

FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

1100 Connecticut Avenue NW ▪ Suite 900 ▪ Washington, DC 20036

Phone: 202-293-1550 ▪ www.fleoa.org



Representing Members Of:

AGRICULTURE
OIG
Forest Service
COMMERCE
Export Enforcement
OIG
NOAA Fisheries Law Enforcement
DEFENSE
Air Force – OSI
Army – CID
Defense Criminal Investigative Service
Naval Criminal Investigative Service
OIG
EDUCATION – OIG
ENERGY
National Nuclear Security Administration
OIG
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
CID
OIG
FEDERAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION – OIG
GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION – OIG
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
OIG
Food and Drug Administration
HOMELAND SECURITY
Border Patrol
Coast Guard Investigative Service
Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Customs and Border Protection
Federal Air Marshal Service
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Federal Protective Service
U.S. Secret Service
Transportation Security Administration
OIG
HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT – OIG
INTERIOR
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Bureau of Land Management
Fish and Wildlife Service
National Park Service
OIG
U.S. Park Police
JUSTICE
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
Drug Enforcement Administration
Federal Bureau of Investigation
U.S. Marshals Service
OIG
U.S. Attorney's Office – CI
LABOR – OIG
POSTAL SERVICE
Postal Inspection Service
OIG
SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION – OIG
STATE DEPARTMENT
Bureau of Diplomatic Security
OIG
TRANSPORTATION – OIG
TREASURY
FinCEN
OIG
Internal Revenue Service – CI
TIGTA
U.S. CAPITOL POLICE
U.S. PROBATION AND PRETRIAL SERVICES
VETERANS AFFAIRS
OIG
VA Police
RETIREES
NATIONAL OFFICERS
President
NATHAN CATURA
Executive Vice President
LARRY COSME
Vice President – Operations
TIM CHARD
Vice President – Agency Affairs
FRANCIS NEELEY
Vice President – Membership Benefits
WILLIAM HAMPSTEAD
Vice President – Legislative Affairs
DOMINICK STOKES
Vice President – Program and Development
CHRIS SCHOPPMAYER
Immediate Past President
JON ADLER
Secretary
ENID FEBUS
Treasurer
MADELINE GORRA
Director of Administration
WILLIAM BELLER
National Chapters Director
MARK HEINBACH
National Awards Director
CHRISTINA TWEED
National Recruitment Director
RASHEED TAHIR
Retirement Director
STAN SCHWARTZ
General Counsel
LAWRENCE BERGER
Public Affairs Officers
JASON BRIEFEL
NIKKI CANNON

March 24, 2016

The Honorable Jason Chaffetz
2236 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Chaffetz,

On behalf of the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association (FLEOA), exclusively representing 26,000 federal agents and officers nationwide, including those from the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, I am writing to express our strong opposition to [H.R. 4751 – Law Enforcement for Local Lands Act of 2016](#).

FLEOA vehemently disagrees with the position put forth in this misguided legislation. Federal Law Enforcement Officers with BLM and the US Forest Service are trained to the highest of standards. These positions are so complex that typical applicants often possess military and/or bachelor degrees as well as prior experience in both natural resources and police work.

Forest Service and BLM officers are required to graduate from the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center's Natural Resource Police Training Program. This program is a five-month intensive training program that most federal law enforcement experts agree is the academy's most demanding training program. Alternatively, local law enforcement authorities typically do not possess the resources or the expertise to perform such complicated law enforcement duties.

For example, in Pennsylvania and several other states, the local county sheriff lacks any type of criminal investigative authority. Instead, the Pennsylvania State Police would be the only entity capable of performing such duties, but they suffer from severe manpower and funding shortages to the point where entire barracks of the state police will only have one trooper on duty at any given time.

US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Special Agents and Officers conduct highly complex investigations pertaining to archaeological resources, timber theft, international drug trafficking, and catastrophic wildfire investigations. With escalating violent crime, threats from drug cartels, and the remoteness of certain regions, Congress should be prioritizing its resources towards strengthening the law enforcement functions of both the US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, and not dismantling these agencies.

Moreover, throughout the years, law enforcement coverage for large scale events such as rainbow gatherings and Burning Man are mostly uneventful because of the close working relationship between local law enforcement authorities and the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management law enforcement. This bill will only serve to waste taxpayer money while dissolving a critical layer of enforcement and protection for the American public.

This bill leads one to believe state and local law enforcement authorities are “more rooted” in the local community, and therefore better suited to enforce federal laws. On the contrary, Forest Service and BLM law enforcement officers are often stationed in remote and sparsely populated communities where local law enforcement has minimal, if any, officers assigned.

In the remote area of the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State, the US Forest Service and National Park Service have at least three officers stationed in Quinalt, Washington while the local Grays Harbor County Sheriff’s Department struggles to keep a single resident deputy in the area.

The fact is that land management law enforcement officers have an extremely low rate of turnover and transfer. These officers embark on a lifelong career, often in the same location, and become valuable assets to their local communities. To suggest that Forest Service and BLM officers are abstruse or have difficulties working with local law enforcement is a mischaracterization of the vast majority of US Forest Service and BLM officers. FLEOA would be happy to point out the many stories where these brave men and women saved lives and arrested very dangerous criminals.

FLEOA understands and recognizes that issues and problems exist, which have led to the introduction of this bill. However, we believe there are better and more viable solutions than simply eliminating two integral and vital federal bureaus and, at the same time, displacing thousands of highly trained and professional law enforcement officers. FLEOA urges Congress to mandate the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service to establish a stove-piped chain of command within their own agency. This ensures that law enforcement personnel are supervised only by other law enforcement personnel with the appropriate level of experience and expertise. Currently, both these agencies are directed by non-law enforcement professionals. The poor decisions we have witnessed through the years is the direct result of faulty and defective decisions being made by non-law enforcement personnel. FLEOA also recommends merging the US Forest Service and BLM into one agency (this has been discussed in the past and Congressional reports have been submitted).

FLEOA is willing and happy to work with Congress to come up with alternative solutions to H.R. 4751. There are better approaches to work out differences in policy and enforcement, than pass a law that simply eliminates the law enforcement functions of two federal bureaus.

Respectfully,

Nathan R. Catura

Nathan R. Catura

FLEOA National President

CC: The Honorable Rob Bishop
The Honorable Mia Love
The Honorable Chris Stewart