

September 2013

# WIFLE NEWSLETTER

WOMEN IN FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

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WIFLE, Inc.  
WIFLE Foundation, Inc.  
WIFLE Scholarship Fund

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Editors: Dorene Erhard and Betsy Casey

Women in Federal Law Enforcement, Inc. (a professional association) and WIFLE Foundation, Inc. (a charitable and educational organization) are tax-exempt under the Internal Revenue Service Codes, 501(c)(6) and 501(c)(3) respectively.

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## WIFLE LEADERSHIP TRAINING June 2013 Westin Mission Hills Rancho Mirage CA



## WIFLE Training 2013 Was Great!

Despite the federal sequestration and budget troubles, attendees present at WIFLE's 2013 Training the week of June 24, 2013, at the Westin Mission Hills Conference Center in Rancho Mirage, CA, rated the training 'excellent,' 'informative,' 'top quality.' In addition to a week of informative seminars and training sessions, the new WIFLE Executive Leadership Institute (WELI) program had its debut. Sponsored by Booz Allen Hamilton, WELI serves to educate government women leaders and provide broad and unique insights for women managers. The Institute fills a recognized gap that exists for senior level management training for women law enforcement professionals.

### Now, Start Planning for WIFLE 2014 in Tampa, FL

Don't forget to mark your calendars for WIFLE 2014 Training the week of June 16, 2014! Next year's training will be held at the Marriott Tampa Waterside Hotel in Tampa, FL.



The WIFLE Executive Leadership Training Institute offers advanced sessions for Federal grades GS-13, 14, 15 and SES (and State and local equivalents). WELI sessions are during normal training periods; e.g., 8-5, mornings or afternoons, and generally run about 3 hours.

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## FOR YOUR PLANNING PURPOSES...

### WIFLE Leadership Training - 2014 June 16 - 19, 2014 Tampa Marriott Waterside, Tampa Florida

- **Pre-conference events, Monday June 16, 2014**  
Julie Y Cross Golf Tournament | Specialized Seminars | Exhibit Hall | Welcome Reception
- **Opening Ceremonies, Tuesday June 17, 2014**
- **Meals Provided** - 3 boxed lunches | Wednesday Evening Banquet | 3 Continental Breakfasts
- **Training Registration** Fee \$495 | Day Training Fee \$195 | Extra Banquet Ticket \$65
- **Recruiting and Exhibitor Booths** Government \$1495
- **Conference Website** - Check Often - <http://www.wifle.org/leadershiptraining2014/index.htm>

*by Catherine Sanz*



*President, WIFLE Foundation, Inc.  
Executive Director, WIFLE, Inc.*

2014 will see WIFLE Leadership Training return to the East Coast - Tampa, Florida. The training hotel is at Federal per diem rates. The USMS will coordinate the public Career Day and we will repeat the mentoring session that has become so popular. Check the website for frequent updates. Workshop proposals and sponsorships are being accepted now. Email [wifle@comcast.net](mailto:wifle@comcast.net) with questions.

*Keep checking [www.wifle.org](http://www.wifle.org) for updates and changes.*

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## Excelsior College's Graduate Degree Partnership Pricing Is Now Permanent!

WIFLE has a partnership with Excelsior College which allows WIFLE members and their spouses and/or domestic partners the unique opportunity of pursuing a degree with Excelsior College at reduced tuition and fees. The original partnership with WIFLE only covered Bachelors and Associates degree programs. As of July 1, 2013, Excelsior College has established a 15% discount for master's degree programs as a permanent component of its partnership pricing.

For members of WIFLE as well as their spouses and/or domestic partners, this means access to any one of Excelsior's graduate-level degree pathways, including an MBA (with eight concentration options), the newly-launched [Master of Science in Cybersecurity](#), the [Master of Arts in Liberal Studies](#), the [Master of Science in Criminal Justice](#), a 33 credit [Masters in Management](#), as well as the [Master of Science in nursing programs](#). For more information on all of Excelsior College's master's degree programs, please visit [www.excelsior.edu/programs](http://www.excelsior.edu/programs).

