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OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

AG Moody Urges Congress to Pass SAFR Act



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody is leading a bipartisan coalition of state attorneys general urging Congress to pass S.3607, the Safeguarding America's First Responders Act. The Act would permit the families of first responders, who die or are permanently and totally disabled as a result of COVID-19, to receive the same federal benefits extended to first responders, or their survivors, otherwise killed or injured in the line of duty. Sadly, several Florida law enforcement officers have already succumbed to the novel coronavirus. Current federal law would only allow survivors access to certain benefits if evidence is provided proving the deceased or permanently disabled first responder contracted COVID-19 while on duty.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Law enforcement officers are risking their health and safety to keep us safe from crime amid the worst pandemic in our lifetime. Many officers are being coughed at on purpose by criminals they encounter while protecting their communities. Tragically, some have contracted COVID-19 and succumbed to this deadly disease. As the wife of a law enforcement officer, I know the risks our first responders face, and how this pandemic has only increased the dangers of their service and the stress placed on their loved ones.

"We must do everything we can to protect our first responders and support their families should their service end in tragedy. That is why I am asking Congress to pass the Safeguarding America's First Responders Act. This Act will show our law enforcement officers that we appreciate all they do to keep us safe and are grateful for their service in the face of this invisible enemy."

Attorney General Moody sponsored a letter sent to Congress today and signed by 51 other attorneys general. The letter states, in part, “When public safety officers are called to respond, they do not know whether they are coming into contact with a person who is positive for COVID-19. We have seen harrowing stories about how public safety officers have taken heroic actions to save the lives of others, knowing that they risked infection in doing so.”

To read the entire letter, click here.

The SAFR Act would establish a temporary presumption that officers contracted COVID-19 while on duty if diagnosed within 45 days of a first responder’s last shift. The legislation ensures families of officers and first responders lost while fighting the pandemic do not face unnecessary barriers to benefits already promised under existing federal law.

This legislation is sponsored by Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa and Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey. It recently passed the United States Senate and is currently being considered by the House of Representatives.

Washington, D.C. Attorney General Karl Racine co-sponsored Attorney General Moody’s letter. The attorneys general joining the call to action include: Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.