

Presidential Candidate Questionnaire

The following questionnaire prepared by the National Legislative Office is being provided to the Presidential Screening Committee at the direction of National President Chuck Canterbury.

The following is a brief summation of the top legislative priorities of the Fraternal Order of Police:

Social Security issues: Support H.R. 1332/S. 2010, the “Social Security Fairness Act,” and Oppose Mandatory Participation in Social Security

The FOP strongly supports the repeal of both the “Windfall Elimination Provision” (WEP) and the “Government Pension Offset” (GPO). The FOP vehemently opposes legislation which would mandate participation in Social Security for public employees or new hires who are currently outside the Social Security system.

Support the “Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act”

The FOP strongly supports legislation which would guarantee the right of public employees to bargain collectively with their employers over hours, wages, and conditions of employment. The goal of this legislation is to have each State pass a law providing minimum collective bargaining rights to their public safety employees and outlines certain provisions to be included in those laws. Strikes and lockouts would be prohibited and States with collective bargaining laws already on the books will be exempt from any Federal statute.

Support H.R. 1789, the “State and Local Law Enforcement Discipline, Accountability and Due Process Act”

The FOP strongly supports a “bill of rights” for law enforcement officers who are, in a number of jurisdictions, denied their due process rights by police administrators and management in noncriminal proceedings. There is a need for a minimum level of procedural protections for law enforcement officers accused of administrative wrongdoing because of the gravity of potential harm to officers created by this lack of uniform safeguards.

Support H.R. 324

The FOP strongly supports legislation giving certain Federal law enforcement officers employed by the U.S. Department of Defense statutory arrest authority.

Support H.R. 327/S. 985, the “Law Enforcement Officers’ Equity Act”

The FOP strongly supports legislation expanding the definition of “law enforcement officer” for salary and retirement benefits to include all Federal law enforcement officers.

SECTION ONE:

EMPLOYEES' RIGHTS ISSUES

1. The Fraternal Order of Police strongly supports *H.R. 1332/S. 2010, the "Social Security Fairness Act,"* which would repeal both the "Windfall Elimination Provision" (WEP) and the "Government Pension Offset" (GPO) in current law. The WEP penalizes certain public employees who also worked in the private sector and paid into the Social Security system, through a substantial reduction in their benefits, because they also collect a government pension. The GPO provision in current law causes the reduction or elimination of the spouse's or widow(er)'s benefit from Social Security by two-thirds of the monthly amount received from the government pension. Are you a cosponsor of this legislation? If elected, will your Administration actively support its enactment and will you sign the bill if it is passed by Congress?

OBAMA: Throughout my career, I have stood with law enforcement. And I will never forget that the members of the Secret Service, including its uniformed division, put their lives on the line to protect my family and me. Even in tough economic times, when tough budget choices are needed, I have insisted on protecting proven efforts to support law enforcement and combat crime. My support for the men and women who put their lives on the line will never waiver.

The Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset raise important questions of fairness. A broader set of reforms are needed to strengthen Social Security for future generations. I support eliminating these two provisions within a comprehensive effort to reform Social Security to ensure that state and local employees are treated fairly.

ROMNEY: Providing for the elderly is a bedrock commitment of our society, and both Social Security and government employee pension programs must be able to meet that obligation for generations to come. Unfortunately, today's Social Security program is unsustainable over the long-term and defined benefit pensions are placing significant strain on government budgets. I am strongly committed to preserving Social Security for today's seniors, who have planned their retirement around the program's benefits. But I do not believe that it would be fiscally responsible to pursue policies that would increase Social Security liabilities.

2. In the past few years, politicians at the Federal, State and local level have demonized public sector unions—including unions representing law enforcement officers. Law enforcement officers, who put themselves in harm's way to protect their neighborhoods and communities, are being held up as objects of scorn and ridicule by these politicians who cite the cost of their hard-earned pensions and benefits as the reason for the government's fiscal woes. What will you and your Administration do to halt these politically motivated attacks on public safety unions and how will your Administration bolster these organizations?

OBAMA: Our economy is stronger when we've got broad-based growth and broad-based prosperity. That's what unions have always been about—shared prosperity. America cannot have a strong, growing economy without a strong, growing middle class and without a strong labor movement. And as long as I'm in the White House I'm going to stand up for collective bargaining.

The American people deserve to have qualified public servants fighting for them every day. This is why I appointed Hilda Solis as Secretary of Labor, and recently appointed three new leaders to the National Labor Relations Board who will uphold the rights of working Americans.

I stand with organized labor and public sector unions in condemning those who vilify public servants for doing their jobs. The Recovery Act kept hundreds of thousands of state and local workers on the job through the economic crisis, and provided \$4 billion specifically for state and local law enforcement. I applauded Ohio voters for rejecting Issue 2, a law that would have stripped public employees of their collective bargaining rights. This year, I am seeking more funding to help cities and states keep police officers and sheriffs' deputies on the job. You can be assured that I will continue to support police officers, firefighters, teachers, and other public servants at every turn.

ROMNEY: Law enforcement officers provide an extraordinarily important service to our communities. We owe them and their families a great debt of gratitude for the risks they take every day in defense of our freedom and safety. As I have long believed and consistently pointed out, labor unions can perform an important and constructive role in our society. The work done by the Fraternal Order of Police — from education services to legal defense — offers an excellent illustration. We need a frank conversation in this country about how we can restore fiscal responsibility to our government, but the discussion must be conducted in a way that recognizes and respects the legitimate interests and concerns of all parties. In my administration, we will listen carefully to the perspective of the law enforcement community and I will ensure that those views are taken into account as we craft policies to address the challenges before us.

3. In 2001, the Commission to Strengthen Social Security (CSSS) issued a report which rejected a scheme to mandate participation in Social Security for newly hired State and local government employees currently outside the Social Security system. Will you pledge to oppose any plan and veto any legislation which includes a provision mandating participation in the Social Security system for either current or newly hired State and local government employees that do not currently participate in Social Security?

OBAMA: I am committed to protecting and strengthening Social Security for future generations, without gambling Social Security benefits on the stock market, slashing benefits, or failing to protect retirees from seeing their basic benefits reduced. Any reform should strengthen retirement security for the most vulnerable, including low-income seniors, and maintain robust disability and survivors' benefits. While some have proposed extending mandatory Social Security coverage to all newly hired public employees to help close our funding shortfall, I have not supported any plan to mandate this coverage.

ROMNEY: One of the great strengths of our system of government is the principle of federalism — the idea that we are stronger as a nation when each state is given the freedom to pursue its own course and adopt the policies best for its own citizens. We have a president today who rejects this founding principle, and instead believes that Washington has the best one-size-fits-all solution to all of our problems. I disagree. That is why, across a broad range of issues, I have proposed taking power away from Washington and giving it to the states. If state and local governments want to provide their employees with alternative pension programs that provide retirement security, the federal government should welcome that effort instead of seeking to interfere with it.

