

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
CHAIRMAN BOB GOODLATTE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 14, 2013 CONTACT: [Kathryn Rexrode](#) or [Jessica Collins](#), (202) 225-3951

**Statement of Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte
Floor Consideration of H.R. 180, The National Blue Alert Act of 2013**

Chairman Goodlatte: Tomorrow on the west front of the Capitol, we will honor those law enforcement officers killed last year in the line of duty. In 2012, 127 officers gave their lives while protecting Americans' public safety, including 3 officers in my home state of Virginia. Although officer fatalities nationwide decreased by 23 percent from the previous year, 66 of these officers were killed in violent or deliberate attacks. Ambush attacks on police officers were the leading cause in fatal shootings, followed by traffic stops or pursuits, drug-related crimes, and robberies.

H.R. 180, the National Blue Alert Act of 2013, encourages an enhanced nationwide system for distribution of time-sensitive information to help identify a violent suspect when a law enforcement officer is injured or killed in the line of duty.

A Blue Alert broadcasts information and speeds apprehension. Blue Alerts use the same principle as Amber Alerts for missing children and Silver Alerts for missing seniors. The Blue Alert system is a cooperative effort among local, state and federal authorities, law enforcement agencies and the general public.

A Blue Alert provides a description of an offender who is still at large and may include a description of the offender's vehicle and license plate information. Like Amber Alerts, Blue Alerts will help hinder the offender's ability to escape and will facilitate their capture.

This bill directs the Department of Justice to designate an existing officer as the Blue Alert national coordinator who will encourage those states that have not already done so to develop Blue Alert plans and establish voluntary guidelines. As of today, eighteen states have Blue Alert networks in place.

However, there are many examples where an integrated, nationwide Blue Alert system would save lives and help bring fugitive suspects to justice.

Following the tragic Boston Marathon bombing last month, one of the suspects shot and killed Patrol Officer Sean Collier of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Police Department. One of the subjects approached Officer Collier as he sat in his patrol car and opened fire on him without warning, striking him several times. The subjects then attempted to steal his service weapon but were thwarted by his secured holster.

The suspects then carjacked a vehicle and led police on a pursuit while throwing explosive devices at pursuing units. The pursuit ended in Watertown, Massachusetts, where one suspect was killed and a Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Police Officer was shot and seriously wounded in a gun battle. The second suspect was captured in Watertown the following evening after another tense stand-off.

The immediate aftermath of the Boston Marathon bombing demonstrates how criminals are becoming even more violent, and their contempt for law enforcement and the rule of law is more evident than ever. This year is already shaping up to be a devastating year for law enforcement fatalities. As compared to this time last year, line of duty deaths this year are up 21 percent. Law enforcement deaths by gunfire are up 7 percent compared to May 2012.

This bill encourages expansion of an integrated Blue Alert communications network throughout the United States, which would ensure that when tragedy strikes, the public is on notice and suspects can be more quickly apprehended and brought to justice. A nationwide Blue Alert network will be particularly effective when a suspect flees across state lines.

I thank Mr. Grimm of New York and Mr. Reichert of Washington for their work on this bipartisan, bicameral legislation. An identical Senate measure is pending before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Supporters of this legislation include the National Fraternal Order of Police, the National Sheriffs' Association, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, the Sergeants Benevolent Association, and the National Association of Police Organizations.

This bill reaffirms our commitment to ensure the safety of our law enforcement men and women and the communities they serve to protect every day. I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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