



# Department of Justice

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## **ATTORNEY GENERAL ERIC HOLDER ANNOUNCES IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS' BENEFITS PROGRAM**

WASHINGTON – Attorney General Eric Holder and Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs Mary Lou Leary announced several improvements to the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program following the completion of a comprehensive review of the program ordered by the Attorney General in May 2012.

In the coming months, the PSOB office will move to an entirely paperless electronic case management system that will allow claimants to file and monitor the progress of their claims online, in order to improve efficiency, increase timeliness and reduce duplication in its claims administration process. The PSOB claims process will also be streamlined, consolidating legal and other functions within the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and eliminating duplicative documentation requirements. As part of the department's ongoing efforts to improve the PSOB, BJA will continue to convene its series of stakeholder listening sessions in order to ensure transparency and a positive dialogue between the PSOB Office and its public safety partners in the field.

"These fundamental improvements to the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program will help us cut through red tape – and ensure that fallen or injured officers and their families can get the benefits they need in a timely manner," said Attorney General Holder. "These improvements are representative of the value that I, the women and men of the Justice Department, and our entire country, must always place on the work of our law enforcement officers. And it's emblematic of our commitment to standing with all who bravely serve our nation, especially in the toughest of times."

"Over the past five years, the PSOB Office has provided more than \$426 million in benefits to fallen police officers, firefighters and other first responders, processing more than 2,857 claims," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Leary. "But we can do even better. These improvements will allow BJA to process cases and serve claimants even more efficiently. We are committed to ensuring that fallen public safety officers and their families get the benefits to which they are entitled under the law in a timely and transparent manner."

Enacted in 1976, the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Act allows the Justice Department to recognize the ultimate sacrifice of law enforcement officers, firefighters

and other first responders killed in the line of duty by providing a federal benefit to their eligible survivors. BJA's PSOB Office administers the Death, Disability and Educational Assistance Programs; these benefits assist families who may be struggling with finances in the aftermath of tragedy, as well as officers catastrophically injured in the line of duty and spouses and children seeking educational assistance to attend institutions of higher education. The PSOB Office considers it an honor to assist families and agencies of America's fallen law enforcement heroes throughout the review of their PSOB cases.

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP), headed by Acting Assistant Attorney General Mary Lou Leary, provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice and assist victims. OJP has six components: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. For more information about OJP please visit: <http://www.ojp.gov>. To read the Attorney General's speech at the 25th Annual National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Candlelight Vigil, please visit: <http://www.justice.gov/iso/opa/ag/speeches/2013/ag-speech-130513.html>.

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