4. The Fraternal Order of Police strongly supports legislation which provides minimal collective bargaining rights for public safety employees (i.e., law enforcement officers and firefighters). What is your position on public employee collective bargaining? In the 111th Congress, the FOP strongly supported **H.R. 413/S. 1611, the “Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act.”** If elected, will your Administration actively support the enactment of similar legislation and will you sign the bill if it is passed by Congress? Would you also support similar provisions that would allow uniform and non-uniform Federal law enforcement officers to unionize and engage in collective bargaining?

OBAMA: In the Senate, I was an original co-sponsor of the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act, and I would sign this legislation with pride.

ROMNEY: I disagree with the Fraternal Order of Police on this point. As I noted above, I believe that labor unions — including public employee unions — can be constructive forces in our communities and I would look forward to working closely with them as president. But it was President Franklin Delano Roosevelt who observed that “the process of collective bargaining, as usually understood, cannot be transplanted into the public service.” I agree with this view, and I would not support an expansion of collective bargaining rights for public employees.

5. The Fraternal Order of Police strongly supports legislation which would articulate the rights of law enforcement officers who are, in a number of jurisdictions, denied their due process rights by police administrators and management. Are you a cosponsor of **H.R. 1789, the “State and Local Law Enforcement Discipline, Accountability and Due Process Act,”** which protects the due process

rights of law enforcement officers in non-criminal, administrative proceedings? If elected, will your Administration actively support its enactment and will you sign the bill if it is passed by Congress?

OBAMA: I remain committed to the protection of both political rights and due process rights of all workers, including those who put their lives on the line to defend others' constitutional rights. I continue to support this important piece of legislation and if enacted by Congress, I will sign it.

ROMNEY: I stand second to no one in my commitment to protecting due process rights for all Americans, and as president I will work to ensure that every level of government in the United States complies scrupulously with every applicable provision of our Constitution. Nowhere are such protections more important than in the context of law enforcement, where our public servants are repeatedly called upon to make split-second life-or-death decisions in the face of murky facts and when the possibility of mistake is unavoidable. However, I do not believe that it is the place of the federal government to impose specific processes or standards on state and local governments. As I described above, I believe that the principles of federalism have served our nation well and can continue to do so. Local communities should be responsible for the management of their own public safety institutions, and I expect that such local control will ultimately benefit not only the communities but also the law enforcement officers who serve them.

6. The Fraternal Order of Police strongly supports ***H.R. 327/S. 985, the "Law Enforcement Officers Equity Act,"*** which would expand the definition of "law enforcement officer" under the Civil Service Retirement System and the Federal Employees Retirement System to include all Federal police officers, as well as Customs and Immigration Inspectors. What is your position regarding the current disparity in the pay and benefits provided to law enforcement officers across the Federal government, and what measures will you support to ensure parity among the Federal government's first responders? If elected, will your Administration actively support its enactment? Will you sign the bill if it is passed by Congress?

OBAMA: Yes, I continue to support the Law Enforcement Officers Equity Act and would sign this legislation if passed by Congress.

ROMNEY: I have not carefully studied the current compensation policies for all types of public safety officers in the federal government. In general, I believe that we must make sure that all federal employees are fairly compensated for the work they do, taking account of the physical demands and threats to personal safety a job entails.

7. The enactment of ***H.R. 3590, the "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act,"*** included an excise tax on high cost employer-sponsored health coverage. Even though this tax is levied against the insurance provider and the tax does not go into effect until January 2018, the provision is strongly opposed by the Fraternal Order of Police because it could result in a decrease in the quality or increase the cost of plans for law enforcement officers. The provision imposes a forty percent (40%) tax to premiums above \$27,500 for family plans and \$10,200 for individuals. (For example, an individual plan worth \$11,200 would pay a \$400 tax.) There is an increased threshold for employees engaged in high risk professions, which includes law enforcement, of \$3,000 for family plans and \$1,350 for individual plans. Essentially, any plan for a law enforcement officer that is under \$30,500 (for a family) or \$11,550 (for an individual) would be exempt from the tax. Also, the thresholds are indexed to increase at the rate of inflation. As President, what steps will you take to repeal this tax and will you pledge to oppose any direct or indirect tax on health plans?

OBAMA: Health care reform is already expanding health care coverage, saving Americans money, and improving our health. Thanks to the law, 105 million Americans no longer have lifetime limits on their coverage, as many as 18 million children with pre-existing conditions can no longer be denied coverage, and 2.5 million young adults have gained coverage through their parents' plan.

The law also includes an excise tax on health care plans with the very highest premiums, which will reduce premiums and contribute to long-term deficit reduction. We improved this provision in the

legislative process by delaying the effective date by five years, raising the premium amounts that are exempt from taxation, providing an allowance for plans whose health costs are higher due to the age or gender of their workers and including a permanent adjustment in favor of high-risk occupations such as first responders.

ROMNEY: I have been a consistent and vocal opponent of Obamacare. On my first day in office I will issue an executive order that begins to relieve states of the law's onerous burdens, and I will work with Congress to repeal the law entirely. My proposal for true health care reform increases state flexibility, promotes market competition, and enhances consumer choice. To achieve those ends I have called for a change in the tax treatment of health insurance. I believe that all Americans should receive the same tax benefit for purchasing health insurance, regardless of whether they purchase it individually, or receive it from an employer or union.

8. The Fraternal Order of Police strongly supports the use of Defined Benefit (DB) pension plans for public employees and is concerned that these plans are under fire at the State and local level in favor of Defined Contribution (DC) plans, which do not have guaranteed benefits for retirees. Many State lawmakers have proposed legislation which would replace existing Defined Benefit plans with Defined Contribution plans, thereby reducing retirement benefits for employees. What is your position in respect to Defined Benefit and Defined Contribution plans and how might your Administration address this issue at the Federal level?

OBAMA: After working for a lifetime, American workers deserve to be able to rely on a secure retirement. My administration is committed to strengthening the pension system while also giving Americans more and better choices to save for retirement. I have proposed doubling tax credits for small employers that start pension plans and establishing automatic workplace retirement accounts. I support the continuation of defined benefit plans for federal law enforcement employees.

ROMNEY: Much of the private sector has already made a transition from Defined Benefit to Defined Contribution plans, and I believe it will be beneficial to state and local governments to make a similar transition. Defined Contribution plans help to control costs and protect future taxpayers, offer employees greater flexibility and choice, and avoid situations in which unfunded liabilities threaten both government budgets and retirement security. I would not seek to use the power of the federal government to prevent state or local governments from making this transition.

