

111TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 1611

To provide collective bargaining rights for public safety officers employed  
by States or their political subdivisions.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

AUGUST 6, 2009

Mr. GREGG (for himself, Mr. KENNEDY, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. DODD, Mr. MARTINEZ, Mr. HARKIN, Ms. SNOWE, and Ms. MIKULSKI) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

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## A BILL

To provide collective bargaining rights for public safety  
officers employed by States or their political subdivisions.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Public Safety Em-  
5 ployer-Employee Cooperation Act of 2009”.

6 **SEC. 2. DECLARATION OF PURPOSE AND POLICY.**

7 The Congress declares that the following is the policy  
8 of the United States:

1           (1) Labor-management relationships and part-  
2           nerships are based on trust, mutual respect, open  
3           communication, bilateral consensual problem solving,  
4           and shared accountability. Labor-management co-  
5           operation fully utilizes the strengths of both parties  
6           to best serve the interests of the public, operating as  
7           a team, to carry out the public safety mission in a  
8           quality work environment. In many public safety  
9           agencies, it is the union that provides the institu-  
10          tional stability as elected leaders and appointees  
11          come and go.

12          (2) State and local public safety officers play an  
13          essential role in the efforts of the United States to  
14          detect, prevent, and respond to terrorist attacks, and  
15          to respond to natural disasters, hazardous materials,  
16          and other mass casualty incidents. State and local  
17          public safety officers, as first responders, are a com-  
18          ponent of our Nation's National Incident Manage-  
19          ment System, developed by the Department of  
20          Homeland Security to coordinate response to and re-  
21          covery from terrorism, major natural disasters, and  
22          other major emergencies. Public safety employer-em-  
23          ployee cooperation is essential in meeting these  
24          needs and is, therefore, in the National interest.

1           (3) The Federal Government needs to encour-  
2           age conciliation, mediation, and voluntary arbitra-  
3           tion to aid and encourage employers and the rep-  
4           resentatives of their employees to reach and main-  
5           tain agreements concerning rates of pay, hours, and  
6           working conditions, and to make all reasonable ef-  
7           forts through negotiations to settle their differences  
8           by mutual agreement reached through collective bar-  
9           gaining or by such methods as may be provided for  
10          in any applicable agreement for the settlement of  
11          disputes.

12          (4) The absence of adequate cooperation be-  
13          tween public safety employers and employees has im-  
14          plications for the security of employees and can af-  
15          fect interstate and intrastate commerce. The lack of  
16          such labor-management cooperation can detrimen-  
17          tally impact the upgrading of police and fire services  
18          of local communities, the health and well-being of  
19          public safety officers, and the morale of the fire and  
20          police departments. Additionally, these factors could  
21          have significant commercial repercussions. Moreover,  
22          providing minimal standards for collective bar-  
23          gaining negotiations in the public safety sector can  
24          prevent industrial strife between labor and manage-

1       ment that interferes with the normal flow of com-  
2       merce.

3           (5) Many States and localities already provide  
4       public safety officers with collective bargaining  
5       rights comparable to or greater than the rights and  
6       responsibilities set forth in this Act, and such State  
7       and local laws should be respected.

8       **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

9       In this Act:

10           (1) **AUTHORITY.**—The term “Authority” means  
11       the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

12           (2) **CONFIDENTIAL EMPLOYEE.**—The term  
13       “confidential employee” has the meaning given such  
14       term under applicable State law on the date of en-  
15       actment of this Act. If no such State law is in effect,  
16       the term means an individual, employed by a public  
17       safety employer, who—

18                   (A) is designated as confidential; and

19                   (B) is an individual who routinely assists,  
20       in a confidential capacity, supervisory employ-  
21       ees and management employees.

22           (3) **EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES PER-**  
23       **SONNEL.**—The term “emergency medical services  
24       personnel” means an individual who provides out-of-  
25       hospital emergency medical care, including an emer-

1 agency medical technician, paramedic, or first re-  
2 sponder.

3 (4) EMPLOYER; PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCY.—The  
4 terms “employer” and “public safety agency” mean  
5 any State, or political subdivision of a State, that  
6 employs public safety officers.