Excelsior is a nonprofit, regionally accredited distance learning institution that focuses on helping working adults complete a degree. Since 1971, [Excelsior College](#), has worked to break down the barriers to degree completion for adult learners through a variety of pathways, including a liberal transfer acceptance policy, online courses, credit-by-examination, and prior learning assessment (PLA). Over 150,000 adults have graduated from Excelsior.

Excelsior's goal is to expand its efforts to help build a more highly educated and diverse labor force capable of competing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy, by allowing greater access to learning for those who might not otherwise be able to afford it. For employees, a master's degree is a signal to their organization that they are ready for career advancement. In addition, the pursuit of a graduate degree allows learners to sharpen their expertise by fully immersing themselves within a given subject area and may lead to an increase in income.

For more information, please visit our WIFLE/Excelsior College Partnership Page: <http://wifle.excelsior.edu> or contact David Roberts at: 1-202-506-6019.



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## WIFLE CFC #29777

### *2013 Combined Federal Campaign National Capital Area for WIFLE Foundation, Inc.*

2012 was the inauguration of WIFLE into the CFCNCA and we are very excited to participate this year! The CFC is the government sponsored charitable program that allows federal employees to financially support the charitable organization of their choice. The Campaign is open now through December 2013.

**WIFLE Foundation, Inc. designated number  
for the Combined Federal Campaign  
National Capital Area 29777**

#### OUR VISION:

Women in Federal Law Enforcement, (WIFLE) Foundation, Inc. works to promote gender equality in federal law enforcement.



#### OUR WORK:

Our work consists of providing leadership training opportunities to all federal personnel. Each year we hold an education training event that is open to all federal law enforcement employees. Additionally we present an executive leadership training program targeting those interested in pursuing or are already in the Senior Executive Staff ranks. We hold an annual Human Trafficking seminar examining the best practices in combating this crime domestically and internationally. For 14 years, we have given scholarships to women pursuing college degrees in a law enforcement related field. These scholarships have helped many women continue their education and enter into their desired career in federal law enforcement. We recognize the heroic contributions of women and those who continue to remove the systemic barriers to the recruitment and retention of women in federal law enforcement through our awards program. We advocate for the improvement of the status of women in federal law enforcement

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by issuing model policies and guidance, most recently the pregnancy policy. We partner with agencies to recruit women and targeted women veterans in our efforts. We are the leading organization that conducts research on women in federal law enforcement and share that research with agencies and federal employees to better assist agencies in designing their recruitment programs and retention policies.

## EXAMPLES OF WHAT YOUR SUPPORT MEANS:

If 20 folks give \$10.00 per month, WIFLE can award one scholarship each year to a deserving woman seeking her dream for a career in federal law enforcement.

If 25 folks give \$5.00 per month WIFLE can continue to present our annual human trafficking seminar.

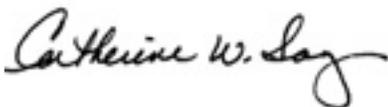
If one person gave \$100 per month, we can help fund research that will continue to help document the issues that women in federal law enforcement continue to face and eliminate the barriers to effective recruitment.

### *Give what you can, no amount is too small!*

To make a donation, please go to [www.cfcnca.org](http://www.cfcnca.org) and on left hand side enter #29777.

WIFLE would like to thank you for your support. As the only organization that advocates for women in federal law enforcement, your financial support is so important to our work. We cannot do it without your help. But, if you cannot give, please spread the word about WIFLE and our work. We look forward to seeing you at our annual training events. Save the date for our next leadership training program, June 16 to June 19, 2014, in Tampa, Florida. Go to [www.wifle.org](http://www.wifle.org) for all details and all information on our organization.

Sincerely,



Catherine Sanz, President



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## There Will Be No Talk of Justice

By June Werdlow Rogers, PhD (DEA Special Agent, Retired)



I stewed as I listened to the conversation between my co-workers, but said nothing. They were reacting to the anchor's announcement just broadcasted on the television in my agency's gym about the 30-year prison sentence given to former police officer Justin Volpe. An arrestee had fallen victim to Volpe's on-duty rage in the form of a broken off broom stick forced up the man's rectum causing severe internal injuries. I wondered how anyone, especially a law enforcement officer could defend such criminal behavior as a brutal sexual assault yet here I was listening to a conversation about "poor Volpe." It was hard but I managed to keep quiet.