9. In 2007, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) proposed a new rule requiring pension plans to have a "normal retirement age" which is an age "not earlier than the earliest age that is reasonably representative of the typical retirement age for the industry in which the covered workforce is employed." For plans in which "substantially all" of the participants are public safety officers, the new "normal retirement age" would be 50. This is at odds with the standard practice of defined benefit plans used by State and local governments, which typically define their normal retirement age or normal retirement date as the date or age when participants qualify for normal or unreduced retirement benefits under the plan. Such qualification is often conditioned, in whole or in part, on the completion of a stated number of years of service. Pension plans are designed for public safety employees, who must maintain physical vigor to accomplish their public safety missions, and, for this reason, often begin these careers at an earlier age than other public employees and retire at an earlier age. Typical public safety plans are tied to years of service, usually ranging from 20 to 25 years, not to the arbitrary 50 years of age described in the regulation. The Federal government has never prohibited the use of years of service practice for governmental pension plans. In fact, the IRS routinely approved service-based normal retirement ages through the determination letter process. The implementation of this rule has been delayed by the IRS several times already and without another delay, a change in the rule, or legislative action, it will go into effect on 1 January 2013. There is little doubt that its implementation would have an immediate and very negative impact on many individuals as well as pension plans, many of which are governed by State statutes or State Constitutions and others which could be part of an existing labor contract. Plans may be forced into a position of choosing to violate a State Constitution, a State law, an existing contract, or an IRS regulation. Congress has introduced legislation, H.R. 3561, the "Small Business Pension Promotion Act," which would make clear that

existing plans which use “years of service” to establish a normal retirement date will be able to continue this practice without penalty and without jeopardizing the retirement plans and benefits of so many of our nation’s law enforcement and other public safety officers. If elected, would you support this legislation or take other steps in your Administration to repeal this regulation?

OBAMA: After spending their careers in the service of their communities, police and other public safety employees should be able to rely on a secure retirement. In response to the rule in question, under my Administration, the Treasury Department and the IRS have taken steps to ensure that it does not have an adverse impact on public safety employees, reflected in proposed guidance issued in April that would modify the 2007 regulations.

As part of this guidance, Treasury and IRS also extended the effective date for governmental plans to comply with the rule to January 1, 2015 (after earlier extending it in 2009 to 2013), providing additional time to consider and respond to comments on the rule. Moreover, as an illustration of its commitment to ensuring this rule is appropriately applied to public safety employees, Treasury and IRS specifically asked for comments regarding “whether, because qualified public safety employees generally tend to have career spans that commence at a young age and continue over a limited period of years, an additional rule should be provided under which retirement after 20 to 30 years of service may be a normal retirement that is reasonably representative for qualified public safety employees.”

ROMNEY: I have not studied this question carefully enough to offer a full answer at this time. I understand why some pension plans — particularly those for professions like law enforcement where careers begin at a young age and are physically demanding — would prefer a years-of-service standard. But I also understand why the IRS would seek to establish a clear, age-based threshold that ensures pension plans are not being used to provide compensation to people who do not need to retire. I would welcome the opportunity to hear more from organizations like the Fraternal Order of Police about how such a policy would affect their members, and would also want to discuss with tax experts the reason for the proposed rule.

10. The Fraternal Order of Police is the largest labor organization representing this country’s law enforcement professionals and, as such, we have been involved with the Administration on a wide range of labor issues, including serving as a member of the Labor Advisory Council for Trade Negotiations and Trade Policy. We were also involved in an effort to evaluate a law enforcement training program in Iraq. As President, how will you involve and consult with our leadership relating to labor issues?

OBAMA: Over the past four years, we made tough choices together. In particular, the Fraternal Order of Police’s assistance has made a number of trade and international law enforcement issues a success. FOP and law enforcement will have a seat at any table at which I sit. Whether we agree on a particular issue or not, FOP will always be heard out.

ROMNEY: One of the greatest strengths of a union like the Fraternal Order of Police is its ability to provide strong representation for the interests of its members on law enforcement and public safety issues where those members have unparalleled expertise and face most directly the consequences of public policy. My administration will be one that seeks the input of all relevant stakeholders and perspectives before making important policy decisions, and that will include the active involvement of the Fraternal Order of Police on law enforcement matters. I will also look to the Order to provide leadership within the law enforcement community in promoting best practices and supporting law enforcement officials throughout their careers.

SECTION TWO:

CRIMINAL JUSTICE ISSUES

1. The FOP supports legislation that would increase the penalties for threats and violence against law enforcement officers, judges, and courtroom personnel—including making the murder or attempted murder of a law enforcement officer employed by an agency that receives Federal funds a capital offense. The legislation also imposes time and other substantive limits on Federal courts' review of *habeas corpus* petitions challenging a State court conviction for killing a law enforcement officer, judge, or other public safety officer and incorporates an existing provision of the Federal *habeas* statute that is used to determine whether a defendant may file a successive petition or seek a new evidentiary hearing in Federal court. If elected, will your Administration actively support such legislation and will you sign the bill if it is passed by Congress?

OBAMA: It is a priority of my administration to ensure that our law enforcement officers, judges, and other courtroom personnel are protected and secure, consistent with Constitutional limits on federal authority.

ROMNEY: I have deep and abiding respect and gratitude for our nation's law enforcement officers. That respect will inform the priorities I set and the decisions I make as president. In recent years, there has been an alarming surge in the number of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty. The *New York Times* recently reported that the number of officers killed by perpetrators last year was 25 percent higher than in 2010 and a full 75 percent higher than in 2008. While any death of an officer in the line of duty is a tragedy, this trend is unacceptable and must be reversed. Accordingly, I firmly support measures that would meaningfully deter and punish threats and violence against law enforcement officers, judges, and courthouse staff, as well as criminal conduct targeted at their families. In my view, such conduct can effectively be deterred only through predictable penalties that are administered without delay or endless litigation. As the law enforcement community well knows, litigation by those who have murdered police officers can last decades and take a toll on the emotional and even financial resources of surviving family members, who are acutely reminded of their painful loss each time a successive court challenge is filed. As president, I would support and sign legislation that would help bring closure to family members who, having already lost a father, mother, son, or daughter to tragedy, have also endured the ordeal and uncertainty of a trial, appeal and *habeas corpus* challenge.

2. The FOP believes that all civilian Federal law enforcement officers should have statutory arrest authority. There are thousands of civilian law enforcement officers employed by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) whose authority is limited to that of "apprehension." Because it is not clear if the difference between arrest and apprehension is one of use or one of law, the FOP supports legislation like **H.R. 324** which would authorize the U.S. Secretary of Defense to grant statutory arrest authority to civilian law enforcement officers within DoD. Would you sign such a bill into law and would you urge your Defense Secretary to use this authority?

