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NSA President Makes First Official Acts, Focusing on Animal Cruelty, School Safety, and Mental Health in Jails

Alexandria, VA – In his first set of official acts as president, National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) 2018-2019 President, Marion County (Ind.) Sheriff John Layton announced the creation of two new committees within NSA for animal cruelty and school safety, and further instructed NSA's Jail Committee to focus on developing innovative solutions to handling mental health and substance abuse in jails.

Layton announced the formation an Animal Cruelty Committee, the first and only of its kind amongst law enforcement organizations.

"With the continued problems facing law enforcement across the country in reference to animal cruelty and animal-related incidents, along with the [recent publication](#) from the Joint Counterterrorism Assessment Team on the link between animal abuse and terrorism, I am appointing a committee to look into the needs and concerns of our sheriffs across the country in handling this issue," said Layton. "Law enforcement needs a unified voice to address animal cruelty, and this committee accomplishes that. No other law enforcement organization includes animal cruelty in its wheelhouse," he continued.

Next, Layton announced the establishment of a School Safety Committee to organize a cohesive body of the nation's sheriffs and other subject-matter experts, tasked with serving as a collection point of resources and catalyzing relevant players into action.

"Since 2013, there have been over 330 school shootings, including at least 50 so far in 2018," Layton commented. "Our children deserve to feel safe while learning, and our nation's sheriffs are in the best position to provide them with a secure environment. This committee will bring a varied combination of experience from both rural and urban environments to produce the best resources and training available."

Lastly, Layton encouraged the NSA's current Jail Committee to continue its work in addressing the mental health and substance abuse issues facing the nation's jails through innovative problem-solving. "As mental health facilities shutter their doors, America's jails find themselves tasked with housing and caring for approximately 2 million individuals with mental health issues, mandated by federal law to provide care regardless of cost," Layton said.

This is a particularly important issue to Layton, and one that he's already tackled in his county, where an estimated 40% of inmates struggle with mental illness, higher than the national average of 15-30%. Other major county jurisdictions such as Dane County, Wis., Davidson County, Tenn., and Harris County, Tex., have made news with their innovation mental health programs, and Layton hopes the collaborative effort of the Committee will help other counties create solutions tailored to their jurisdictions.

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About the National Sheriffs' Association:

The National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) is one of the largest associations of law enforcement professionals in the United States, representing more than 3,000 elected sheriffs across the nation, and a total membership of more than 20,000. NSA is a non-profit organization dedicated to raising the level of professionalism among sheriffs, their deputies, and others in the field of criminal justice and public safety. Throughout its seventy-eight year history, NSA has served as an information clearinghouse for sheriffs, deputies, chiefs of police, other law enforcement professionals, state governments and the federal government.