Like me, you probably have encountered similar situations at work where you've had to bite your tongue. Although society warns us to never discuss politics or religion at work, discussions do occur. The answers to questions such as *who are you voting for* or *what kind of church do you attend* generate internal uneasiness and for good reason. Politics and religion spark such heated debate that instead of enlightenment, argument sometimes ensues. I believe it is the high emotional investment that comes with religious and political decisions that lead to the passion with which we convey our positions. Consequently, defending our stance rather than listening to another person's position contributes to the risk of communication breakdown. That's the reason I had to exercise my right to remain silent on the Volpe matter - I couldn't trust what I might say or more importantly *how* my comments would be delivered.

Watching guests on talk shows almost come to blows while discussing the recent trial and verdict in the George Zimmerman case has me convinced that justice may need to be added to the politics and religion taboo for the workplace. In the general population, there are people who are unwavering in their belief that George Zimmerman should be free and those that are resolute that he should be imprisoned for killing Trayvon Martin. But surely women and men in law enforcement, people who detect, investigate, and prosecute crimes would never disagree on matters of justice - would they? The short answer is yes.

Disagreement about the Zimmerman verdict posted in comments on law enforcement websites demonstrate that not only can law enforcement officers differ in their opinions about "justice", they also at times show a level of vitriol in message delivery. While I agree that controversy in matters of law and justice often lead to necessary reform, there is a time and a place for such intervention. It is only the security of anonymity supplied by the websites that prevents the professional backlash one would be subjected to for some of the heated messages I saw. And herein lays the point to ponder. Should law enforcement officers avoid rendering their opinions at work about controversial cases?

I would argue while such conversations should not be *off limits*, there should be *some limits* - namely one should tread carefully and keep emotion out of the conversation. Moreover, not saying anything is at times the best course of action. I'm reminded of another example with the 1995 acquittal of O.J. Simpson in the murder of his ex-wife and her companion. During the trial, the nation was polarized. When the time came, an announcement was made over my office's public address system that the verdict was in. Back then there were fewer televisions in our work setting so many of us proceeded to the break room to hear the verdict read real-time. You literally could have heard a pin drop. And although I know for a fact that different people in the room had different reactions to the verdict - everyone remained poker-faced and not a word was uttered until the room was emptied. Then people gravitated to a clique where they perceived their conversations were "safe."

At the time I admit to thinking the approach was somewhat gutless, but now I'm not so sure. Now I believe that dangerous topics encountered by law enforcement should be approached with similar care as dangerous people encountered by law enforcement - "with extreme caution."

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## Client Cannot Excuse Her Failure to Comply with Deadlines by Blaming Her Attorney

By Peter J. Jeffrey, Esq., Member, The Jeffrey Law Group, PLLC, The Federal Employee's Law Firm<sup>®</sup>



While the substantive laws protecting federal employees from unlawful employment discrimination for the most part mirror those in the private sector, the procedures for bringing a claim of unlawful employment discrimination differ sharply. For example, pursuant to 29 CFR Part 1614, federal employees within the executive agencies must initiate contact with an agency EEO counselor within 45 days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of personnel action, within 45 days of the effective date of the action. See 29 CFR § 1614.105.

Federal employees are entitled to be represented by counsel at any stage in the processing of a complaint, including the counseling stage. See 29 CFR § 1614.605(a). Once the employee designates an attorney-representative, she is bound by the acts (or omissions) of her attorney. See *Irwin v. Dep't of Veterans Affairs*, 498 U.S. 89, 92 (1990) (“[u]nder our system of representative litigation, each party is deemed bound by the acts of his lawyer-agent and is considered to have notice of all facts, notice of which can be charged upon the attorney”). Unfortunately, federal employee Donna Marie Farris learned the hard way that “a client cannot excuse her failure to comply with deadlines by blaming her attorney.” *Farris v. Dep't of Veterans Affairs*, 660 F.3d 557 (1st Cir. 2011) citing to *Hoult v. Hoult*, 57 F.3d 1, 5 n.3 (1st Cir. 1995).