OBAMA: I am committed to ensuring that civilian law enforcement officers have the tools they need to carry out their responsibilities effectively. I look forward to further discussions with the FOP on how to accomplish this goal.

ROMNEY: I believe that effective law enforcement must always involve clear jurisdictional lines and robust communication between and among federal, state and local law enforcement officers. There are times when exigent circumstances may warrant a limited expansion of jurisdictional authority for certain civilian law enforcement officers, including those at DoD. I am willing to study this proposal in greater detail and discuss it with DoD, the Fraternal Order of Police and any other interested groups to determine whether and how such an expansion or clarification of authority might be appropriate.

3. The Fraternal Order of Police supports legislation that would limit the amount of damages a criminal defendant could recover as a result of injuries that the criminal incurred in the course of committing or being apprehended for a felony or a crime of violence. Would your Administration support such legislation if it were introduced? Will you pledge to sign such a bill if it is passed by Congress?

OBAMA: In general, I am opposed to establishing arbitrary caps on civil damages.

ROMNEY: I support common-sense tort reform measures to eliminate the burden of frivolous litigation and errant judgments, which are matters that are largely the responsibility of state courts and legislatures under our federal system. Nonetheless, there is a distinct role for federal tort law reform with regard to frivolous and costly litigation against law enforcement, which typically occurs in the federal courts under federal statutory claims. One such reform was proposed in the “*Daniel Faulkner Law Enforcement Officers and Judges Protection Act*,” during the 110th Congress. That reform proposal, if enacted, would curtail a perpetrator’s ability to sue for damages sustained as a result or in the course of conduct by the perpetrator that, “more likely than not, constituted a felony or a crime of violence[.]” As president, I would support measures like the one proposed in the *Faulkner Act* to curb lawsuits by perpetrators who sue seeking to profit from alleged injuries caused by their own criminal misconduct.

4. For what crimes do you believe that the death penalty is appropriate?

OBAMA: There are some crimes—such as the killing of law enforcement officers, mass murders, or the rape and murder of a child—that merit the ultimate punishment.

ROMNEY: I support the federal death penalty and the right of individual states to determine whether and how to enforce capital punishment according to their own laws. In 2005 as Governor, I proposed legislation to re-establish the death penalty, which has not been utilized in Massachusetts since 1947. My proposal included establishing capital punishment for crimes involving terrorism, multiple murders, and the killing of law enforcement officers. I will continue to support capital punishment for these and other heinous crimes, along with safeguards to provide criminal defendants with appropriate due process so that when capital punishment is implemented, there is no question about the guilt of the offender.

5. When Congress enacted *H.R. 3630, the “Temporary Payroll Tax Cut Continuation Act,”* the bill contained a provision allocating the D Block of spectrum to public safety in order to create a truly national public safety broadband network. The law calls for a new entity, the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) to be created. FirstNet will be located within the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) at the U.S. Department of Commerce and be provided with \$7 billion to fund the build out of the national public safety broadband network. This is less than the original \$12 billion proposed to fully fund the build out. What steps are you prepared to take to ensure that public safety is provided the resources to complete a national public safety broadband network?

OBAMA: First responders put their lives on the line to protect us every day. They need dedicated bandwidth to communicate with each other, especially in emergency situations when commercial wireless networks are congested.

Already, we have made progress. The Recovery Act provided resources to jurisdictions using wireless broadband for public safety. And I have directed federal agencies to enable large swaths of spectrum to be used more efficiently, a goal the National Telecommunications and Information Administration is pursuing.

The Payroll Tax Reduction Extension sets aside a portion of the spectrum for a nationwide interoperable public safety broadband network for law enforcement, firefighters and emergency medical technicians. This law also invested into research into set aside critical funding for public safety network R&D—funds that will be vital to helping the public safety community build a robust, flexible and innovative network for first responders all around the country. I am committed to continue this progress in my second term.

ROMNEY: Effective communication among law enforcement and first responders is critically important during any public safety incident. I will support reasonable and cost-effective proposals to ensure communications interoperability and the development of a national public safety broadband network. This should be achieved by hearing from all those affected and involved in the issue, not by any lone voices with a narrow agenda that ignores the broader public interest. Further, decisions about the allocation and use of spectrum must be made in a manner that takes into account public safety concerns as well as the economic and other benefits to all Americans provided by telecommunications services.

6. How will you and your Administration guarantee that the Fraternal Order of Police and the interests of its members are represented on the First Responder Network Authority, which will hold the Public Safety Broadband Licensee, and on the advisory councils of the Federal Communications Commission, which will oversee FirstNet?

OBAMA: The knowledge and expertise of public safety professionals is integral to the success of both FirstNet and the advisory council. At least three board members must have served as public safety professionals, and at least three members must represent the collective interests of states, localities, tribes, and territories. We welcome input from the FOP on qualified representation as the Secretary of Commerce appoints membership to the FirstNet Board that meets our statutory obligations as well as the interests of the community.

ROMNEY: I commit to you that in a Romney administration, the Fraternal Order of Police will always have a prominent seat at the table to discuss this issue, and any other law enforcement issue of interest or concern to its members.

7. The Fraternal Order of Police strongly supports the enactment of **H.R. 365/S. 657, the “National Blue Alert Act,”** which will create a national alert system allowing law enforcement to notify and seek the help of the general public if a law enforcement officer goes missing, is killed or is seriously injured in the line of duty. If passed by Congress, would you sign such a bill into law?

OBAMA: I commend the efforts of states who have already taken action to enact “Blue Alert” systems to ensure that critical information is quickly and appropriately disseminated to law enforcement agencies when a police officer is injured or killed. I support these state efforts and am willing to consider any legislation designed to achieve similar goals nationwide.

ROMNEY: I believe the federal government, through the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other resources, should do all it can to assist state and local law enforcement in the location and apprehension of criminals who have assaulted or killed an officer. The Blue Alert concept is based upon the highly-effective Amber Alert system, which has rescued over 500 children and apprehended many offenders since the 2003 PROTECT Act reinforced the Amber Alert system at the federal level. Over the last two Congresses, the *National Blue Alert Act* has been mired in a legislative dispute relating to funding streams and funding levels. Although I understand and respect the different voices and views in this dispute, the reality is that the dispute has been allowed to persist without any resolution due to a lack of leadership from the executive branch. As president, I would ensure that my administration would engage to bring meaningful federal support to the Blue Alert system to help ensure the prompt identification and arrest of those who have harmed or killed law enforcement officers.

