

Public Safety Collective Bargaining Rights

The IAFF strongly supports the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act and encourages members of Congress to cosponsor H.R. 1154 and S. 1394.

BACKGROUND

Fire and police departments benefit from productive partnerships between employers and employees. Studies have shown that communities promoting such cooperation enjoy more effective and efficient delivery of emergency services. Cooperation enables employers and workers to come together to confront difficult budgetary constraints, which proved invaluable as the country recovered from the last economic crisis. The best way to ensure such cooperation is through an established collective bargaining framework. While many public safety officers already benefit from local collective bargaining laws, there are still many workers who have zero rights or whose laws do not provide adequate protection.

Over the years, Congress has expanded the scope of collective bargaining laws to protect private sector employees, transportation workers, federal government employees and congressional employees. One of the few groups of workers not covered by federal law are state and local public safety employees. While Congress has historically given states and localities wide latitude in managing their own employees, ensuring public safety officers have basic collective bargaining rights is consistent

with the large role the public safety community plays in protecting our nation's homeland security.

The Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act would give public safety officers basic collective bargaining rights in states that currently do not provide them. The legislation gives states wide flexibility to write and administer their own laws, consistent with the following minimum standards:

- The right to form and join a labor organization and to have that organization be recognized through the formation and agreement of a contract.
- The right to bargain over working conditions, hours and wages.
- The ability to find resolution through arbitration and, if an agreement is reached, to have that agreement enforced in court or through an administrative agency.

The Cooperation Act does not allow strikes or lockouts, does not infringe on right-to-work laws and does not interfere with existing state laws and collective bargaining agreements.

LEGISLATION

House: H.R. 1154, the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act of 2019
Sponsors: Representative Dan Kildee (D-MI); Representative Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA)

Senate: S. 1394, the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act of 2019
Sponsor: Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)

Summary: The Cooperation Act would guarantee public safety officers basic collective bargaining rights in states that do not currently provide them.