On or about November 5, 2008, Ms. Farris filed an informal charge of discrimination with the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) counselor at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) over her termination from the VA. Sometime thereafter, Ms. Farris engaged Stephanie Mills, Esq., to represent her. After an unsuccessful mediation, the VA's Office of Resolution Management (ORM) notified Ms. Farris her right to file a formal EEO complaint within fifteen days of her receipt of the letter -- by January 2, 2008. After receiving the letter, Ms. Farris immediately forwarded it to her attorney, Ms. Mills, who received it on December 19, 2008.

Despite Ms. Farris' diligence in contacting her attorney and her attorney's promises and assurances to timely file the complaint, Attorney Mills did not file Ms. Farris' complaint until January 13, 2009. Included within Ms. Farris' untimely formal complaint was a letter from Attorney Mills admitting the tardiness of the complaint and explaining that she had believed she had filed the complaint on January 2, but that it had been “overlooked” because of the “holiday rush.” The court found that: Attorney Mills' implicit contention that, because the fifteen-day period fell during the Christmas and New Year's Day holidays, she was justified in missing the filing deadline is not a sufficient basis for equitable tolling. The holiday period between Christmas and New Year's Day is a readily anticipated annual affair and legal deadlines invariably continue to fall due.

*Farris v. Dep't of Veterans Affairs*, 660 F.3d 557 (1st Cir. 2011). Hence, the court granted the agency's motion for summary judgment and ordered judgment in favor of the agency. See *id.*

*The information contained in this article is of a general nature and is subject to change; it is not meant to serve as legal advice in any particular situation. For specific legal advice, the authors recommend you consult a licensed attorney who is knowledgeable about the area of law in question.*

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## National Law Enforcement Officers Museum Director Cites WIFLE Training

Read the [article](#) in the National Law Enforcement Museum Newsletter. The Museum Director discusses one of the seminars at the 2013 WIFLE Training reiterating the need for a National Law Enforcement Museum.



National Law Enforcement  
MUSEUM  
A MATTER OF HONOR



The **Federal** Long Term  
Care Insurance Program™

[www.LTCFEDS.com](http://www.LTCFEDS.com)

## The FLTCIP Reflects Your Preference for Home Care

Today, many individuals prefer to receive long term care at home rather than in a facility, such as an assisted living facility or a nursing home. If home care is your preference, you'll be pleased to know the Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP) includes valuable features that support care in your home, helping you maintain quality of life in familiar surroundings.

The FLTCIP covers care provided in your home by friends, family members,<sup>1</sup> and other authorized caregivers, as well as formal care by licensed caregivers. It also provides reimbursement for actual charges you incur up to 100% of your daily benefit amount. The program's coverage of home care is one of the most flexible in the long term care insurance industry.

The preference for home care is reflected in the number of enrollees who take advantage of this popular feature. Currently, more than half of all FLTCIP enrollees choose to receive care services at home in

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order to avoid entering an assisted living facility or a nursing home for as long as they can. And many have elected to receive care services from someone they know since the FLTCIP can reimburse family caregivers for their services.

When the need for long term care arises, adult children are often the first people called upon to provide care. However, assuming the role of caregiver can have a significant financial and emotional impact. Juggling the demands of caregiving with a career and child-rearing responsibilities can be overwhelming. The FLTCIP can reimburse for home care by licensed caregivers so family members can continue to be employed full-time while directing your services. In addition, the FLTCIP can help relieve your family caregiver of some of the burdens commonly associated with caregiving. For example, when they're providing hands-on care, family caregivers often have less time to spend with their other family members and close friends, or even look after their own health. Not surprisingly, they report more depression and physical illness than individuals who aren't providing care for their aging relatives.<sup>2</sup>

