



NATIONAL FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE®

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NATIONAL PRESIDENT

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6 January 2015

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John A. Boehner
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Harry M. Reid
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy P. Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator McConnell, Mr. Speaker, Senator Reid and Representative Pelosi,

I am writing on behalf of the members of the Fraternal Order of Police to urgently request that Congress expand the current Federal hate crimes law to include law enforcement officers.

For more than a decade, the FOP has advocated for increased criminal penalties on perpetrators who select their victims because they are or are perceived to be law enforcement officers. When legislation amending our nation's bias crime laws to protect victims targeted because of their sexual orientation, gender, perceived gender or disability was actively debated in the 110th and 111th Congresses, the FOP made a strong case that law enforcement officers should also be included because they were so often targeted just because of their chosen profession. Our efforts were ultimately unsuccessful and President Obama signed the amendments into law as part of the National Defense Reauthorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010.

Now, under current law, persons who deliberately victimize another person because of the race, color, creed, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability are subject to greater penalties. The law passed with bipartisan support because Congress saw a need to expand the law to protect a group of our fellow citizens whom we suspected were being targeted as victims of violence and intimidation. In addition to increased criminal penalties, the law required the U.S. Department of Justice to collect data on these crimes so that we in law enforcement can do a better job of deterring and preventing them.

Now Americans who choose to be law enforcement officers, who choose to serve their communities and put their lives on the line for their fellow citizens, find themselves hunted and targeted just because of the uniform they wear.

Of the 47 deaths by gunfire suffered by law enforcement in 2014, nine of them—that's 19%—were ambush killings. These were deliberate and sadly successful efforts by individuals who set out to kill a police officer:


- New York City Police Officers Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu were executed while sitting in their squad car;
- Corporal Bryon Dickson of the Pennsylvania State Police was killed by a sniper as he left his barracks and another State Trooper was wounded;
- Leon County Deputy Sheriff Christopher Smith responded to reports about a house fire and was killed from behind by the suspect who then used the Deputy's service weapon against other responding public safety officers with the Tallahassee Fire and Police Departments;
- Jersey City Detective Melvin Santiago's murderer assaulted a store security guard, stole his gun and waited for officers to respond so he could kill them;
- Patrolman Jeffrey Westerfield of the Gary, Indiana Police Department, responded to a call for service and was killed while sitting in his patrol car;
- Las Vegas Police Officers Igor Soldo and Alyn Beck were murdered by two killers while they ate lunch at a local pizzeria; and
- Sergeant Cory Wride of the Utah County Sheriffs Office pulled behind an SUV which appeared to have been abandoned when he was shot by surprise and killed by a high-powered rifle fired from the rear window. The driver and the shooter fled the scene and later killed Deputy Greg Sherwood during a vehicle pursuit using a rifle fired from the rear window.

Ambush attacks and incidents of multiple deaths or injuries at the same scene are on the rise. Those in our profession have always been in harm's way. It is our job to protect others but it should not be "part of the job" to be a target of a hate-fueled assassin who is looking simply to kill a cop. We do not accept that our uniforms alone make us targets because someone was driven to rage over a perceived injustice or desires to strike a blow against our civil government.

This is a critical officer safety issue and we strongly believe that Congress should act quickly and pass this important change to Federal hate crimes law.

On behalf of the more than 330,000 members of the Fraternal Order of Police, I thank you for your consideration of our views on this issue and look forward to discussing them with all of you further.

Sincerely,



Chuck Canterbury
National President

cc: The Honorable Charles E. Grassley, Chairman, Senate Committee on the Judiciary
The Honorable Robert W. Goodlatte, Chairman, House Committee on the Judiciary
The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on the Judiciary
The Honorable John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member, House Committee on the Judiciary