

Prepared Statement by U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee
Markup on Bills Supporting Law Enforcement during National Police Week
Thursday, May 19, 2022

We've held over the nominees, but I wanted to mention a letter the Republicans on the Committee sent to Senator Durbin yesterday. We asked for a second hearing for Ms. Choudhury. She's nominated to the Eastern District of New York.

It's unusual for a nominee to come back for a second hearing. But there's a good reason to have that happen here.

At her hearing, she was asked whether she'd said that police killing unarmed black men is something that "happens every day in America." She initially said she wasn't sure if she said it. But later when asked if the statement was true, she stated three times that she said it in her role as an advocate. Law enforcement groups opposed her nomination because of her testimony, including the Fraternal Order of Police, the National Sheriffs' Association, the NYPD Sergeants Benevolent Association and the United Coalition of Public Safety.

She sent a letter two weeks after her hearing saying that she never made this statement. But the letter doesn't explain the extremely conflicting testimony she gave at the hearing. It also doesn't explain why she refused to acknowledge that the statement is blatantly false and has no basis in fact.

That gives us serious concerns that this is a major case of "confirmation conversion." This isn't just a case where she misspoke and her letter clarified what she meant. It directly conflicts. The only way to address this is for Ms. Choudhury to come back for another hearing.

That brings me to the business up this week.

Joining this markup as my guests are Heidi and Ladd Paulson. Ladd is a Marine and former police officer for the city of Billings, and Heidi is his devoted and tireless wife who works with The Wounded Blue. Heidi, through The Wounded Blue, worked tirelessly to get PAFRA across the finish line last year. Thank you both for your service.

I want to thank the chairman for holding this Police Week markup to honor law enforcement officers and first responders. This is an important tradition.

Last year, there was some doubt about whether we would even have a police week markup. I thank the chairman for having a markup last year when the climate in his party wasn't so friendly to police. This year, the atmosphere is very different. President Biden says he will fund the police, and Democrats are willing to follow suit right now.

We haven't completely turned the corner when it comes to working together to protect the police, however. Intentional killings of police have reached a horrifying 20-year high. Ambush attacks on police,

where the attacker targets an officer because they are an officer, rose 115 percent last year. Even Attorney General Garland admitted that police have become targets for violence.

But if you ask President Biden, this is just another reason for gun control. Violence against police, the 30 percent spike in murders, both started the first week of June 2020, when the country broke out into nationwide anti-police riots. President Biden attributes them both to the legal sale of firearms.

I believe the chairman has indicated that he is willing to hold a hearing on attacks on police, a hearing which I requested. I appreciate that very much, and I look forward to a productive hearing. But this hearing won't be productive if it's just another forum for partisan gun control, and not a real opportunity to discuss what is causing this spike in targeted violence against police.

Two of the bipartisan bills I requested be considered for this markup couldn't be considered because of the president's false narrative. We can't consider a bill I worked on with law enforcement groups that would gather more information about attacks on police. This bill might upset some who don't want to know what is causing the violence. And we can't consider a bill that would allow officers to purchase their service weapons rather than waste them, because if we even say the word "gun" it must immediately be paired with gun control.

This is also true when we talk about domestic extremism or helping the dangerously mentally ill. I think that's a terrible shame. For years, Representative Deutch from Parkland and I've been asking, pleading, to pass the EAGLES Act.

So have 40 states' attorneys general and countless victims' families. This bill would allow schools and other venues to receive voluntary training from the Secret Service about recognizing a person in need of intervention before they engage in mass violence. Time after time, we see that shooters gave multiple, predictable warning signs before an attack. We see this pattern again with the 18-year-old shooter in Buffalo. Yet this bipartisan bill, that could have made a difference, gets no closer to passage.

I'm going to support the bills we're marking up today: Fighting PTSD, which I'm leading with Senator Coons, Invest to Protect, which I joined with Senator Cortez Masto, and bills which Senators Cornyn, Whitehouse, and Peters have cosponsored.