7 (5) FIREFIGHTER.—The term “firefighter” has  
8 the meaning given the term “employee engaged in  
9 fire protection activities” in section 3(y) of the Fair  
10 Labor Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. 203(y)).

11 (6) LABOR ORGANIZATION.—The term “labor  
12 organization” means an organization composed in  
13 whole or in part of employees, in which employees  
14 participate, and which represents such employees be-  
15 fore public safety agencies concerning grievances,  
16 conditions of employment, and related matters.

17 (7) LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER.—The term  
18 “law enforcement officer” has the meaning given  
19 such term in section 1204 of the Omnibus Crime  
20 Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C.  
21 3796b).

22 (8) MANAGEMENT EMPLOYEE.—The term  
23 “management employee” has the meaning given  
24 such term under applicable State law in effect on  
25 the date of enactment of this Act. If no such State

1 law is in effect, the term means an individual em-  
2 ployed by a public safety employer in a position that  
3 requires or authorizes the individual to formulate,  
4 determine, or influence the policies of the employer.

5 (9) PERSON.—The term “person” means an in-  
6 dividual or a labor organization.

7 (10) PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICER.—The term  
8 “public safety officer”—

9 (A) means an employee of a public safety  
10 agency who is a law enforcement officer, a fire-  
11 fighter, or an emergency medical services per-  
12 sonnel;

13 (B) includes an individual who is tempo-  
14 rarily transferred to a supervisory or manage-  
15 ment position; and

16 (C) does not include a permanent super-  
17 visory, management, or confidential employee.

18 (11) STATE.—The term “State” means each of  
19 the several States of the United States, the District  
20 of Columbia, and any territory or possession of the  
21 United States.

22 (12) SUBSTANTIALLY PROVIDES.—The term  
23 “substantially provides”, when used with respect to  
24 the rights and responsibilities described in section

1 4(b), means compliance with each right and respon-  
 2 sibility described in such section.

3 (13) SUPERVISORY EMPLOYEE.—The term “su-  
 4 pervisory employee” has the meaning given such  
 5 term under applicable State law in effect on the date  
 6 of enactment of this Act. If no such State law is in  
 7 effect, the term means an individual, employed by a  
 8 public safety employer, who—

9 (A) has the authority in the interest of the  
 10 employer to hire, direct, assign, promote, re-  
 11 ward, transfer, furlough, lay off, recall, sus-  
 12 pend, discipline, or remove public safety offi-  
 13 cers, to adjust their grievances, or to effectively  
 14 recommend such action, if the exercise of the  
 15 authority is not merely routine or clerical in na-  
 16 ture but requires the consistent exercise of  
 17 independent judgment; and

18 (B) devotes a majority of time at work to  
 19 exercising such authority.

20 **SEC. 4. DETERMINATION OF RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBIL-**  
 21 **ITIES.**

22 (a) DETERMINATION.—

23 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days  
 24 after the date of enactment of this Act, the Author-  
 25 ity shall make a determination as to whether a State

1 substantially provides for the rights and responsibil-  
2 ities described in subsection (b).

3 (2) CONSIDERATION OF ADDITIONAL OPIN-  
4 IONS.—In making the determination described in  
5 paragraph (1), the Authority shall consider the opin-  
6 ions of affected employers and labor organizations.  
7 In the case where the Authority is notified by an af-  
8 fected employer and labor organization that both  
9 parties agree that the law applicable to such em-  
10 ployer and labor organization substantially provides  
11 for the rights and responsibilities described in sub-  
12 section (b), the Authority shall give such agreement  
13 weight to the maximum extent practicable in making  
14 the Authority's determination under this subsection.

15 (3) LIMITED CRITERIA.—In making the deter-  
16 mination described in paragraph (1), the Authority  
17 shall be limited to the application of the criteria de-  
18 scribed in subsection (b) and shall not require any  
19 additional criteria.

20 (4) SUBSEQUENT DETERMINATIONS.—

21 (A) IN GENERAL.—A determination made  
22 pursuant to paragraph (1) shall remain in ef-  
23 fect unless and until the Authority issues a sub-  
24 sequent determination, in accordance with the  
25 procedures set forth in subparagraph (B).



