

Push Your Congressperson for Increased Funding for Body Armor

Law enforcement is a dangerous field to work in. Police regularly deal with drunks, mentally disabled, and potentially violent persons, and arrests can be injurious for both the involved parties involved. In 2018 alone, the fatalities of sheriff's patrol and police officers increased by 14 percent compared to previous years — fatalities which are mostly caused by conflict with another person or via vehicular accidents.

In fact, the FBI's LEOKA statistics show that over seventy thousand officers were assaulted by firearms over a thirty-year period, and 92% of those deaths can be attributed to firearms. During that same period, a key statistic emerged that demands the attention of lawmakers across the country: twenty percent of murdered officers were killed with ammunition that was more powerful than the vest's capability to stop it.

Body armor is a critical component for the safety of law enforcement officers, so why is this being overlooked?

Some of the problem lies with local departments themselves. It's important to ensure that law enforcement officers are educated by their departments on how to properly store their body armor, in order to maximize its effectiveness, and are also urged to stay compliant with the BVP's (Bulletproof Vest Partnership) "mandatory wear" policy. However, the current BVP program doesn't give local departments the resources to train officers on maintaining their armor, which can cost officers their lives.

Congress needs to consider the extra resources it takes to train officers and maintain the awarded vests and adopt those costs into additional law enforcement grants. Congress also needs to work with the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and other organizations to develop a higher standard of body armor, a standard that includes the emerging threats to officer safety. In order to keep officers from dying, our standards must anticipate the use of higher caliber rounds.

It's time for the federal government to step up and support the officers that are put at risk to uphold its laws. It is not fair that an officer could be killed over an issue that is easily preventable.