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CHUCK CANTERBURY
NATIONAL PRESIDENT

JAMES O. PASCO, JR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

5 May 2005

The Honorable Chris Chocola
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Chocola,

I am writing on behalf of the members of the Fraternal Order of Police to advise you of our strong support for legislation you intend to introduce this week entitled the "Healthcare Enhancement for Local Public Safety (HELPS) Retirees Act."

Because of the physical demands of their profession, law enforcement and other public safety officers retire earlier than other occupations--in fact, many local, State and Federal agencies have mandatory retirement ages for their officers. In many instances, these retired officers lose their employer-provided health insurance upon or shortly after their retirement--a time when they are years away from being eligible for Medicare. This, coupled with the fact that law enforcement and other public safety officers face greater health care needs than other professions because of the hazards they faced in the line of duty, forces them to spend a considerable amount of their limited income on health insurance premiums.

The legislation you intend to introduce this week would provide a modest tax benefit to help retired public safety officers afford health insurance by allowing these retirees to use, on a pre-tax basis, up to $5,000 annually from their pension funds, including defined benefit plans and defined contribution plans, to pay for premiums on health care and long-term care insurance. Your proposal does not create new health care programs or provide public safety officers access to health care options they don't already have--it simply makes existing options more affordable.

The F.O.P. was proud to have had the opportunity to work with you and your staff in the development of the legislation and we look forward to helping you move the bill through Congress. On behalf of the more than 318,000 members of the Fraternal Order of Police, thank you for your leadership on this important issue. If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me or Executive Director Jim Pasco in my Washington office.

Sincerely,

Chuck Canterbury
National President