

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEPTEMBER 29, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

---

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
UPON SIGNING H. R. 366  
THE PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS  
BENEFITS ACT OF 1976

THE ROSE GARDEN

12:00 NOON EDT

Good morning, everybody.

Distinguished Members of the House and Senate, members of the Cabinet, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Two days ago in Miami, Florida, I declared a major new escalation in America's war on crime. I outlined plans as follows: To completely revise the Federal Criminal Code; to expand the demonstrably successful career criminal program; to impose mandatory sentences for certain Federal crimes; to explore new ways of preventing juvenile crime; and to take other steps to make the Federal fight against crime a model for State and local efforts throughout the Nation.

There is no more important work to be done in our society than insuring domestic tranquility, as the Constitution requires, and protecting the lives and property of the American people. This means that America's 600,000 Federal, State and local public service officers are among our most important and valuable citizens.

We owe these dedicated public servants more than gratitude, more than praise. We owe them, as well as their families, the fullest measure of protection that we can provide.

We are now providing the most sophisticated equipment, the best training and the greatest financial and moral support that we can. But it is these courageous men and women themselves who stand on the front lines of America's war on crime. They take the risks, they suffer the injuries and they are the ones who lay their lives on the line every day for the rest of us in this country.

MORE

(OVER)

In 1975, 126 officers were killed in the line of duty; 49 were killed in the first four months of this year. Violent death has also claimed its grim toll of firefighters and other public safety officers whose courage is equally admirable, whose jobs are no less essential and whose lives are just as precious.

There is no way that we can fully compensate for this loss of life in our public service, but we have a clear obligation to help as much as we can.

The Congress has passed -- and I congratulate the Members of the House and Senate on both sides of the aisle -- the Public Service Officers Benefits Act of 1976. This legislation provides that the Federal Government will pay a \$50,000 benefit to the surviving dependents of public service officers who are killed in the line of duty. This includes not only policemen, but firemen, prison guards, parole and probation officers and court officials.

This Act demonstrates the esteem of a free society for those whom it entrusts with our public and personal safety.

It is with great pride and pleasure that I sign this legislation, and I congratulate the Congress for its efforts which I think are long overdue in this regard.

END (AT 12:05 P.M. EDT)