1           (B) PROCEDURES FOR SUBSEQUENT DE-  
2           TERMINATIONS.—Upon establishing that a ma-  
3           terial change in State law or its interpretation  
4           has occurred, an employer or a labor organiza-  
5           tion may submit a written request for a subse-  
6           quent determination. If satisfied that a material  
7           change in State law or its interpretation has oc-  
8           curred, the Authority shall issue a subsequent  
9           determination not later than 30 days after re-  
10          ceipt of such request.

11          (5) JUDICIAL REVIEW.—Any person or em-  
12          ployer aggrieved by a determination of the Authority  
13          under this section may, during the 60-day period be-  
14          ginning on the date on which the determination was  
15          made, petition any United States Court of Appeals  
16          in the circuit in which the person or employer re-  
17          sides or transacts business or in the District of Co-  
18          lumbia circuit, for judicial review. In any judicial re-  
19          view of a determination by the Authority, the proce-  
20          dures contained in subsections (c) and (d) of section  
21          7123 of title 5, United States Code, shall be fol-  
22          lowed.

23          (b) RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.—In making a  
24          determination described in subsection (a), the Authority  
25          shall consider a State's law to substantially provide the

1 required rights and responsibilities unless such law fails  
2 to provide rights and responsibilities comparable to or  
3 greater than the following:

4           (1) Granting public safety officers the right to  
5 form and join a labor organization, which may ex-  
6 clude management employees, supervisory employ-  
7 ees, and confidential employees, that is, or seeks to  
8 be, recognized as the exclusive bargaining represent-  
9 ative of such employees.

10           (2) Requiring public safety employers to recog-  
11 nize the employees' labor organization (freely chosen  
12 by a majority of the employees), to agree to bargain  
13 with the labor organization, and to commit any  
14 agreements to writing in a contract or memorandum  
15 of understanding.

16           (3) Providing for the right to bargain over  
17 hours, wages, and terms and conditions of employ-  
18 ment.

19           (4) Making available an interest impasse resolu-  
20 tion mechanism, such as fact-finding, mediation, ar-  
21 bitration, or comparable procedures.

22           (5) Requiring enforcement of all rights, respon-  
23 sibilities, and protections provided by State law and  
24 enumerated in this section, and of any written con-  
25 tract or memorandum of understanding between a

1 labor organization and a public safety employer,  
2 through—

3 (A) a State administrative agency, if the  
4 State so chooses; and

5 (B) at the election of an aggrieved party,  
6 the State courts.

7 (c) COMPLIANCE WITH REQUIREMENTS.—If the Au-  
8 thority determines, acting pursuant to its authority under  
9 subsection (a), that a State substantially provides rights  
10 and responsibilities described in subsection (b), then this  
11 Act shall not preempt State law.

12 (d) FAILURE TO MEET REQUIREMENTS.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—If the Authority determines,  
14 acting pursuant to its authority under subsection  
15 (a), that a State does not substantially provide for  
16 the rights and responsibilities described in sub-  
17 section (b), then such State shall be subject to the  
18 regulations and procedures described in section 5 be-  
19 ginning on the later of—

20 (A) the date that is 2 years after the date  
21 of enactment of this Act;

22 (B) the date that is the last day of the  
23 first regular session of the legislature of the  
24 State that begins after the date of the enact-  
25 ment of this Act; or

1           (C) in the case of a State receiving a sub-  
2           sequent determination under subsection (a)(4),  
3           the date that is the last day of the first regular  
4           session of the legislature of the State that be-  
5           gins after the date the Authority made the de-  
6           termination.

7           (2) PARTIAL FAILURE.—If the Authority makes  
8           a determination that a State does not substantially  
9           provide for the rights and responsibilities described  
10          in subsection (b) solely because the State law sub-  
11          stantially provides for such rights and responsibil-  
12          ities for certain categories of public safety officers  
13          covered by the Act but not others, the Authority  
14          shall identify those categories of public safety offi-  
15          cers that shall be subject to the regulations and pro-  
16          cedures described in section 5, pursuant to section  
17          8(b)(3) and beginning on the appropriate date de-  
18          scribed in paragraph (1), and those categories of  
19          public safety officers that shall remain subject to  
20          State law.

