

# SB 387 (Portantino) – LEARN ACT

## PROBLEM

To truly improve public safety outcomes and restore trust in law enforcement, we must also focus on recruiting a more diverse pool of prospective officers and provide them with the education they need to prepare them for the challenges of modern day policing. Working together, we must set our goals on ensuring California has the best trained and most highly educated peace officers in the country by the end of this decade. This is a tall task, which is why we must start moving forward now.

## BACKGROUND

Community policing today is more complex than ever before. The basic functions and duties of an officer have changed immensely over the years. Yet, the education requirements and minimum academy training have not matured fast enough to ensure we are adequately preparing officers for the adversities they will face on the job today. Years of research and academic studies repeatedly confirm a clear connection between education levels and police behavior. These studies show that a higher education significantly reduces the likelihood that officers will use force as their first option to gain compliance and educated officers tend to demonstrate greater levels of creativity and problem-solving skills.

## SUMMARY

Senate Bill 387, the **Law Enforcement Academic and Recruitment Next (LEARN) Act** represents a comprehensive approach to advancing our standard of education for all peace officers in California, and at the same time ensuring we are actively recruiting and assisting individuals from diverse backgrounds in entering the profession. The LEARN Act accomplishes this through three major components, which are:

1. **Requiring the completion of specific college-level coursework in order to earn a peace officer's Basic Certificate.** SB 387 directs the Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training to work with various stakeholders to develop a list of specific courses that meet this

new requirement, ensuring the coursework is related to topics such as mental health, psychology, child welfare, communications, and other related fields. While other states simply require a college degree, California will move ahead by requiring specific work related to the duties and responsibilities of modern police. Through this work, we ultimately hope to create a modernized degree specific to policing for law enforcement that includes a multi-discipline approach to capture all the various skill-set requirements necessary of the future of policing.

2. **Establishing a statewide taskforce to aid in the recruitment of future peace officers.** Unfortunately, in a recent survey of 10,000 officers, only 7% said they would recommend law enforcement as a career. Law enforcement departments across the state are forced to leave open positions vacant. To address this issue, the statewide taskforce – to be made up of community members, educators and law enforcement – will focus on identifying best practices for recruitment, working with our schools to educate about the profession and provide direct outreach as appropriate.
3. **Providing financial grants to individuals committed to pursuing a career in law enforcement.** Since SB 387 raises the standards to entering the law enforcement profession, we must make sure we are not then limiting those that have access to this career – especially those from economically disadvantaged and historically underserved or underrepresented backgrounds. To address this issue, SB 387 creates a state fund to provide grants to those in need.

## EXISTING LAW

Outside of completing the Basic Academy and passing a background check and psychological evaluation, the statutory requirements to becoming a peace officer in California include having a high school degree or equivalence, being a citizen or permanent resident eligible for citizenship, being free of any felony convictions, and any meeting any additional local requirements.

Office of Senator Anthony J. Portantino  
SB 387– Fact Sheet

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## **SUPPORT**

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**California Police Chiefs Association (Sponsor)**  
**Peace Officers Research Association California**

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