

Prepared Statement by Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
Executive Business Meeting
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We have a couple of bills on the agenda this morning that will help protect those who protect all of us – the men and women who dedicate their lives to law enforcement. Every day these heroes put their lives on the line to ensure our safety, and I am proud to support them.

The first bill on the agenda is S. 665, the Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act of 2015. I am a co-sponsor of the bill, which is named after the two New York City police officers who were ambushed and killed while sitting in their squad car last December. Their murderer had traveled from Maryland to New York with the specific intent to kill police officers. And we've seen a number of other high-profile instances across the country recently where police officers have been specifically targeted for violence.

S. 665 tasks the Department of Justice with assisting states that want to establish a national "blue alert" system to facilitate the dissemination of information when a police officer is injured or when there is an imminent, credible threat against an officer. The system would be entirely voluntary, and the bill does not authorize any additional funds. But it is possible that if such a system was in place, information about Ramos and Liu's murderer could have been communicated quicker and saved their lives. I'd like to submit a letter of support for the bill from the Sergeants Benevolent Association for the record.

On S. 125, the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program Reauthorization Act, I will support this bill as I did in the last Congress. The bill reflects changes that were made to the program as a result of oversight work. For all its benefits of protecting police officers, this program in years past was administered in a way that did not foster accountability, allowed skirting of program requirements, and reduced effectiveness.

At my request, in 2012, the Government Accountability Office investigated the program. It recommended that \$27 million of undisbursed funds whose terms had ended be deobligated. They asked the Justice Department to make sure grant recipients understand that they could not satisfy the 50 percent match requirement of the Bulletproof Vest Partnership program – the match is what makes it a partnership – by using other federal funds as the basis for the match. And GAO made recommendations regarding retention of documents and requiring Byrne/JAG grantees to purchase vests that comport with standards that would actually make the vests effective.

GAO later reported that the Justice Department later complied with its recommendations, including deobligating tens of millions of dollars in unused funds, and in adopting new procedures to prevent this problem from recurring. And JAG grantees are now required not only to purchase vests that meet the standards but to adopt mandatory use policies. Both the BVP program and Byrne/JAG fund bullet proof vests, but so does the joint law enforcement operations program that is funded by the asset forfeiture fund. Senator Leahy and I are working

on language on a civil asset forfeiture bill that I hope will recognize the value of Byrne/JAG and JLEO.

I appreciate that the sponsor of the bill, Senator Leahy, has adopted language in the bill that deals with undisbursed funds, the source of the matching funds, mandatory use policies, and a cut in the authorization level. For all of the above reasons, I will support the bill.