8. The Fraternal Order of Police supports the creation of a national commission to examine our nation’s criminal justice systems and to make recommendations to Congress based on their findings. A similar commission established in 1965 resulted in a huge step forward for the profession of law enforcement and the criminal justice system at every level of government. We believe that the integrity and credibility of such a commission depends on it being created by an act of Congress, not an executive order. To this end, the FOP supports the passage of **S. 306, the “National Criminal Justice Commission Act.”** Would you sign this bill into law and would you support such a commission? How would you ensure that the Fraternal Order of Police and the interests of its members are represented on such a commission?

OBAMA: Although communities and law enforcement professionals have worked to achieve significant gains in public safety in the last few decades, the United States’ criminal justice system continues to face significant challenges. Over the past 25 years, the U.S. prison and jail population reached an all-time high and the number of people on probation and parole doubled. In 2009, nearly 7 million individuals were under supervision of the state and federal criminal justice systems. Yet despite these significant expenditures, far too many offenders return to drug use and crime upon their reentry into society.

To address these and other challenges in the criminal justice system, my administration has consistently supported law enforcement and community policing efforts, gang violence prevention, and drug treatment. Our National Drug Control Strategy encourages the implementation of a continuum of evidenced-based interventions to protect the safety of the community while addressing the needs of offenders. My administration will continue to focus efforts and resources on key activities and policy issues that will advance an effective and efficient criminal justice system. A blue-ribbon commission could help clarify the choices our country faces in addressing its criminal justice challenges.

ROMNEY: Although I believe our national criminal justice systems need to be studied and improvements made, where appropriate, I do not believe meaningful and cost-effective reforms will come from a blue ribbon panel that removes accountability from our policy makers and political leaders. In my view, the best model for federal criminal justice reform can be traced to the strong leadership efforts during the Reagan administration to champion several groundbreaking initiatives, including transformational bail and truth-in-sentencing reforms. The best recipe for meaningful future reforms to our criminal justice system is strong presidential and executive branch leadership to propose and champion such reforms. As president, I would value and insist upon gaining the full participation and candid views of local, state, and federal law enforcement in any study or evaluation of our nation's criminal justice system. The views of the Fraternal Order of Police would be a key and core component of my administration's engagement with law enforcement.

9. The FOP has long been concerned about foreign governments providing shelter for criminals who commit murder or other serious violent crimes in this country, and subsequently flee to another. The FOP strongly opposes normalization of relations with Cuba until this issue is resolved, but travel restrictions that were in place for decades have recently been relaxed. We have been equally critical of other governments, including France, Israel, and Mexico, on this same point. At the FOP's Biennial National Conference in 2005, our membership adopted a resolution urging the President of the United States and the Congress to take any and all measures necessary to enforce the 1978 Extradition Treaty made between the United Mexican States and the United States of America, "including, but not limited to the cancellation or renegotiation of the Extradition Treaty" and imposition of sanctions "including but not limited to rescinding all financial aid and support to that Government and any and all benefits afforded to that Government under the North American Free Trade Agreement" to ensure that those who commit crimes of violence in the United States are extradited and prosecuted under the laws of the United States. What steps will you and your Administration take to place pressure on Cuba, Mexico and other foreign governments that provide safe harbor for those who commit crimes of violence in the U.S.? Will you pledge to make sure that your Administration fully addresses the issue of extradition of existing and future fugitives when considering agreements with foreign governments?

OBAMA: Cooperation with U.S law enforcement efforts, including observance of the letter and spirit of the extradition treaty, is a key component of the shared relationship between Mexico and the United States. With respect to Mexico and other countries, my administration will continue to use the full range of diplomatic and political resources at its disposal to emphasize the importance of such cooperation and achieve improvements where necessary.

ROMNEY: As a general matter, the United States has a compelling and legitimate interest in ensuring that individuals who commit violent crimes in this country are extradited and prosecuted under the laws of the United States. In dealing with foreign governments, my administration would consider the full range of options, from diplomacy to sanctions, to ensure that criminals are brought to the United States to face justice.

I have made it clear that my administration would take a tough approach with Cuba, including reinstating remittance and travel restrictions and ending the policies of appeasement that have been pursued with a predictable lack of success by the current administration. Throughout the last several decades, Cuba has become a safe haven for cop killers like Joanne Chesimard, who murdered a law enforcement officer in New Jersey, and Charles Hill, who was involved in the murder of a law enforcement officer in New Mexico. Cuba has refused to extradite these and other violent criminals to the United States to face prosecution. That is unacceptable, and any path towards normalized relations with Cuba must also

include an agreement to extradite for prosecution those who have committed violent crimes in the United States.

Mexico's track record is somewhat better in this area, particularly after a 2008 ruling by that country's Supreme Court permitting extradition to countries where the accused could face life in prison without the possibility of parole. Nonetheless, Mexico continues to harbor violent fugitives who could face the death penalty in the United States. One foreign nation's extradition policy should not dictate law enforcement or prosecution decisions in the United States. As president, I will work to ensure that Mexico continues to improve its extradition record with the United States, and that the issue of extradition is fully addressed when considering new agreements with foreign governments.

10. "Racial profiling," once a political buzzword and a favorite topic of the media, disappeared from the headlines following the attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001. The FOP has condemned the practice and asserted that it is not the policy of any U.S. law enforcement agency to base enforcement decisions solely on race. However, legislation like **H.R. 3618/S. 1670, the "End Racial Profiling Act,"** continues to be introduced in Congress. How do you define "racial profiling"? Do you believe that Federal legislation is necessary to address this issue and if so, what would the legislation do and how would it affect law enforcement activity at the State and local level?

OBAMA: I will continue to fight to build a more fair and equitable criminal justice system. I have directed my staff to evaluate the referenced legislation. The U.S. Department of Justice is reviewing its guidance regarding the use of race by federal law enforcement agencies. Their conclusions will help guide any future action by my administration in this area.

ROMNEY: Like the Fraternal Order of Police, I oppose racial profiling as a policy or decision-making tool in law enforcement matters. I believe that law enforcement decisions should be made based upon the individual facts and circumstances of the matter under investigation. In such circumstances, race or ethnicity may become relevant where credible information has come to light regarding a possible perpetrator, victim, organization, or scheme. Generic racial profiling that is disconnected from the facts and circumstances of an investigation, however, has no place in our criminal justice system. I believe that states, localities, the federal government, and organizations like the Fraternal Order of Police have largely expressed the same view and have taken steps to prevent racial profiling. I believe there is no need for federal legislation on this score.

11. Would your Administration impose race-collection criteria on Federal law enforcement officers during enforcement actions?

OBAMA: I believe that collecting appropriate data and developing procedures for responding to complaints is an important step to understand and address any issue of racial profiling.

ROMNEY: It is my understanding that routine demographic information and data are already collected and retained with regard to federal law enforcement actions. Beyond such information, I see no reason why further non-case related information would need to be gathered.