Understanding this, the FLTCIP reimburses for respite care, so your family caregiver can take much-needed time off. This benefit will pay for a substitute caregiver in your home for the weekend or formal services at a nursing home so your family caregiver can take a vacation or just relax. Special benefits improve safety and well-being at home. Once you're determined to be benefit eligible, the FLTCIP stay-at-home benefit<sup>3</sup> can help you remain at home safely and maintain your quality of life. Valuable stay-at-home services may include:

- home modifications that can help you better manage care in a home setting, such as adding hand grips in a bathtub and installing wheelchair ramps
- a personal emergency response system that can help enrollees who want to remain in their own home, but who don't have round-the-clock supervision
- caregiver training so a family member or other informal caregiver can learn safe practices on how to provide care, such as helping to move you safely in and out of a tub or shower

To learn more about the FLTCIP's comprehensive benefits and features, register for one of our upcoming webinars or view our existing library of webinar recordings at [www.LTCFEDS.com/webinar](http://www.LTCFEDS.com/webinar).

For personalized assistance, call 1-800-LTC-FEDS (1-800-582-3337) TTY 1-800-843-3557 to speak with a program consultant. Consultants are available to answer any questions you may have and can walk you step-by-step through the plan design and application process.

Established by an act of Congress in 2000 and overseen by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, the FLTCIP is designed to meet the specific needs of the Federal family. The FLTCIP provides industry-leading benefits and offers flexible options that allow enrollees to tailor coverage to meet their needs.

Certain medical conditions, or combinations of conditions, will prevent some people from being approved for coverage. You need to apply to find out if you qualify for coverage under the FLTCIP.

*<sup>1</sup>Benefits for informal caregivers who are family members are limited to 500 days in your lifetime. To be eligible for reimbursement as an informal caregiver, a family member must not have been living in your home at the time you became eligible for benefits.*

*<sup>2</sup>MetLife Mature Market Institute, MetLife Study of Caregiving Costs to Working Caregivers, June 2011.*

*<sup>3</sup>Stay-at-home benefits must be part of an approved plan of care.*

*The Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program is sponsored by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, offered by John Hancock Life & Health Insurance Company, and administered by Long Term Care Partners, LLC.*

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## Your Federal Benefits Explained

by Sandra K. Harman, President, Harman & Associates, Inc.

### Guidance on the Extension of Benefits to Married Gay and Lesbian Federal Employees, Annuitants and Their Families

As you already know, on June 26, 2013, the Supreme Court ruled that Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) is unconstitutional. As a result of this decision, the United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM) will now be extending benefits to Federal employees and annuitants who have legally married a spouse of the same sex.

OPM will be issuing additional information covering a broader range of issues, but at this time, OPM offers the following guidance regarding specific employee benefits that may be of particular interest:

**Health Insurance (FEHB):** All legally-married same-sex spouses, regardless of state-of-residency, will now be eligible family members under a Self and Family enrollment. (This decision does not extend coverage to registered domestic partners or those in civil unions.) In addition, the children of same-sex marriages will be treated just as those of opposite-sex marriages and will be eligible family members according to the same eligibility guidelines. This includes coverage for children of same-sex spouses as stepchildren. Employees and annuitants had 60 days (from June 26, 2013 until August 26, 2013) to make immediate changes to their FEHB enrollment. Enrollees will continue to be eligible to make changes to their coverage options during Open Season later this year. For those employees and annuitants who already have a Self and Family insurance plan, coverage for their same-sex spouse will begin immediately upon notifying their FEHB carrier that there is a newly eligible family member. For those employees and annuitants electing Self and Family for the first time, benefits will be effective on the first day of the first pay period after the enrollment request is received. While on-line enrollment systems are updated, it may be necessary for employees and annuitants to update their elections using the paper (rather than electronic) version of the SF2809 form.

**Life Insurance (FEGLI):** All legally-married same-sex spouses and children of legal same-sex marriages are now eligible family members under the FEGLI Program, which means that employees may add coverage for a same-sex spouse and any newly eligible children under Option C. Employees had 60 days (June 26, 2013 - August 26, 2013), to make those changes to their FEGLI enrollment.

