

KEY POINTS

The Cooperation Act enjoys broad bipartisan support and protects states' rights

- The Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act has historically enjoyed broad and bipartisan support in Congress. When last considered by the U.S. House of Representatives in the 110th Congress, the bill passed 314 to 97, with a majority of each party in favor.
- The bill gives maximum flexibility and ample time for states to craft their own laws, giving fire fighters and police officers the ability to sit down and talk with their employers. The Cooperation Act respects the uniqueness of each state's employment needs and does not allow public safety officers the right to strike, does not impact right-to-work laws and allows local jurisdictions to have the final say over public safety decisions.

Collective bargaining helps protect public safety

- The federal government has a vested interest in improving local emergency response operations through adequate staffing, training and equipment to better protect the security of the homeland. Effective homeland security relies in large part on effective local first response agencies. It is to the benefit and within the ability of the government to ensure frontline responders can discuss with their employer how to best provide emergency services.
- The ability of fire fighters to talk about their job with employers protects public safety. Collective bargaining has produced measurable staffing, training, equipment and health and safety improvements throughout the nation's fire departments — resulting in safer fire fighters and improved local emergency response capabilities.

Civilian fatality rates for states that do not provide basic collective bargaining rights are, on average, higher than in states that do.

The Cooperation Act strengthens public safety retirement and wages

- Due to the dangerous nature of the profession, fire fighters are forced to retire early, putting an emphasis on smart retirement planning. Studies show that collective bargaining results in a fairer pension contribution, producing a more reliable retirement security with less stress applied to local governments' ability to manage retirement systems.
- Collective bargaining and union representation can also strengthen earnings while still on the job. Eight of the top 10 states, in terms of per capita income, recognize the right to bargain for public employees. Seven of the bottom 10 states in per-capita income do not allow collective bargaining for all public sector workers.

Collective bargaining ensures communities receive the best possible protection

- The number-one priority for public safety workers is to provide the most effective and efficient service possible to the community. This in part requires aggressive recruiting, smart training and retaining high-quality workers. Having a voice in the workplace creates a needed space where management and labor can come together to achieve this priority and keep the community safe.