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IAFC Asks President Bush to Examine PSOB Program
Major Fire-Service Organizations Express Concern about Program

Fairfax, Va., Apr. 23, 2007... The IAFC, joined by other major fire-service organizations, called on the White House to examine concerns over the administration of a federal program designed to compensate the families of public-safety officers who die in the line of duty. The Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) program, administered by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), was expanded by the Hometown Heroes Survivors Benefits Act of 2003 to cover the families of public-safety officers who die due to a line-of-duty heart attack or stroke.

"The IAFC is very concerned that the DOJ is not implementing this legislation properly. As a result, the families of America's fallen public-safety officers are not receiving survivor benefits mandated by law," noted IAFC President Chief Jim Harmes.

On April 20, the IAFC—joined by the Congressional Fire Services Institute, the International Association of Firefighters, the National Volunteer Fire Council, the International Association of Arson Investigators and the National Fallen Fighters Foundation—[sent a letter to the White House](#). This letter was in response to numerous survivor inquiries and recent press reports that indicated that 38 of the first batch of PSOB claims considered under the Hometown Heroes Survivors Benefits Act have been rejected and only two have been approved. Another 200 cases remain undecided.

In 2003, Congress passed the Hometown Heroes Survivors Benefits Act (P.L. 108-182), which extended PSOB coverage to the families of public-safety officers who have died as the direct and proximate result of a heart attack or stroke during an emergency response. The presumption of death is clearly defined in the law and accompanying floor statements made by the bill's authors in the House and Senate.

The IAFC also is concerned that the DOJ has shifted the burden of proof for these benefits onto those very families that recently lost a loved one in the line of duty. "This has never been the intent of the PSOB program, nor is it a proper way to deal with these grieving families," Harmes stated.

The IAFC will continue to seek a satisfactory resolution for the families of these public-service officers lost in the line of duty. We will continue to press forward in working with the other major fire-service organizations, the White House and the DOJ to ensure we reach this mutual goal.

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