**Dental and Vision Insurance (FEDVIP):** As with FEHB, all legally-married same-sex spouses, regardless of their state of residence, will now be eligible family members under a Self and Family enrollment or a Self Plus One enrollment. This decision does not extend coverage to register domestic partners or individuals in civil unions. Current FEDVIP enrollees may now call BENEFEDES (877-888-FEDS (3337)) directly to make the necessary enrollment changes. Employees had 60 days (June 26, 2013 - August 26, 2013), to make changes to their FEDVIP enrollment. Current enrollees will also be able to make changes to their coverage options during Open Season later this year, and individuals wishing to enroll in FEDVIP for the first time may also do so at that time.

**Long-Term Care Insurance (FLTCIP):** All legally-married same-sex spouses can now apply for long term care insurance under FLTCIP. Same-sex spouses of employees had 60 days (June 26, 2013 – August 26, 2013), to apply for FLTCIP coverage with abbreviated underwriting. The long form for underwriting may be used at any time.

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**Retirement:** All retirees who are in legal same-sex marriages will have two years from the date of the Supreme Court's decision (i.e., June 26, 2015) to inform OPM that they have a legal marriage that now qualifies for recognition and elect any changes to their retirement benefits based on their recognized marital status. OPM is advising annuitants to consider their language carefully before sending OPM written requests regarding survivor benefits for their same-sex spouses. An annuitant who contacts OPM and only requests information about the effect a survivor election would have on the annuity will receive a statement describing the cost of the election and an election form that would need to be returned to OPM by June 26, 2015, to elect the survivor's benefit. An annuitant who sends a signed statement or letter to OPM and indicates that he/she wants to elect a survivor's benefit for a same-sex spouse will also receive a statement describing the cost of the election; he/she will not be able to change his/her mind about providing the survivor benefit. Unless otherwise specified, OPM will consider any requests for information about survivor benefits or any signed elections of survivor's benefits as requests for information or elections of the maximum survivor benefit. More information about the election and the survivor reduction is provided at <http://www.opm.gov/retirement-services/my-annuity-and-benefits/life-events/#url=MarriageDivorce>.

A request for information about survivor annuity benefits or signed, written elections of survivor benefits should be accompanied with a copy of the marriage certificate proving the same-sex marriage. Be advised that an election of a survivor annuity is irrevocable. An annuitant will not be able to change an election later. Retirees will need to determine whether this option makes sense for them, as making this election will likely result in a deduction to the monthly annuity that the retiree currently receives. Going forward, the same-sex spouses of retiring employees will be eligible for survivor annuities under the same rules as opposite-sex spouses.

**Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA):** All employees who are in legal same-sex marriages will now be able to submit claims for medical expenses for their same-sex spouses and any newly-qualifying (step) children to their flexible spending program.

**Thrift Savings Plan (TSP):** All legally-married same-sex spouses will have the same protections as legally-married opposite-sex spouses.

**Social Security Administration (SSA):** All individuals who are in legal same-sex marriages, regardless of state of residence, and who currently qualify for a Social Security benefit are encouraged to apply to the Social Security Administration to protect against the loss of any potential benefits.



## WIFLE CREATES GIRL SCOUT PATCH

The new WIFLE Girl Scout Patch was highlighted at the recent 2013 Annual Leadership Training in Rancho Mirage, CA, including a mentoring event provided to a group of high school age Girl Scouts in coordination with the San Geronio Girl Scout Council. The mentoring event included a seminar, recruitment fair, lunch, and a one-on-one mentoring

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opportunity with a female federal law enforcement officer.

In order to earn the patch, Girl Scouts will be required to do the following:

- Conduct research into job qualifications for three different federal law enforcement agencies.
- Conduct a 10-20 minute interview with two federal law enforcement officers from various agencies (a phone or e-mail interview meets the requirement).
- Presentation to troop members on findings about qualification, roles, and responsibilities of federal law enforcement officers.

Girl Scouts can earn the patch and at the same time be exposed to career opportunities they may never have considered. With representation of women in federal law enforcement positions hovering around 15%, this outreach initiative strives to increase the future diversity of applicant pools for federal law enforcement agencies.



