

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

## VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

September 9, 2020

The Honorable William P. Barr  
Attorney General  
United States Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Barr,

Over the past three months, our nation has been in the midst of a vital debate about the relationship between law enforcement and our communities. All of us agree that this is a crucial debate, which is why each of us supported Senator Tim Scott's JUSTICE Act to provide for more accountability and transparency in law enforcement. But while we seek to support law enforcement, this debate has also exposed the radical voices of those who would "defund" our police departments. Scenes from across the country have shown Americans the dangers of defunding the police.

While peaceful protesters have rightly called for justice and reform, demonstrations have been exploited by extremists interested only in their radical views. We need look no further than the protests in Portland, where peaceful demonstrations by day turn into skirmishes at night. Each evening, law enforcement officers are placed in physical danger while trying to safeguard lives and property from violent assaults by these agitators. The American people understand that what is happening in Portland is a precursor to what life would be like if we defunded the police.

The rhetoric employed by those who support defunding the police has deepened the divides in our community. It has also encouraged hostility to the men and women who protect public safety. As a result, we are increasingly seeing individuals willing to justify targeting law enforcement officers for harassment, assault, and deadly attacks.

This is a dangerous and unacceptable state of affairs. So far this year, there have been 36 law enforcement officers killed in the U.S. This is an increase of 20% during the same time last year. Of those, 8 were ambushed in premeditated attacks, 2 were victims of an unprovoked attack, and the other 26 officers were killed in the line of duty. During the past three months alone:

- In St. Louis, former Moline Acres Police Chief David Dorn was shot and killed when he attempted to stop looters;
- In Las Vegas, an officer was shot and critically wounded when protests turned violent;

- In Oakland, a federal officer was shot and killed while protecting a federal building;
- In Buffalo, a demonstration at the Police Department became dangerous when two officers were hit by a vehicle, and another run over;
- In New York City, there have been multiple attacks, including an officer who was struck by a vehicle, an officer who was stabbed in the neck, and two officers who suffered gunshot wounds; and
- In Salt Lake City, a police officer was hit in the head with a baseball bat following a demonstration.

This list is merely a sampling of the violence which is being committed against our law enforcement community each and every day. There are countless other examples of major and minor injuries which have resulted from attacks by the anarchists who seek to use peaceful protests as a means to their violent ends.

The brave men and women in our law enforcement community are essential to public safety and stability. We know that you and the Justice Department are doing everything you can to protect the lives of law enforcement, and to prosecute violent offenders who assault and kill law enforcement officers. However, given the attacks we are seeing against law enforcement officers, we believe it is time to consider whether your Department needs additional authorities, resources, and tools to combat this activity. Accordingly, we ask that you answer the following questions by no later than October 9, 2020:

1. Does the Department believe that enhanced criminal penalties for purposefully targeting law enforcement officers would be helpful in stemming this violent conduct?
2. If the Department believes that enhanced criminal penalties would deter targeted violence towards police, how would the Department recommend that Congress enact such penalties? In other words, should Congress enact a new statutory crime for direct targeting of police, or would other changes to existing law or sentencing policies accomplish the same goal?
3. What resources does the Department currently dedicate to combatting targeted crimes toward law enforcement? Does the Department need any additional resources or tools to combat these enhanced attacks?
4. Outside of new statutory authorities or financial resources, is there anything else the Department needs from Congress in order to more fully deter crime against law enforcement officers?

We thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to working with you to continue to protect our nation's brave law enforcement officers. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



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Thom Tillis  
United States Senator



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John Cornyn  
United States Senator



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Pat Toomey  
United States Senator



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James M. Inhofe  
United States Senator



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David A. Perdue  
United States Senator



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Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator



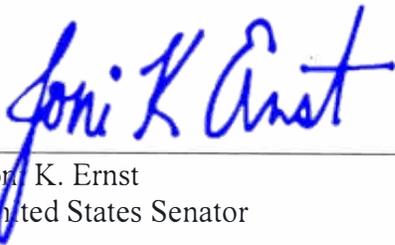
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Mike Braun  
United States Senator



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Roy Blunt  
United States Senator



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Joni K. Ernst  
United States Senator



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M. Michael Rounds  
United States Senator