

September 10, 2013

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman,
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Grassley
Ranking Member,
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman and Senator Grassley:

We, the undersigned organizations representing more than 335,000 federal, state, and local law enforcement professionals, are writing to advise you of our strong support for S. 357, the “National Blue Alert Act.” We thank you for scheduling the September 12, 2013, mark-up of this important legislation, and respectfully request that the Committee advance S. 357 so that it may be considered by the full Senate at the earliest possible opportunity.

As we commemorate this week the 12th anniversary of the heinous terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, we are provided with a stark reminder of the many dangers inherent in law enforcement work. A glance at the FBI’s most recent statistics on law enforcement officers killed and assaulted provides another. In 2011 alone, 72 law enforcement officers were feloniously killed in the line of duty. Fifteen of these officers were killed in ambush situations and 23 were killed during arrest situations. Also for 2011, the FBI reported that nearly 55,000 officers were assaulted—a rate of 10.2 assaults per 100 officers. In just the past year, the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund reported that while the number of officer fatalities declined in 2012, there was an increase in both officers killed in firearms-related ambush attacks and during traffic stops or pursuits.

The criminals who attack law enforcement officers pose a particular threat to our communities insofar as their aggression against officers demonstrates that there are no limits to the range of targets against which they will direct their lawless violence. That is why there is a need for measures that, while not completely alleviating the dangerous nature of law enforcement work, do enhance officer safety. The “National Blue Alert Act” is one such measure. S. 357 would help establish a national “Blue Alert” communications network within the U.S. Department of Justice to disseminate information on suspects who are being sought in connection with the death or injury of a law enforcement officer. Similar to the nationwide Amber Alert system for missing children, the Blue Alert would rapidly notify law enforcement agencies, the media, and the public to help aid in the apprehension of these most violent criminals. And because S. 357 contains no separate authorization for federal funds and uses existing employees, this legislation will enhance the safety of our communities and the men and women who protect them at no additional cost to U.S. taxpayers.

As with the Amber Alert system, the purpose of the “Blue Alert Act” is to create a voluntary partnership between the federal, state, and local governments, the media, and others. It is designed to supplement, not supplant, the efforts of those states who have already established a Blue Alert system, and to serve as a central resource to aid states that do not in the creation of new Blue Alert systems. The type of coordination, consistent standards, and collaboration that will result from passage of S. 357 is particularly critical in situations involving an individual

wanted in connection with the death or injury of a law enforcement officer who crosses state lines. A lack of consistency even between states with Blue Alerts already in place could mean the difference between the apprehension of a dangerous fugitive from justice and his escape.

It is for these reasons and many others that we again request that the Committee advance this important officer safety legislation to the full Senate. Thank you in advance for your support of S. 357. We stand ready to work with you to see it enacted into law.

Sincerely,

Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association
International Brotherhood of Police Officers
National Association of Police Organizations
National Sheriffs' Association
National Troopers Coalition
Sergeants Benevolent Association of the New York City Police Department

CC: Members, Committee on the Judiciary