## *A Look Ahead to Congressional Return from Recess*

On September 9, Congress will return from its five week summer recess. Only nine (9) legislative days are scheduled until the conclusion of the fiscal year on September 30. With both chambers yet to pass any appropriations bills, questions swirl around Washington as to whether the government will be shut-down at the end of September, and what will be done about sequestration.

While touring the country and their districts over the August recess period, some members have threatened to shut-down the government unless the President's 2010 healthcare law, the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, is defunded. Other members have acknowledged that the President will not sign legislation undermining one of his key legislative achievements, and the defund-shutdown tactic will not work.

House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) basically agreed with the latter view when he signaled on a GOP conference call that his strategy for September will be to not allow a government shutdown, and to maintain sequestration budget cuts. He told his conference, "When we return, our intent is to move quickly on a short-

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term continuing resolution that keeps the government running and maintains current sequester spending levels.”

Passing a short-term continuing resolution (CR) is necessary because Congress has insufficient time available to pass appropriations bills to fund all aspects of the government. It will also allow Congress to align decision making on government funding and sequestration with the nation hitting its debt limit, which is predicted to occur in mid-October.

The last debt ceiling fight, in 2011, proved disastrous for the economy. The United States had its credit rating downgraded for the first time in the Nation’s history.

FEDagent will continue monitoring this situation as the debate over how to address government funding, sequestration, Obamacare, and the debt ceiling reaches a crescendo in the coming months.



## Public Safety Officers’ Benefits by Federal Employee Defense Services, Inc.

As a law enforcement officer, it is crucial that you understand the Public Safety Officers Benefit (PSOB) program. The first step public safety officers can take to ensure that their family is prepared and taken care of in the unfortunate event of a death or debilitating injury suffered on the job, is to review the order of benefits listed below. To help avoid any legal complications in the event of a benefit pay-out, public safety officers must be sure that their employing agency has a copy of their most recently executed life insurance policy. A life insurance policy can aid in determining beneficiaries of a PSOB pay-out, and having the most recent on file at your agency will make this process easier and less contentious.

Congress authorized the PSOB program in the Public Safety Officers’ Benefits Act of 1976 (P.L. 94-430). The program entitles Public Safety Officers (law enforcement officers, firefighters, chaplains, rescue squad or ambulance crew members, and qualified FEMA employees) or their families a death benefit, disability benefit, or education benefit of up to \$323,035.75.

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PSOB funds are primarily paid out in the form of death benefits to the survivors of public safety officers whose deaths were the direct and proximate result of a traumatic injury sustained in the line of duty or certain work-related heart attacks or strokes. By providing sufficient evidence that these conditions were met, an eligible survivor of a public safety officer can receive the PSOB death benefit, which is paid out in a one-time lump sum. The PSOB program has a defined order in which claimants can file for the death benefit.

- If an officer is survived by only a spouse (no children), the spouse receives 100% of the death benefit.
- If the officer is survived by a spouse and children, the spouse receives 50% of the benefit, with the remaining 50% split equally among the children.
- If only children survive an officer, the entire death benefit is split equally amongst the eligible children.
- If the officer is survived by neither a spouse nor children, the benefit is paid to the individual designated by the officer in her most recently executed life insurance policy on file with the employing agency.
- If the officer is survived by neither a spouse nor children and does not have a life insurance policy, the benefit is equally distributed between the officer's surviving parents.

In addition to the death benefit, the PSOB program also includes a disability benefit, if the claimant can provide sufficient evidence that he or she suffered a permanent and total disability as a direct result of a catastrophic injury suffered while on the job. This benefit is the same dollar amount as the death benefit (the most recent revision has the benefit at \$323,035.75).

In 1996, Congress authorized another addition to the PSOB program. Spouses and children of officers killed or disabled in the line of duty became eligible for educational assistance funds. These funds are only available after a PSOB death or disability claim has been approved and awarded. Education assistance funds are used to help spouses and children defray the cost of going to college and can be used on any education-related expenses (books, tuition, room and board, etc.). The maximum monthly education assistance amount is approximately \$1,000.