21 **SEC. 5. ROLE OF FEDERAL LABOR RELATIONS AUTHORITY.**

22          (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the  
23          date of enactment of this Act, the Authority shall issue  
24          regulations in accordance with the rights and responsibil-  
25          ities described in section 4(b) establishing collective bar-

1 gaining procedures for employers and public safety officers  
2 in States which the Authority has determined, acting pur-  
3 suant to section 4(a), do not substantially provide for such  
4 rights and responsibilities.

5 (b) ROLE OF THE FEDERAL LABOR RELATIONS AU-  
6 THORITY.—The Authority, to the extent provided in this  
7 Act and in accordance with regulations prescribed by the  
8 Authority, shall—

9 (1) determine the appropriateness of units for  
10 labor organization representation;

11 (2) supervise or conduct elections to determine  
12 whether a labor organization has been selected as an  
13 exclusive representative by a voting majority of the  
14 employees in an appropriate unit;

15 (3) resolve issues relating to the duty to bar-  
16 gain in good faith;

17 (4) conduct hearings and resolve complaints of  
18 unfair labor practices;

19 (5) resolve exceptions to the awards of arbitra-  
20 tors;

21 (6) protect the right of each employee to form,  
22 join, or assist any labor organization, or to refrain  
23 from any such activity, freely and without fear of  
24 penalty or reprisal, and protect each employee in the  
25 exercise of such right; and

1           (7) take such other actions as are necessary  
2           and appropriate to effectively administer this Act,  
3           including issuing subpoenas requiring the attendance  
4           and testimony of witnesses and the production of  
5           documentary or other evidence from any place in the  
6           United States, and administering oaths, taking or  
7           ordering the taking of depositions, ordering re-  
8           sponses to written interrogatories, and receiving and  
9           examining witnesses.

10       (c) ENFORCEMENT.—

11           (1) AUTHORITY TO PETITION COURT.—The Au-  
12           thority may petition any United States Court of Ap-  
13           peals with jurisdiction over the parties, or the  
14           United States Court of Appeals for the District of  
15           Columbia Circuit, to enforce any final orders under  
16           this section, and for appropriate temporary relief or  
17           a restraining order. Any petition under this section  
18           shall be conducted in accordance with subsections  
19           (c) and (d) of section 7123 of title 5, United States  
20           Code.

21           (2) PRIVATE RIGHT OF ACTION.—Unless the  
22           Authority has filed a petition for enforcement as  
23           provided in paragraph (1), any party has the right  
24           to file suit in any appropriate district court of the  
25           United States to enforce compliance with the regula-

1 tions issued by the Authority pursuant to subsection  
2 (b), and to enforce compliance with any order issued  
3 by the Authority pursuant to this section. The right  
4 provided by this subsection to bring a suit to enforce  
5 compliance with any order issued by the Authority  
6 pursuant to this section shall terminate upon the fil-  
7 ing of a petition seeking the same relief by the Au-  
8 thority.

9 **SEC. 6. STRIKES AND LOCKOUTS PROHIBITED.**

10 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subsection (b), an em-  
11 ployer, public safety officer, or labor organization may not  
12 engage in a lockout, sickout, work slowdown, strike, or any  
13 other organized job action that will measurably disrupt the  
14 delivery of emergency services and is designed to compel  
15 an employer, public safety officer, or labor organization  
16 to agree to the terms of a proposed contract.

17 (b) NO PREEMPTION.—Nothing in this section shall  
18 be construed to preempt any law of any State or political  
19 subdivision of any State with respect to strikes by public  
20 safety officers.

21 **SEC. 7. EXISTING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING UNITS AND**  
22 **AGREEMENTS.**

23 A certification, recognition, election-held, collective  
24 bargaining agreement or memorandum of understanding  
25 which has been issued, approved, or ratified by any public

1 employee relations board or commission or by any State  
2 or political subdivision or its agents (management offi-  
3 cials) and is in effect on the day before the date of enact-  
4 ment of this Act shall not be invalidated by the enactment  
5 of this Act.

