

116TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 7568

To amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to authorize public safety officer death benefits to officers suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 9, 2020

Mr. TRONE (for himself and Mr. RESCHENTHALER) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to authorize public safety officer death benefits to officers suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Public Safety Officer
5 Support Act of 2020”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Every day, public safety officers, including
2 police officers, firefighters, emergency medical tech-
3 nicians, and others, work to maintain the safety,
4 health, and well-being of the communities they serve.

5 (2) From time to time this means being called
6 to respond to stressful and potentially traumatic sit-
7 uations, sometimes even putting their own lives in
8 danger.

9 (3) This work not only puts them at risk for ex-
10 perience harm, serious injury, and severe trauma,
11 but also places them at up to 25.6 times higher risk
12 for developing post-traumatic stress disorder when
13 compared to those without such experiences.

14 (4) Psychological evidence indicates law en-
15 forcement officers experience significant job-related
16 stressors and exposures that may confer increased
17 risk for mental health morbidities (for example post-
18 traumatic stress disorder, and suicidal thoughts and
19 behaviors), and hastened mortality.

20 (5) Public safety officers often do not have the
21 resources or support they need, leaving them at
22 higher risk for long-term mental health con-
23 sequences.

24 (6) In 2017, the Department of Justice ap-
25 proved 481 Public Safety Officer Benefit (PSOB)

1 claims, but not one of them for the over 240 public
2 safety officers who died by suicide that year.

3 (7) As it currently stands, officers who have
4 died or are disabled as a result of suicide or post-
5 traumatic stress disorder do not qualify for this pro-
6 gram, despite officers being more likely to die by
7 suicide than in the line of duty.

8 **SEC. 3. PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICER DEATH BENEFITS FOR**
9 **POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.**

10 Section 1201 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe
11 Streets Act of 1968 (34 U.S.C. 10281) is amended by
12 adding at the end the following:

13 “(o) As determined by the Bureau—

14 “(1) post-traumatic stress disorder suffered by
15 a public safety officer, and diagnosed by a licensed
16 medical or mental health professional, shall be pre-
17 sumed to constitute a personal injury within the
18 meaning of subsection (a), sustained in the line of
19 duty by the officer, if the officer, while on duty, en-
20 engages in situations involving stressful, tensional, or
21 traumatic law enforcement, fire suppression, rescue,
22 hazardous material response, emergency medical
23 services (including responding to opioid overdoses, or
24 traumatic psychological or psychiatric distress calls),

1 prison security, disaster relief, or other emergency
2 response activity; and

3 “(2) in the case that a public safety officer de-
4 scribed in paragraph (1) dies by suicide (for pur-
5 poses of a claim under subsection (a)), or is perma-
6 nently and totally disabled as a result of post-trau-
7 matic stress disorder, including as a result of at-
8 tempted suicide (for purposes of a claim under sub-
9 section (b)), such death or disability shall be pre-
10 sumed to be a direct and proximate result of such
11 engagement,

12 unless competent psychological or medical evidence estab-
13 lishes that the post-traumatic stress disorder was unre-
14 lated to the engagement or was directly and proximately
15 caused by something other than the mere presence of post-
16 traumatic stress disorder risk factors. For purposes of
17 paragraph (2), a public safety officer shall be considered
18 permanently and totally disabled as a result of post-trau-
19 matic stress disorder if the officer is unable to serve as
20 a public safety officer in the same or substantially similar
21 role as the officer was serving prior to suffering from post-
22 traumatic stress disorder.”.

23 **SEC. 4. GAO REPORT.**

24 On the date that is one year after the date of the
25 enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the

1 United States shall submit to Congress a report on bene-
2 fits issued pursuant to subsection (o) of section 1201 of
3 the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968
4 (34 U.S.C. 10281), as added by this Act, and any rec-
5 ommendations to improve such subsection.

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