



United States Capitol Police

Labor Committee

1320 G Street, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003

Telephone: 202-544-4813

www.uscp-fop.com



Capitol Police Officers Abandoned by Leadership

Capitol Police officers have worked day in, day out to secure the safety of Congressional leaders as they crafted the historic economic rescue package for America, and in spite of the health risks posed by the Covid-19 virus.

Now, Capitol Police officers are being undermined by their own leadership.

The United States Capitol Police (USCP) has chosen this time of duress to abandon the rights of rank and file sworn officers, by suspending the labor safeguards that underpin their working conditions.

On March 20th, USCP indefinitely suspended the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) between the employer and the labor union. Though USCP cited the Covid-19 crisis for the suspension, Union representatives from the United States Capitol Police Labor Committee have in fact spent weeks trying to engage the USCP on a coordinated response to the health crisis.

Instead of a good faith effort to involve frontline officers, USCP has taken a ham-fisted approach that will undermine both the conditions and morale of its force, officers who are crucial to protecting the Legislative Branch.

The action by USCP is unexpected and unexplained, and other Federal law enforcement agencies including Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and U.S. Park Police have taken no such action to suspend the labor rights of their officers or to undermine their working conditions.

As of now, Capitol Police officers are stripped of their union support and have lost their voice in labor-management relations.

It is unclear how this will help secure the safety of Congressional leaders as they steer the country through the difficult months ahead in this health crisis.

The sole CBA provision the Chief of Police of USCP agreed to keep, was to allow the parties to continue negotiations on a future contract. This amounts to forcing officers to continue working after being stripped of their rights, on a vague promise to keep talking about a future contract.

Union Chairman and active Capitol Police officer, Gus Papathanasiou says officer rights need to be reinstated as they work through this crisis, in order for good faith negotiations to proceed. Additionally, negotiations must resume in accordance with medical guidelines on social distancing – not under the current conference room arrangement which puts all parties at risk.

"I felt it was **unethical** to allow talks to go on, knowing the safeguards in the CBA have been suspended without protections for our Officers", says Papathanasiou.

“This is no time to jeopardize the morale and safety of Capitol Police officers – all Members of Congress and staff know that. What has become clear in this crisis, is that workers and their families, including those in law enforcement, are pivotal in keeping our government functioning and safe.”

Given recent positive Covid-19 tests of two USCP Officers, along with a growing number of Members of Congress, the Union Chairman has asked the Chief of Police for all frontline USCP officers to be tested, to ensure they're not party to spreading infection on Capitol Hill, and to safeguard the officers and their families.

However, not only has the Chief of Police told the Union this testing is unnecessary, the Department has also failed to isolate employees who were exposed to individuals who tested positive for Covid-19 or to provide all employees with personal protective equipment. "It's unacceptable for the Department to take this position - they should test every officer required to be at work, as they protect the Congressional community." says Chairman Papathanasiou.

Given the increased health risks, the Union has requested the Department give its Officers Hazardous Duty Pay in keeping with the requirement that they report to work as first responders. Despite the unprecedented dangers faced by Officers, the Department has refused this request.

All the Union's suggestions and requests have gone unanswered by the Chief of Police and his Executive Management Team. "By suspending the entire CBA, it's very clear the Chief doesn't want Capitol Police Officers to have the labor safeguards they need, nor to interact with their Union leadership. This is a crucial time in the Department's history when we must all work together to get through this difficult time," says Chairman Papathanasiou. The Chief of Police's decision to indefinitely suspend the entire CBA has assured that the Officers – who have been front and center in dealing with the pandemic on a daily basis – have no voice in how or whether their health and safety will be assured.