12. In 2009, the **Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act** was signed into law without any support from the law enforcement community. Did you support this legislation? Why is such a law necessary and how do you believe such crimes should be defined? Would you consider making the murder of a law enforcement officer a crime of hate?

OBAMA: I signed into law the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, which allowed us to strengthen protections against crimes based on the color of your skin, the faith in your heart, the place of your birth, and added federal protections against crimes based on gender, disability, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Prosecutors now have new tools to work with states and, in their discretion, to prosecute to the fullest those who would perpetrate such crimes.

From the time that the Shepard-Byrd Act became law, the Justice Department has been working to promote safer and more tolerant communities by implementing and enforcing the new law. The Justice Department's implementation efforts have included holding training conferences to bring together federal, state, and local law enforcement with community to build collaboration for its enforcement. I hope to work with you to continue this important work.

My Administration is committed to stopping senseless tragedies and keeping our police safe. Federal law already provides for harsher penalties when federal crimes of violence are committed against law enforcement officers. We will continue to keep cops on the street and collaborate with law enforcement agencies to reduce injuries and deaths in the line of duty, including through the new Preventing Violence Against Law Enforcement and Ensuring Officer Resilience and Survivability (VALOR) initiative.

ROMNEY: There is no place in civil society for assaults on individuals based upon the color of their skin, their religion, place of origin, gender, disability, or sexual orientation. My administration will vigorously investigate and prosecute criminals who violate federal law by targeting victims in such a manner.

Regarding the *Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act*, I did not take a position on this particular piece of legislation. I note that prior to enactment of the Act, federal law already provided robust sentencing enhancements for federal crimes targeted at an individuals based upon that person's race, ethnicity, religion, disability, national origin or sexual orientation, and I support such laws providing such added penalties. Additionally, federal criminal statutes also already existed to punish major civil rights violations and race-based assaults upon churches and voting rights. Accordingly, there was a significant debate surrounding the 2009 Act as to the need for many of its provisions.

As for assaults targeting law enforcement officers and their families, my administration would have a zero tolerance policy. Current federal law provides penalties, up to and including the death penalty, for crimes targeting federal law enforcement officers and their families. The federal sentencing guidelines provide further enhancements for crimes targeting official victims, including law enforcement officers, in the course of federal crimes. As president, I would ensure vigorous enforcement of these provisions and the creation of new penalties, as needed, to punish and deter crimes against officers. Additionally, much as I did as Governor of Massachusetts, I would support death penalty reforms at both the state and federal level, as appropriate, to ensure the availability of capital punishment where an officer has been murdered.

13. In 1996 Congress passed the "Domestic Violence Offender Gun Ban," or "Lautenberg Law," as it is popularly known. The language was a small part of the huge "Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act," a must-pass bill enacted on the final day of the 104th Congress. There were no hearings and very little debate on the measure which, for the first time in the history of federal gun control, affected law enforcement officers and members of the military. The law provides a Federal firearms disability for any person convicted, regardless of the date of conviction, for a misdemeanor offense in which domestic violence is an actual or statutory element. The law has had no demonstrable impact in the fight against domestic violence to date, is not being properly enforced on military personnel, and is aimed only at active duty law enforcement officers under the current enforcement strategy. Because of liability concerns, good police officers are losing their jobs for minor offenses committed long before the law passed. What is your position with respect to this law, and would you support legislation to amend it by making its application prospective from the date of original enactment for all persons? Would you sign such a bill if passed by Congress?

OBAMA: I do not support a repeal of this law. While some progress has been made, domestic violence is still a significant problem facing women, men, families, and communities.

ROMNEY: I believe that law enforcement officers and others affected by this law should be afforded appropriate due process, and that the law should be applied even-handedly among those covered by it. As Governor of Massachusetts, I supported tough domestic violence laws, and will continue to do so as president. I also would carefully review any proposed changes to this law suggested by Congress to avoid any future unintended consequences. I also favor periodic review of the effectiveness of our laws in achieving the objectives they were designed to accomplish. If this or any other law was studied and

demonstrated to be ineffective or have negative unintended consequences, I would support appropriate reforms.

- 14.** Federal funding for State and local law enforcement is a very real concern, especially given the increased homeland security responsibilities of State and local agencies and the impact of deep cuts to our most critical programs in the past two years. How will you work to ensure continued Federal funding for traditional law enforcement programs like the hiring program administered by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne-JAG) programs, the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP), and the Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP) program?

OBAMA: We need an economy that is no longer burdened by years of debt and in which everyone shoulders their fair share to put our fiscal house in order. I have proposed a plan to reduce deficits by \$4 trillion over the next ten years, bringing deficits down to a sustainable level that shares the burden and requires tough choices on spending.

Even in the face of these historic budget challenges, I will continue to ensure a strong commitment to our nation's law enforcement needs and priorities. The Recovery Act kept hundreds of thousands of state and local workers on the job through the economic crisis, and provided \$4 billion specifically for state and local law enforcement. My budget continues to assist State and local criminal justice programs with more than \$2 billion in program assistance for police hiring, general purpose criminal justice assistance, violence against women programs, and Second Chance Act grants, the same as in 2012. The budget requests \$935 million for the Office of Justice Programs State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance, including \$430 million for the Byrne-JAG program, \$24 million for the Bulletproof Vest Program, and \$70 million for the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program.

ROMNEY: I share the concerns of the Fraternal Order of Police regarding law enforcement funding in light of the continuing – and, in many cases, worsening – fiscal and budgetary crises at the state, local, and federal level and believe we must do all possible to maintain an appropriate level of support for state and local law enforcement. I think the frontline professionals who are fighting crime are in the best position to decide how to allocate limited funds to achieve agreed-upon public safety objectives. There are currently many different federal funding streams and grant programs that can be pitted against one another and their related purposes in annual budget and funding decisions. In my view, the best approach is to consult closely with those authorities and personnel who need and will be utilizing the funding. I will seek out the views of the Fraternal Order of Police to evaluate traditional law enforcement programs and determine the funding structures and amounts necessary to ensure effective law enforcement.

- 15.** Several organizations and many fringe groups have accused State and local law enforcement agencies receiving Federal assistance through the 287(g) program of using these funds to “target communities of color, including disproportionate numbers of Latinos in particular places, for arrest.” The FOP rejects these assertions as hateful and counter to the law enforcement mission. The 287(g) program is a powerful example of a successful cooperative effort between State and local law enforcement and the Federal government. For State and local agencies, the Federal resources provided by the program allow them to pursue investigations relating to violent crimes, human trafficking, gang/organized crime activity, sexual-related offenses, narcotics trafficking and money laundering. It also allows the Federal government to tap into the resources and capabilities of State and local agencies to identify and remove serious and violent criminals who have illegally entered the United States. Would your Administration continue to support or expand this program?

