

Senate Democratic Policy Committee Hearing

“Will the Bush Administration’s Overtime Proposals Mean Less Pay and Longer Hours for American Workers?”

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December 11, 2003

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today. I am currently an officer in the Annapolis Police Department, and have been a police officer for over 17 years. I am also a veteran, having served four years active duty in our nation’s Air Force. Presently, I am a Staff Sergeant in the District of Columbia National Guard, where I perform Homeland Security and other public safety duties. I am accompanied today by my fellow officer, John Lee, who has 10 years of service at the Annapolis Police Department. Both of us are members of Local 400 of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW).

As a Corporal and supervisor for the Annapolis Police Department, my principal duty is public safety. I have helped provide escort protection for the President and Vice President and other dignitaries when they visit Annapolis or the Naval Academy. I have also protected the public during demonstrations at the state capitol and performed various other public safety functions, such as DWI patrols and traffic enforcement. Like most other police officers, much of the time I spend performing these duties is on overtime. Like every other police department, we could not function without the flexibility of overtime. And eliminating overtime pay for our first responders would have a devastating impact on our department’s ability to perform vital public safety functions.

Most police and other first responders cannot afford to perform overtime work without overtime pay, and would be extremely resistant to working unpaid overtime. Forced unpaid overtime would seriously compromise public safety as well as undermine officer morale and department structure. Public safety departments faced with the possibility of unpaid overtime would likely demand even more hours from first responders, further straining morale and undermining job performance. In addition, officers will have less time to volunteer for National Guard duty, further compromising the effective strength of our armed forces.

Like many police officers, overtime pay constitutes approximately 20% of my total income. For some officers in our department, overtime pay is 25-30% of their income. If I were to lose that pay, it would radically change my family life. We would have to move into a different home, as we could no longer afford the mortgage on our present home. Already, I have to live about an hour’s drive from Annapolis in order to find affordable housing. I’m sure our new home would be even farther, and our 19 year old son and 16 year old daughter would be forced to change schools. If I were to lose that pay, my son’s college plans would be endangered, and so would

my daughter's. Family vacations and many other things that are part of a middle-class lifestyle would be out of the question.

Like any other police officer, I am proud of the work I do. Working in our state capitol, I feel a sense of comradery with your own Capitol Hill Police. Like them, we work hard and willingly take risks to assure that the public and public officials — such as yourselves — are safe and secure in their homes, offices, schools and on the road. Paid overtime work takes us away from our families, but allows us to do our job and to afford many of the things that make our families' lives better. I know I speak for many first responders everywhere when I say I am extremely disappointed that our government would reward our hard work and public service with a massive pay cut. I implore you to do everything in your power to assure that the Department of Labor does not issue regulations that would take away our overtime pay.

Thank you again for this opportunity.