

**Testimony of Stafford Officer Ann M. Carrizales**  
Senate Judiciary Committee  
Hearing on the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program  
May 14, 2014

Good Morning, Chairman Leahy, Ranking Member Grassley and Committee Members. My name is Officer Ann Marie Carrizales and I am a police officer for the City of Stafford, Fort Bend County, Texas. I would like to thank you, in advance, for your time as I share with you the testimony of one of the most life altering moments of my life. On October 26, 2013, just before 4:00 a.m., I initiated the traffic stop that almost became my very last. Every fiber of my memory can recall each detail of what was to follow. I am here this morning to share some of those details with you in the hopes of illustrating to all of you the dangers that Law Enforcement Officers face on a daily basis.

In the moments leading up to the incident, I felt the night become darker and the gentle breeze in the air seemed to retreat in the presence of evil. The natural peace that I sometimes feel at that hour of the night, when the citizens of Stafford, Texas are sleeping safely in their homes was no longer and I could sense that evil was lurking, like a snake in the grass looking for just the right moment to catch me unaware. Only I was not unaware, and more importantly, I was not unprepared. I was wearing my bulletproof vest that my agency had custom fit for my body and issued to me upon employment. Although my vest snugly hugged my body, I could still feel the sweat beads trickle down my chest and the back of my neck as the hot breath of evil filled the air around me. One car. Three occupants. Our eyes locked. I knew. They knew. We knew. The first shot struck my left cheekbone. It traveled through my cheek and exited at my lower jaw line. As the bullet exited, it obliterated my left earlobe leaving only shreds of tissue dangling where there was once an earlobe. I remember the muzzle flash, looking directly at the weapon and taking a mental note of its caliber and then there were his eyes. I will never forget his eyes.

The metal burned and I could taste both metal and blood. Instinctively I raised my left forearm to cover my face in a defensive technique from my many years of competitive boxing and I simultaneously began to turn to my right to find cover while drawing my firearm. A second shot rang out. I felt it strike the left side of my left breast and I immediately thought, "Oh....my vest didn't catch that one..." I could feel the immense pain and burning in my chest followed by the warmth of my blood as it ran down the left side of my ribcage. The second shot knocked me back three steps. I recall counting the steps in my mind, "one, two, three..." In those moments, my thought process was extremely clear. I gave myself a quick pep talk in between those three steps back saying, "You're in a gun battle here! Any day you wanna start shooting!" It felt like several seconds in between me getting shot and me returning fire, however; it was immediate. The suspect vehicle fled, I began pursuit, and a few days later the dash cam video of my pursuit was released for the world to see.

Relaying the information to dispatch that I had been shot was very hard for me. I knew what it would do to my partners, to include my dispatchers. One of their own was shot twice, in the face

and chest, and they would do anything in the world to save me. I could hear the voices of other officers from other agencies scanning the police channels asking their dispatchers to “Check on Stafford, check on Stafford! I think one of theirs has been shot!” I could hear panic in the voices of my partners as they all tried to get to me. “Not again” I thought to myself. Recalling that I had just been involved in a shooting the October prior. One year almost to the day. Lightning struck me twice, and I was determined that I would NOT give up or give in, even as the suspects shot at me from the moving vehicle. It was not an option for me to quit. I would not allow these individuals to hurt anyone else, even if it cost me my life to protect everyone else’s. Ultimately, my pursuit ended in Houston, Harris County, and today, all three suspects are in custody.

When the dust cleared, I was left with two bullet holes in my face (from entry and exit), a severely damaged left earlobe, and a large bullet hole on my left breast. The hole was approximately two inches deep and about as round as a quarter. The bullet? It was embedded in my bulletproof vest, exactly where it needed to be. My vest, issued to me by my agency. Custom cut and made to fit my body, did its job for me that night. That hot, heavy, uncomfortable, piece of equipment that can sometimes carry an odor that can singe your nose hairs, SAVED MY LIFE.

I patrol the night streets in the City of Stafford, Texas. We have approximately 49 sworn officers policing a city with a daytime/commercial population of approximately 100,000 people and around 1,800 at night. I don’t work for a large agency like Houston PD or Dallas PD. I work for a small department and I have had two officer involved shootings in one year. It can happen anytime, anywhere. Not just in the larger cities. I am fortunate enough to work for an agency that provides the necessary equipment, such as a bulletproof vest, to offer me the most protection while I am out on the front lines fighting crime. An agency that has, in the past, used government funding to provide vests to their officers. Even with the decline in funding Stafford PD has continued to provide their officers with vests, whereas, other agencies with less of a budget to work with are forced to choose between what is most important to officer safety and how much money to put into ensuring their officer’s safety. In some cases, women are forced to wear men’s vests which do not fit properly and therefore cannot function properly and provide adequate protection.

We expect our officers to run toward the danger, when everyone else is running away. We expect our officers to push through their fear (and YES, we do get scared!) and protect those who cannot protect themselves. We expect our officers to sacrifice time away from their families to uphold the law and keep our streets safe. We give them a gun and a badge, and tell them to aggressively seek out the evil doers. Then we tell them, that we don’t have the money to purchase the armor that they will need to help keep them alive, but they must go and fight the war anyway. And they do. Everyday. Often times for less money than one might think. They do it because it’s a calling. They do it because it’s in their blood to be protectors. They are me. They are some of those people sitting in this room behind me. They are the 286 officers whose names will be added to the Memorial this year because they gave the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. The men and women of Law Enforcement. A group of our nation’s Protectors.

I submit to you, Chairman Leahy, Ranking Member Grassley, and Members of the Committee, to help us **Protect the Protectors**.

I would not be sitting here today, had I not been wearing a properly fitting bulletproof vest. My 10 year old daughter, MiKayla, and 19 year old son, Joseph, would not have their mother had I not been issued a bulletproof vest by my agency. My husband, Christopher, would be a widower forced to raise two children on his own. That vest saved my life, when it mattered most! It did its job. Just as I do my job every night that I am on those streets risking my life. I now, humbly, ask you to do your job and work to reinstate the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program. Now is the time when it matters most!

This incident shook my family to its very core. We are still trying to put the pieces back together. I have been fortunate that my daughter's school, Oyster Creek Elementary, have been such a great source of support for my daughter as she struggled to process this traumatic event. Attached are letters from the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students of OCE School asking for your assistance in helping police officers across our nation obtain the bulletproof vests that they need for survival. They have rallied behind me and my family ever since the incident and I am deeply touched by their passion to protect our police officers! I am proud and honored to submit them to you with my testimony. Thank you, again, for your time.

Respectfully Submitted,

Officer Ann Carrizales  
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