The Dale Long Public Safety Officers' Benefits Act of 2012 added a series of improvements to the PSOB benefits system, expanding coverage definitions and eliminating requirements that reduced payouts. One of the Dale Long Act's key provisions added authorized or licensed

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members of nonprofit rescue squads or ambulance crews serving the public and engaging in rescue activity to the list of eligible public safety officers; this was done in order to more closely reflect and cover the types of emergency response teams often active in rural areas. Another addition broadened the coverage of “Hometown Heroes” cases (eligible line-of-duty heart attacks and strokes) to include vascular ruptures. In the benefits area, the hierarchy of eligible beneficiaries was expanded to include surviving adult children. The new act also established a 90-day period for final agency appeals to be filed with the U.S. Court of Appeals, and eliminated the statutory requirement to reduce the PSOB educational assistance award by the amount of other public educational assistance the student receives as well.

While none of us would like to think about death or catastrophic injury, for public safety officers these risks are inherent in the job. Avoiding or not dealing with these issues can put officers’ families in a vulnerable position. In the wake of a death or serious injury, an overwhelming amount of stress and complications arise. Don’t let your PSOB eligibility be one of them. To learn more about the Public Safety Officers Benefit Program, call the Bureau of Justice Assistance at 1-888-744-6513 or review the PSOB Checklists at [www.bja.gov](http://www.bja.gov) or <https://www.psob.gov/> and read more about the PSOB. It is too important not to do.

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Federal Employee Defense Services (FEDS), a WIFLE partner, provides professional liability insurance. Visit our website at [fedsprotection.com](http://fedsprotection.com) to enroll or learn more. Don’t forget your WIFLE discount code! We also offer LEOSA / State CCW Protection, Contractor Liability Insurance, FedAdvantage Supplemental Disability and allFeds Life options.

## WIFLE Flash Mentoring Event By Catherine Sanz, WIFLE President

Earlier this year, I met with newly appointed Chief Kim Dine of the United States Capitol Police. During our conversation, Chief Dine expressed a desire to create more networking opportunities for his officers and support staff. On August 28, 2013, the U.S. Capitol Police, United States Secret Service and WIFLE collaborated to hold a flash mentoring session for members of the Capitol Police. The session was held at the Congressional Visitors Center in Washington, D.C. Claire Gudewich and Jessie Lane from the Secret Service and Crystal Torrence from the Capitol Police worked hard to organize this enterprising program. Chief Kim Dine spoke of the event as an opportunity for mentors to give back and to leave a legacy and for protégés to get exposure to managers inside and outside their agencies.

Our 15 mentors volunteered from the Drug Enforcement Administration, Capitol Police, Secret Service, and WIFLE. Each spoke about the challenges they faced to balance work and life; described their personal career journeys; discussed the people that affected their lives both positively and negatively; shared what they wished they had known before they started on their career paths, and explained how they created work opportunities for themselves. Protégées had the opportunity to speak to high-level managers and get answers to questions that would help them navigate and plan for a successful career.

This was my first Flash Mentoring event and it was great. I think one of the hardest things to do is to approach a high-ranking person within your own agency and ask those two simple questions: “How did you do that?” and “Can you help me?” A Flash Mentoring event opens that door for you. I think one of the most surprising things for the protégés listening to our stories was how many of us tripped, fell, and just failed as we rose through the ranks. Another common theme I witnessed repeatedly was the message to the protégés that you can’t do it alone, that you need a network of people to help you execute your career goals.



Topping off the event, the Capitol Police provided participants with a guided tour of the Capitol. WIFLE would like to thank all of the members of the Secret Service and U.S. Capitol police who helped pull this event together. Events like Flash Mentoring take a cadre of people willing to spend time doing all sorts of unflattering and tedious tasks to ensure the things go off successfully. Your attention to detail showed. Thank you.

## Let Us Never Forget

Two years ago, the Federal Times ran an article remembering the 59 federal employees



who lost their lives on September 11, 2011. As we approach another anniversary of that awful event, let us again recall those brave victims.

To re-read the 2011 Federal Times article, [click on this link.](#)