6 **SEC. 8. CONSTRUCTION AND COMPLIANCE.**

7 (a) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this Act shall be  
8 construed—

9 (1) to preempt or limit the remedies, rights,  
10 and procedures of any law of any State or political  
11 subdivision of any State that provides greater or  
12 comparable rights and responsibilities than the  
13 rights and responsibilities described in section 4(b);

14 (2) to prevent a State from enforcing a right-  
15 to-work law that prohibits employers and labor orga-  
16 nizations from negotiating provisions in a labor  
17 agreement that require union membership or pay-  
18 ment of union fees as a condition of employment;

19 (3) to preempt or limit any State law in effect  
20 on the date of enactment of this Act that provides  
21 for the rights and responsibilities described in sec-  
22 tion 4(b) solely because such State law permits an  
23 employee to appear on the employee's own behalf  
24 with respect to the employee's employment relations  
25 with the public safety agency involved;



1           (4) to preempt or limit any State law in effect  
2           on the date of enactment of this Act that provides  
3           for the rights and responsibilities described in sec-  
4           tion 4(b) solely because such State law excludes  
5           from its coverage employees of a State militia or na-  
6           tional guard;

7           (5) to permit parties in States subject to the  
8           regulations and procedures described in section 5 to  
9           negotiate provisions that would prohibit an employee  
10          from engaging in part-time employment or volunteer  
11          activities during off-duty hours;

12          (6) to prohibit a State from exempting from  
13          coverage under this Act a political subdivision of the  
14          State that has a population of less than 5,000 or  
15          that employs less than 25 full-time employees; or

16          (7) to preempt or limit the laws or ordinances  
17          of any State or political subdivision of a State that  
18          provide for the rights and responsibilities described  
19          in section 4(b) solely because such law or ordinance  
20          does not require bargaining with respect to pension,  
21          retirement, or health benefits.

22 For purposes of paragraph (6), the term “employee” in-  
23 cludes each and every individual employed by the political  
24 subdivision except any individual elected by popular vote  
25 or appointed to serve on a board or commission.

1 (b) COMPLIANCE.—

2 (1) ACTIONS OF STATES.—Nothing in this Act  
3 or the regulations promulgated under this Act shall  
4 be construed to require a State to rescind or pre-  
5 empt the laws or ordinances of any of the State’s  
6 political subdivisions if such laws provide rights and  
7 responsibilities for public safety officers that are  
8 comparable to or greater than the rights and respon-  
9 sibilities described in section 4(b).

10 (2) ACTIONS OF THE AUTHORITY.—Nothing in  
11 this Act or the regulations promulgated under this  
12 Act shall be construed to preempt—

13 (A) the laws or ordinances of any State or  
14 political subdivision of a State, if such laws pro-  
15 vide collective bargaining rights for public safe-  
16 ty officers that are comparable to or greater  
17 than the rights enumerated in section 4(b);

18 (B) the laws or ordinances of any State or  
19 political subdivision of a State that provide for  
20 the rights and responsibilities described in sec-  
21 tion 4(b) with respect to certain categories of  
22 public safety officers covered by this Act solely  
23 because such rights and responsibilities have  
24 not been extended to other categories of public  
25 safety officers covered by this Act; or

1           (C) the laws or ordinances of any State or  
2 political subdivision of a State that provide for  
3 the rights and responsibilities described in sec-  
4 tion 4(b), solely because such laws or ordi-  
5 nances provide that a contract or memorandum  
6 of understanding between a public safety em-  
7 ployer and a labor organization must be pre-  
8 sented to a legislative body as part of the proc-  
9 ess for approving such contract or memo-  
10 randum of understanding.

11           (3) LIMITED ENFORCEMENT POWER.—In the  
12 case of a law described in paragraph (2)(B), the Au-  
13 thority shall only exercise the powers provided in  
14 section 5 with respect to those categories of public  
15 safety officers who have not been afforded the rights  
16 and responsibilities described in section 4(b).

17           (4) EXCLUSIVE ENFORCEMENT PROVISION.—  
18 Notwithstanding any other provision of the Act, and  
19 in the absence of a waiver of a State’s sovereign im-  
20 munity, the Authority shall have the exclusive power  
21 to enforce the provisions of this Act with respect to  
22 employees of a State.

1 **SEC. 9. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

2       There are authorized to be appropriated such sums  
3 as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this  
4 Act.

○