



## **Fraternal Order of Police United States Park Police Labor Committee**

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### **Officers Union Endorses US Park Police Modernization Act (H.R. 9928): "A Critical Lifeline for a Federal Law Enforcement Agency on the Brink of Collapse Due to Decades of Neglect"**

Kenneth Spencer, the Chairman of the United States Park Police Fraternal Order of Police (USPPFOP), said today that the officers' union strongly supports H.R. 9928, the United States Park Police Modernization Act, legislation introduced last week by Representative Nicole Malliotakis (R-NY).

HR 9928 modernizes the officer retirement step system to mirror those offered by other urban, federal law enforcement agencies. "It is a simple, and straightforward, fix to our agency's recruitment and retention crisis. For the life of me, I can't understand why the Department of the Interior has allowed our agency to fall behind so far," said Spencer.

The US Park Police, having law enforcement jurisdiction over broad geographic swaths spanning three urban areas across Washington, DC, San Francisco, and New York City, has a critical responsibility to uphold First Amendment rights within national parks, ensuring that individuals can exercise their freedoms of speech, assembly, and expression in these public spaces. As many national parks serve as venues for protests, demonstrations, and other forms of public expression, the USPP is tasked with balancing the protection of these constitutional rights with the need to maintain public safety and order.

Spencer also highlighted the fact that the U.S. Park Police plays a crucial role in ensuring public safety and security during inaugural ceremonies in Washington, D.C., by managing crowds and securing key areas around the National Mall and surrounding parks. "We all know that, no matter who wins, the upcoming election is likely to generate some serious law enforcement situations in Washington. Our US Park Police officers are the world's leading experts in providing safety and security in such circumstances, but our ability to provide these services has been seriously compromised by the decades of DOI neglect," said Spencer.

"Our mission is more important and more relevant today than ever before," said Spencer, "yet, somehow, the federal government has turned a blind eye to the fact that we are 150 officers short of minimum staffing levels. We have fewer officers today than were on patrol in 1975 - 50 years ago! The resulting undue risk to the safety of the millions of American visitors to our parks, our national monuments and icons, and the officers themselves is shocking and represents a disaster waiting to happen."

"Modernizing the officer retirement system is such an obvious, and relatively inexpensive, solution to the crisis," Spencer pointed out, "because it will balance the recruitment and retention marketplace for qualified and capable law enforcement officers. It's nearly impossible to convince good officers to join or stay with our agency when other federal law enforcement agencies are offering retirement systems that are leaps and bounds better than ours. We are merely seeking a level playing field, that's all."

Spencer noted that Representative Malliotakis "is among the nation's leading champions for local, state, and federal law enforcement. So many of her colleagues in Congress are all-too-willing to spout rhetoric about 'backing the blue,' but the Congresswoman is actually willing to put in hard work to improve the lives of officers and our families. With her, it's not just hollow talking points - it's about taking meaningful action to protect her constituents, visitors and tourists, and the officers themselves."

Spencer said he urges Congress to act on the legislation during its upcoming post-election session: "Unfortunately, the destructive and dangerous outcomes from the protests last summer are just the tip of the iceberg unless Congress passes this legislation. Our officers are committed to the agency's mission and we will continue do everything we can to protect and serve, but unless the Department of the Interior and Congress step forward to restore minimum staffing levels, foreboding handwriting is on the wall."

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