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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS
REGIONAL WHIP

CONGRESSIONAL BRAIN
INJURY TASK FORCE
CO-CHAIR

August 4, 2006

Mr. George Christie
President
Probation Association of New Jersey
617 Union Avenue – Building 2
Brielle, New Jersey 08730-1838

Dear President Christie,

I offer my full support to probation officers throughout New Jersey. You each encounter numerous threats to your personal safety while selflessly providing our communities with an enormous benefaction. We are all grateful for your continued hard work in the face of true adversity and there is no doubt that you should be considered law enforcement officers in every sense.

We know that probation officers are exposed to more risk today than in the past. One reason is that people sentenced to probation are now more serious offenders—in terms of the severity of their criminal acts, prior records, and drug abuse histories.

A U.S. Department of Justice report indicated that 45 percent of all state prison inmates were either on probation or on parole when they committed the acts for which they were sent to prison. Of 162,000 recent probation violators, it was learned that over a 17 month period they committed 6,400 murders, 7,400 rapes, 10,400 assaults and 17,000 robberies while under supervision in their communities. It is also significant to note that approximately 21 percent of probation and parole violators reported that they carried firearms while on community supervision.

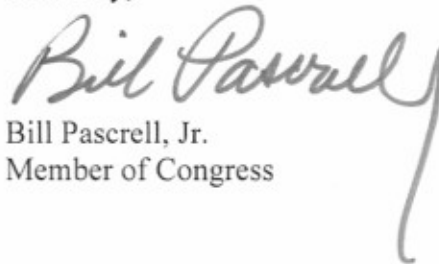
Clearly, probation officers are charged with an enormous daily risk and they must have the ability to protect themselves at all levels of confrontation. That is why I believe the order issued by the state judiciary prohibiting probation officers from making arrests and performing other law enforcement duties is wrong. It will undermine the effectiveness of our probation personnel and ultimately thwart efforts to improve the safety and security of cities and towns statewide.

I have long been a vocal proponent of giving probation officers the status necessary and resources needed to do their jobs. My legislation, H.R.484, *The Probation and Parole Officer Safety Task Force Act*, for example, was designed to address many of

the problems our probation and parole officers face nationwide. The bill creates a Task Force within the Department of Justice to study Federal and State policies and practices as they affect the personal safety of probation and parole officers during the execution of their duties. The Task Force will recommend guidelines for the safety training of probation and parole officers, as well as the use of force and equipment standards. In addition, the bill directs the Bureau of Justice Statistics to carry out comprehensive statistical reviews of the incidence and effects of violence against Federal and State probation and parole officers and submit annual results to the Attorney General.

We depend on probation officers in more ways than we ever imagine. You contribute directly to the communities in which you serve and we must do everything in our power to ensure that we help you perform your vital duties. The directive of the state judiciary has abandoned this principle. Know that I am with New Jersey's probation officers in fully fighting this misguided and dangerous order.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Pascrell, Jr.". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress

