

Statement of

The Honorable Patrick Leahy

United States Senator
United States Senate
May 17, 2012

Today the Judiciary Committee approved by voice vote the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Act of 2012. The Judiciary Committee's action today sends a strong message of support to law enforcement officers across the country. I thank those Senators who cosponsored this legislation, and who supported its passage in Committee. I thank the Fraternal Order of Police, the National Association of Police Organizations, the International Association of Chiefs of Police and all the law enforcement organizations who have urged support for this important measure.

I was happy to work with Senator Grassley to make sure this program is administered as effectively as possible, and to enable the Department of Justice to disburse these important grants in an efficient manner. Senator Feinstein offered an amendment to encourage law enforcement agencies to provide female law enforcement officers with body armor that fits properly, and thus performs properly. In reporting this legislation, 17 Senators on the Judiciary Committee worked together in a bipartisan, thoughtful manner to arrive at an agreement that will keep this program in place as a vital part of Congress' commitment to law enforcement.

Just this week, we heard from the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Robert Mueller, who emphasized the fact that this program saves lives and how important it is for law enforcement officers to wear this equipment. I agree with the FBI Director.

On February 15, 2012, the Judiciary Committee held a hearing to discuss the reauthorization of the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant program. The Committee heard from Burlington, Vermont Police Chief Michael Schirling and Fraternal Order of Police National President Chuck Canterbury. Both of these men are dedicated law enforcement leaders. The Committee also heard from a representative of the Government Accountability Office who presented the Committee with suggestions for ways in which the Department of Justice could improve this program. Following that hearing, I worked with Senator Grassley and others to develop legislation responsive to the testimony taken by the Committee.

Today, during National Police Week, the Committee acted in a bipartisan and productive manner to approve the bill. I look forward to Senate passage without delay.

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