OBAMA: Yes. My administration has worked to provide funding for the 287(g) program, while improving oversight and management. The Department of Homeland Security has also taken critical steps to strengthen public safety and ensure consistency in immigration enforcement across the country by prioritizing the arrest and detention of those individuals who have criminal convictions or fall under other priority categories.

ROMNEY: Yes. My administration will support the 287(g) program, which follows the time-tested multijurisdictional and multi-agency approach that has worked well for decades across many different areas of law enforcement. In the current era of limited funding and tight budgets, the partnerships created under the 287(g) program provide additional resources and trained personnel to supplement the efforts of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). As Governor, I reached a 287(g) agreement to authorize Massachusetts law enforcement to assist in the enforcement of immigration law.

16. True immigration reform requires action by the Federal government. The FOP believes that any legislation reforming our nation's immigration system must provide for greater security at our nation's borders, aggressive enforcement of immigration law internally, and enhanced penalties against businesses and individuals that exploit and traffic in illegal laborers. Do you agree? What elements do you see as most important for a comprehensive immigration reform bill and what steps will your Administration undertake to enact reform?

OBAMA: Over the last two years, my administration has dedicated unprecedented resources to secure our borders, taken important steps to make our interior and worksite enforcement smarter and more effective, and made long-needed improvements to the legal immigration system. These steps have been important, but we cannot solve the problems with our broken immigration system without broad-based legislative changes.

I am committed to working with Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform and have reaffirmed my commitment to strengthening our economic competitiveness by creating a legal immigration system that rewards hard work and demands responsibility. I agree that we need a smart, effective system that secures our borders, holds employers accountable, and provides a path to citizenship for those in the United States illegally after they get right with the law by passing a background check, learning English, and paying taxes and fines. I am also committed to passing the DREAM Act, which provides opportunity for responsible, young immigrants who came here through no fault of their own and grew up as Americans to earn their citizenship by serving in the military or going to college.

ROMNEY: I believe we must protect legal immigration by ending illegal immigration. That will require securing the borders with proper resources and a border fence, establishing a national E-Verify system to enable employers to check the work status of those they hire, cracking down on employers who knowingly hire illegal immigrants, and turning off other "magnets"—such as drivers' licenses and in-state tuition—that encourage illegal immigration. I believe we must ensure that any reform of our immigration system does not encourage further illegal immigration. Illegal immigrants who apply for legal status should not be given any advantage over those who are following the law and waiting their turn. Illegal immigrants must get in line with those applying legally. We must respect the rule of law and respect those who are waiting patiently to enter the United States through legal channels.

17. The FOP has expressed concern that critics of the decision of the State of Arizona to enact **Senate Bill 1070, the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act**, have and continue to state that law enforcement officers will engage in racial profiling despite the fact that this practice is illegal. Law enforcement officers know the meanings of the terms "reasonable suspicion" and "probable cause." What is your position on local and State enforcement of immigration law, be it State or Federal?

OBAMA: The Arizona law is a misdirected expression of frustration over our broken immigration system, and it raises serious concerns, especially for civil rights. A patchwork of different state immigration regulations around the country would interfere with the federal government's responsibility to set and enforce immigration policy. The Supreme Court is reviewing provisions of this law and is expected to issue a final decision on the case this June.

ROMNEY: I support the right of states to craft laws to allow state and local law enforcement to assist in the enforcement of our immigration laws, particularly when the federal government has not adequately dealt with the costs of illegal immigration. As with any laws, such measures should be implemented with

care and caution so as not to single out individuals based upon their ethnicity, but I would expect nothing less from the law enforcement officers across the country who serve the public on a daily basis.

18. The FOP strongly supported the REAL ID Act because law enforcement officers need to have confidence that the documents presented to them to establish the identity of a given individual are accurate. Officers rely on these documents during traffic stops and other law enforcement actions to access information related to that individual's criminal history. As President, will you continue to support it and ensure adequate funding to States for its implementation? Will you pledge to oppose efforts to repeal the law like the *"Providing for Additional Security in States' Identification (PASS ID) Act?"*

OBAMA: I will continue to support states in their efforts to meet the requirements of the REAL ID Act. The deadline for state compliance has been extended from May 11, 2011 to January 15, 2013. This change will give states the time necessary to ensure that driver's licenses and identification cards meet the security requirements of the REAL ID Act.

ROMNEY: I support efforts to assist the states in improving standards for the issuance of accurate and secure drivers' licenses and identification cards. Such efforts must be mindful of federalism concerns and not unduly burden state budgets, particularly in this current economic climate. As the Fraternal Order of Police is no doubt aware, many states have resisted implementing REAL ID because of budget and other concerns, including the belief that REAL ID is an unfunded mandate. Proposals like the PASS ID Act have hampered implementation of REAL ID by incentivizing states to delay their compliance with REAL ID in the hope that Congress would change the law, which has not occurred. As president, I would work with the states to find solutions to the problem that appropriately respect federalism principles and provide the necessary funding to implement the goals of REAL ID.

19. Because of the increased politicization of firearms issues and the lack of any meaningful public safety component in many legislative proposals, the membership of the FOP adopted a resolution stating that it would not support additional "gun control" legislation beyond our support for the measures signed into law in 1994. Will your Administration seek to push any additional "gun control" measures? If so, what public safety benefit do you expect to achieve and why should the FOP overturn its resolution on this issue?

OBAMA: I believe, like the majority of Americans, that the Second Amendment guarantees an individual right to bear arms and the courts have settled that as the law of the land. In this country, we have a strong tradition of gun ownership that's passed on from generation to generation. In fact, my administration has not curtailed the rights of gun owners—it has expanded them, including allowing people to carry their guns in national parks and wildlife refuges.

However, tragedies like the one that occurred in Tucson, Arizona teach us that there's room for our country to have reasonable laws that uphold liberty, ensure citizen safety and are fully compatible with a robust Second Amendment. I have called for us to begin enforcing laws that are already on the books and reward the states that provide best data to strengthen our background check system. We also need to make the system faster and nimbler, by providing an instant, accurate, and comprehensive and consistent system for background checks to sellers who want to do the right thing, and make sure that criminals cannot escape it. I welcome your input on this important issue, as we continue the discussion on how to we can keep America safe for all our people.

ROMNEY: My administration will not advocate for additional "gun control" measures beyond those already enacted. The Second Amendment provides one of the most basic fundamental rights, and the right to bear arms is essential to our functioning free society. I believe we need to focus on enforcing the laws currently on the books rather than create new laws that burden the constitutional rights of law-abiding gun owners.

