefits," **said President Vincent Vallelong of the NYPD Sergeants Benevolent Association (SBA).** *"This legislation includes several longstanding SBA priorities, most notably expediting the claims process for 9/11 first responders with World Trade Center-related health conditions. We are grateful for the leadership of Senators Gillibrand and Cruz in working with us to address legacy issues with the PSOB Program and to ensure that it provides timely assistance to the families of those who have fallen in the line of duty."*

For a full list of endorsement quotes, please click [here](#).

The full text of the legislation can be found [here](#) and a summary of the legislation can be found [here](#).

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