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Contact:

Ian Anderson
(818) 268-6488

IAnderson@fionahuttonassoc.com

United States House of Representatives Passes Several Public Safety Bills

On Wednesday, October 27th, the United States House of Representatives passed three public safety bills with broad bipartisan support, including S. 921, *the Jaime Zapata and Victor Avila Federal Officers and Employees Protection Act*; S. 1502, *the COPS Counseling Act*; and S. 1511, *the Protecting America's First Responders Act of 2021*. The three bills are now headed to the President's desk to be signed into law.

- **S. 921, the Jaime Zapata and Victor Avila Federal Officers and Employees Protection Act** ensures that individuals who harm or attempt to harm federal law enforcement officers can be prosecuted in the United States by granting extraterritorial jurisdiction over this criminal conduct. The bill is named after two U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Special Agents who were attacked by Mexican drug cartels in San Luis Potosi, Mexico in 2011. Special Agent Zapata died from his injuries, and although his murderers were apprehended, a federal appeals court dismissed the murder convictions because the district court did not have jurisdiction over the crimes committed on non-U.S. soil.
- **S. 1502, the COPS Counseling Act** establishes new requirements for peer counseling programs for law enforcement officers, including that any information shared by law enforcement officers remains confidential, and that the Department of Justice publicly release best practices and training resources for those looking to become peer support mentors.
- **S. 1511, the Protecting America's First Responders Act of 2021** corrects several administrative issues with Public Safety Officer Benefits (PSOB), which currently only benefit first responders disabled in the line of duty if they can never again return to work. Because this standard leaves behind many disabled officers who would benefit from the program, S. 1511 ensures that disabled first responders whose work is for therapeutic purposes, involves simple tasks, or provides special accommodations, can still receive benefits.

"Despite the announcement that federal police reform negotiations had come to a halt earlier this year, it is encouraging to see that Congress continues working in a bipartisan manner to enact common sense legislation that will have a significant impact on officers nationwide," **said Brian Marvel, President of the Peace Officers Research Association of California.** "PORAC is encouraged by these three bills and remains committed to working with our legislators in Washington to develop and champion new policies that will place officers in a better position to serve our communities."

About the Peace Officers Research Association of California:

The Peace Officers Research Association of California (PORAC) was incorporated in 1953 as a professional federation of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. PORAC represents over 77,000 public safety members and over 920 associations, making it the largest law enforcement organization in California and the largest statewide association in the nation.