20. We certainly recognize the prevalence of the term 'first responder' to cover the gamut of public safety disciplines, but the reality is that law enforcement officers are usually the first to respond to any scene

or incident. It is the responding law enforcement officer that assesses the situation and then calls for the appropriate public safety response, be it additional law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians or hazardous material response. Every public safety discipline is vital when responding to a critical incident, but we must recognize that, in almost every instance, it is the rank-and-file law enforcement officer who is the first on the scene. The FOP has consistently maintained, throughout the several debates on homeland security funding legislation, that the first priority of the homeland security effort is preventing a terrorist attack and that the “all hazards” approach of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) compromises this priority. The FOP believes that Federal funding does not sufficiently reflect the prevention goal and is geared instead towards purchasing equipment and training to respond to the aftermath of a critical incident. What is your view on the “all hazards” approach and how do you think it impacts law enforcement’s role in the war on terror in terms of access to Federal funds?

OBAMA: Even at a time of major fiscal constraints, my proposed budget for fiscal year 2013 provides a slight increase from the 2012 enacted level to continue our strong investments in core homeland security functions such as the prevention of terrorist attacks, border security, administration of immigration laws, aviation security, disaster preparedness and cybersecurity. My administration has made it a priority to eliminate duplicative, stand-alone FEMA grant programs so we can instead consolidate them into a new National Preparedness Grant program to better develop, sustain, and leverage core capabilities across the country while supporting national preparedness and response. My budget builds on this commitment.

ROMNEY: The most important goal of our nation’s counterterrorism efforts must be the detection and prevention of a terrorist attack. Accordingly, I share the Fraternal Order of Police’s view that prevention must be the top counterterrorism priority, and my administration will remain focused on that priority in its efforts to protect the American people and communities from attack. I do not believe the “all hazards” approach to disaster and first responder planning was ever intended to distract from or diminish the key priority of incident prevention. As president, I would ensure that the relevant agencies, including the Department of Justice, DHS, and FEMA, strike an appropriate balance between planning and funding both prevention and response efforts, and that those agencies work closely with key stakeholders, including the Fraternal Order of Police, in determining where to draw those lines.

21. Law enforcement is an exceedingly dangerous profession, with an average of one hundred and fifty (150) officers who die in the line of duty every year. Since 1962, the Federal government has recognized the sacrifices of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty by designating 15 May as “National Peace Officers Memorial Day.” Nearly thirty years ago, the National FOP began holding a Memorial Service on this day to honor the memories of the fallen officers and their loved ones. This event is held on the West Front of the U.S. Capitol and is attended by the family of the officer, as well as thousands of fellow officers and friends. For the last fifteen years, the keynote speaker for this event has been the President of the United States. Will you pledge to attend the May 15th Memorial Service event honoring the families and memory of our nation’s slain heroes?

OBAMA: Yes, as president, I plan to attend the “National Peace Officers Memorial Day” scheduled for May 15th of this year as I have in past years.

I believe that our nation’s public safety officers are American heroes who risk their lives to keep our families and communities safe. Despite facing budget constraints and daily threats, public safety officers embrace innovative approaches to improving our Nation and upholding the rule of law. They put their lives on the line to protect ours, sometimes making the ultimate sacrifice.

While we can never adequately thank our law enforcement officers for their service, we can use every tool at our disposal to protect them on the job. I am committed to providing funding for resources to keep cops on the street and to collaborate with law enforcement agencies and organizations like yours to develop strategies that reduce injuries and deaths in the line of duty.

My administration launched the new Preventing Violence Against Law Enforcement and Ensuring Officer Resilience and Survivability (VALOR) initiative, designed to reduce and prevent law enforcement officer injuries and line-of-duty deaths. And after consulting with members of the law enforcement community, we instituted a new mandatory wear policy as part of our Bulletproof Vest Partnership program as of last year. We will continue to seek more efficient ways to share information and invest in evidence-based, smart-on-crime approaches to fight crime and will provide support to the families of law enforcement officers if tragedy does strike.

ROMNEY: Yes. As president, it would be a humbling honor to attend the Memorial Service for law enforcement officers who have given their lives protecting our communities, including meeting with spouses and family members who have suffered such tragic losses in support of our public safety. The recent surge in line-of-duty killings of law enforcement officers is deeply alarming to me, and I know this trend is even more alarming to the law enforcement officers and the community of spouses and family members who stand behind them. As president, I will work diligently to reverse this unacceptable and dangerous trend.

22. The families of law enforcement officers and other public safety officers who are killed in the line of duty are eligible to receive a one-time death benefit from the Public Safety Officers' Benefit (PSOB) program. Yet, for the last several years, many of our survivor families have faced great difficulty and resistance from the Office of General Counsel (OGC) which must approve the benefit before the family receives the money. These Federal attorneys see themselves as defending against a claim against the Federal government, instead of a death benefit for a grieving family. The Fraternal Order of Police is working with our allies on Capitol Hill to examine what reforms might be needed at the PSOB program, but it is possible that there simply needs to be a new perspective at OGC. What steps will you take as President to expedite the payment of the PSOB death benefit?

OBAMA: We must do everything in our means to provide the necessary help and support to the families and public safety agencies that lose an officer in the line of duty. My administration will continue to seek ways to improve this process so we can best provide survivors and law enforcement, firefighter, and other first responder agencies with the best information and support through the claim process. I am pleased that my administration is working with your leadership to help ensure that payments are made in a timely way.

ROMNEY: I strongly support the PSOB program. As Governor of Massachusetts, I also supported and signed a law to provide death benefits at the state and local level to part-time and volunteer public safety officers killed in the line of duty. Programs such as these should be implemented in a way that minimizes the administrative burden on grieving families and the law enforcement support network that assists them in their application for benefits. I pledge to work with the Fraternal Order of Police and its allies to remove any obstacles to a timely review and payment of benefits due under this program. I will also review and consider potential legislative reforms to the program that may be proposed with an eye toward that same objective. If changes in policy or personnel at DOJ or elsewhere also are warranted, I will see to it that they are made.

23. Since the Fraternal Order of Police is the largest labor organization representing this country's law enforcement professionals, how will you involve and consult with our leadership concerning any legislation, regulations, or other Administration activity relating to law enforcement or criminal justice issues?

OBAMA: Yes. I stand committed to continuing to forge a strong relationship with the Fraternal Order of Police and furthering our commitment to our nation's law enforcement officers that sacrifice daily to protect our communities and people. My administration has ensured that FOP leadership and membership always have a seat at the table on issues of importance to our nation's law enforcement, and I hope to continue this engagement in my second term as president.

ROMNEY: As president, I will have an open door policy and consult with the Fraternal Order of Police and its leadership on matters related to law enforcement and criminal justice, and I will insure that the cabinet and agency leaders in my administration do the same.