

## Main Identity

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## PRESS RELEASE

### FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE

August 12, 2005

### **F.O.P. Wins Major Court Victory on Privacy Rights of Law Enforcement Officers**

*Organization successful in defending a law which it helped write*

Today National President Chuck Canterbury hailed as a "major victory" the recent decision by the Ohio Supreme Court upholding the privacy rights of law enforcement officers in the case of *State ex rel. Plain Dealer Publishing Co. v. City of Cleveland*. In a 6-1 decision, the Court ruled in favor of the City, noting that "police officer photographs are exempt from disclosure under the Public Records Act because they constitute 'peace officer residential and familial information.'"

"The F.O.P. is committed to enhancing the safety of every single law enforcement officer in the nation," Canterbury said, "and the decision in this case is a major victory in our continuing efforts to do so: upholding the right to privacy for our police officers, and recognizing the inherent danger to these brave men and women by wantonly and unnecessarily making their personal information publicly available."

At issue was a public records request by the Cleveland Plain Dealer under the Ohio Public Records Law for photographs of eight law enforcement officers, who are usually uniformed officers. The law--which the Ohio Fraternal Order of Police drafted and which was enacted in 2000--provides an exemption from public disclosure of "peace officer, firefighter, or EMT residential and familial information." The City of Cleveland, after consultation with the individual officers, denied the public records request. The Plain Dealer then brought a mandamus suit with the Ohio Supreme Court demanding the release of these records. The Fraternal Order of Police--which submitted amici briefs from the National, State and local lodge level--was the only major law enforcement organization involved in the case, or to recognize its potential impact on officer safety.

"Vindictive criminals, or anyone with an axe to grind 'against the system,' who can gain access to the home addresses, phone numbers or even photographs of these officers endangers not only the officers themselves, but their families and co-workers as well," Canterbury said. "Those who would deny this basic fact need only to look at the very recent and tragic murder of the family of a Federal judge in Chicago by a former defendant, where the judge's home address and family photographs were posted on the Internet."

"To think that police officers are not targeted for retaliation by the drug dealers or gang members they must confront on a daily basis is naïve," Canterbury said. "The dangers which these individuals must face in carrying out their sworn duty to protect and serve are

immense, and the court agreed with us that protecting their safety is profoundly more important than being able to sell a few more newspapers."

The Fraternal Order of Police is the largest law enforcement labor organization in the United States, with more than 321,000 members.

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For more information or elaboration, please do not hesitate to contact the National F.O.P. Legislative Office at 202.547.8189 or via [e-mail](#).

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