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Statement from President Canterbury
For Immediate Release

Recently President Obama made comments about the riots in Baltimore and in an effort to keep a discussion of the many topics he touched on open, I want to offer the following remarks.

President Obama explained that the DOJ was on the ground in Baltimore and is conducting an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of Freddie Gray. We welcome a complete investigation into the circumstances leading to his death and we have had daily contact with the Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Vanita Gupta and with the Director of the COPS Office Mr. Ron Davis on this matter. We have in fact worked to facilitate discussions between the local FOP lodge and DOJ to insure local involvement in any and all collaborative initiatives. Our work with the COPS Office has been frequent and open to all topics.

The President went on to characterize the rioters as Criminals and thugs and, although we would have restricted our characterization to “criminals”, we understand and agree that this type of criminal activity has no place in peaceful protests and is in no way associated with the peaceful protests. The members of the Baltimore City Police had been protecting those peaceful protestors for many days ahead of the outbreak of criminality without incident. We encourage Federal Law Enforcement to assist the Baltimore Police in identifying and prosecuting these criminals.

The President further went on to say that:

What I'd say is this has been a slow-rolling crisis. This has been going on for a long time. This is not new. And we shouldn't pretend that it's new. The good news is that perhaps there's some newfound awareness because of social media and video cameras and so forth that there are -- are problems and challenges when it comes to how policing and our laws are applied in certain communities, and we have to pay attention to it and respond.

The National Fraternal Order of Police passed a resolution in 1997 condemning the practice of racial profiling and we have sent the message to police management for years that we oppose “crime prevention” through ticket quotas and performance evaluations that reward officers based on the number of arrests.



The crime reduction that we saw after passage of the 1994 Crime Bill was a true indicator that community involvement and adequate resources to engage our communities was, and is, an effective strategy. The President discussed grants that are being offered to assist agencies with body cameras -another move we applaud- but other law enforcement grant programs have seen a significant reduction in the past two administrations and a band aid approach to issues is not cost efficient nor does it solve problems.

The President also identified abject poverty as an issue in neighborhoods that have distrust for law enforcement. Urban decay, unemployment, inferior educational systems, weak family structure, and numerous other factors are virtually always evident in impoverished areas. In my testimony before his 21st Century Policing Task Force, I discussed the need for a holistic approach to shoring up relationships in impoverished neighborhoods. We are pleased that the President agrees that police cannot be the only tool of Government to attack these issues.

The fact that the 21st Century Policing Task force did not have one rank and file police officer on its board may be because the Administration is unfamiliar with the FOP's historical involvement in community and policing betterment programs. State and local FOP lodges in this country have run camps for underprivileged and at risk children for many years. We have also been strong partners to Boys and Girls Clubs, PAL, and Cops and Kids shopping and back to school events and numerous other worthwhile undertakings. The fact that poverty is the root cause of many issues in many communities of color has not been lost on us - and we hope that the politicians that heard this message will agree with the President and rank and file police officers.

Finally we want to thank the President for recognizing that the FOP must be part of the solution to many of the issues discussed, we agree. The President stated:

I think it's gonna be important for organizations like the Fraternal Order of Police and other police unions and organizations to acknowledge that this is not good for police. They have to own up to the fact that occasionally there are gonna be problems here, just as there are in every other occupation.

The innuendo here being that the FOP defends bad cops and subscribes to a code of silence legend. In this single area of his remarks, he was totally wrong about cops in general, and about the FOP. Nobody hates bad cops more than other cops, and the FOP doesn't have any sympathy for a cop who crosses the line. That being said, every US citizen including cops, teachers or heck even politicians- have a right to the presumption of innocence and to due process.

During recent meetings with the Police Executive Research Forum the FOP proposed training for Police management and Police rank and file leaders that teaches the primary responsibilities of each group. The police union has a duty and responsibility to make sure our members receive due process. This due process is afforded to every person we arrest, but in many states a police officer is deprived of that right. The evidence does not change because of due process.

To make statements that we must acknowledge that there are "gonna be problems" completely ignores the thousands and thousands of meetings and discussions we have had over the past 100 years where rank and file police officers have effected changes in the criminal justice system which have improved the quality of life for all.



We applaud the prosecution of bad cops but we also believe that all citizens are innocent until proven guilty.

We stand ready to work with this administration and the administrations of the thousands of state and local governments to help restore confidence in law enforcement as long as they recognize our rights for due process and to justice.

