

**EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE**

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

---

Tuesday, June 5, 2007  
Press Office, 202-226-0853

**Chairman Andrews Statement at Subcommittee Hearing on  
Ensuring Collective Bargaining Rights for First Responders**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. Rob Andrews (D-NJ), chairman of the House Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions, for a subcommittee hearing on “Ensuring Collective Bargaining Rights for First Responders: H.R. 980, The Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act of 2007.”*

\*\*\*

Good afternoon and welcome to today’s hearing entitled “*Ensuring Collective Bargaining Rights for First Responders: H.R. 980, The Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act of 2007.*” I believe it is essential that every rank and file worker, whether public or private, enjoy certain basic rights and protections in the workplace. One of those basic worker rights, known as collective bargaining, is surprisingly withheld from many of our public safety workers today. In today’s hearing, we will layout the factual predicate as to why it is necessary for Congress to provide collective bargaining rights to those public safety officers who currently do not possess them and to consider the *Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act of 2007* (H.R. 980) as a legislative vehicle to provide them.

Historically, states have possessed the authority to manage their own employees. Whether their employees have or lack basic worker protections, the decision to provide these protections has been in the hands of the states. However, in our post-9/11 world, the increasing demand and pressure placed on our public safety officers warrants the need to ensure that these dedicated public servants have basic collective bargaining rights to protect their families, and their benefits during the times when their help is needed most.

The *Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act of 2007* would extend the basic right to discuss workplace issues with their employers to our firefighters, law enforcement officers, emergency medical services personal and correctional officers. These brave men and women, who risk their lives each day and serve as our first line of defense against natural disasters, terrorists, criminals, medical emergencies, etc., deserve more than the status quo. The least Congress can do is provide the right for every public safety officer to meet at the table with their employer to discuss ways to improve the safety of their community and the well-being of their families. I look forward to hearing all of the witnesses’ testimony today.

<http://edlabor.house.gov/>