

Senator Duckworth & Reps. Cohen, Clay introduce Police Training and Independent Review Act

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) today introduced the Police Training and Independent Review Act to help prevent police-involved deaths and encourage independent and impartial investigations into law enforcement officials’ use of deadly force. The legislation, introduced as a companion to identical House legislation drafted by Congressman Steve Cohen (D-TN) and Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution and Civil Justice Congressman Lacy Clay (D-MO), is supported by a broad coalition of more than 90 members of Congress as well as [the NAACP](#).

“The vast majority of our nation’s law enforcement officers do their best each day to protect and serve their communities but we’ve lost too many young men and women—from Chicago to Ferguson and around the nation—in tragic and preventable police-involved deaths,” said Senator Duckworth. **“Families like Laquan McDonald’s that have experienced heartbreak are no less deserving of justice than any other family, but too often they don’t get it. I’m proud to join Congressmen Cohen and Clay in offering this innovative approach to help ensure objective investigations of police-involved shootings while helping prevent them in the first place.”**

The *Police Training and Independent Review Act* would create an incentive for states to eliminate the inherent conflict of interest that arises when local prosecutors are asked to investigate, and potentially prosecute, the same local police departments with whom they work so closely on a daily basis. The bill would encourage the use of independent prosecutors in cases where a civilian death or injury results from police use of deadly force. It would also encourage states to provide training to law enforcement on ethnic and racial diversity as well as best practices for working with members of the community who are disabled or mentally ill. Assigning cases of police-involved deaths to external and independent prosecutors was a key recommendation of [President Obama’s Taskforce on 21st Century Policing](#).

“America received a wakeup call in Ferguson, Missouri,” said Congressman Cohen. **“It received another in Staten Island, New York. It received yet another in Ohio, South Carolina, Illinois, Minnesota, Louisiana, Oklahoma and in my district in Memphis, Tennessee. Our nation faces sobering questions about the basic fairness of our criminal justice system. And we face sobering questions about race. These questions cannot be ignored. For too many, for too long, justice has seemed too lacking. This is why we’ve introduced the Police Training and Independent Review Act. Asking local prosecutors to investigate the same law enforcement officers with whom they work so closely is an inherent conflict of interest. Even if the prosecutor**

does everything right, there is still a perception of unfairness. If we are serious about restoring a sense of trust between police and the communities they serve, we must remove this conflict immediately. We must also provide police with improved training to better help them protect us and protect themselves. I would like to thank Congressman Clay and Senator Duckworth for their partnership on this bill and tireless advocacy on these issues.”

“In the wake of Ferguson, MO; Staten Island, NY; Cleveland, OH; Sanford, FL, St. Paul, MN; Memphis, TN; North Charleston, SC; Baltimore, MD; and far too many other communities...the urgent need to require all police officers to receive specialized sensitivity training to help them deescalate volatile situations remains an urgent public safety priority,” said Congressman Clay. “This bill would protect both police officers and the citizens they serve. I am proud to coauthor it with my good friend, Congressman Steve Cohen of Memphis, Tennessee and my bi-state colleague, Senator Tammy Duckworth of Illinois. Our legislation would require sensitivity training in the areas of race, ethnic bias, disabilities, and interactions with new immigrants. It would also establish incentives to encourage states to adopt new laws to require an independent prosecutor in all cases when police use deadly force. Our legislation incorporates key findings and recommendations from the Ferguson Commission.

Cosponsors of the legislation include House Judiciary Committee Ranking Member John Conyers (D-MI), civil rights icon Congressman John Lewis (D-GA), as well as Congressional Black Caucus Chairman Cedric Richmond (D-LA).

In 2015, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo began requiring the use of an independent prosecutor for police killings. See NY Times: [Cuomo to Appoint Special Prosecutor for Killings by Police](#)

Previous coverage of this legislation can be found at:

Chicago Tribune Editorial:

[Police deadly force cases call for independent prosecutors](#)

USA Today:

[Lawmakers seek congressional hearing on police shootings](#)

NBC News:

[Tense Relations Between Cops, Prosecutors Fall Out From Freddie Gray Cases](#)

The Hill:

[Calls mount for outside probes of police shootings](#)

The New Republic:

[Lawmakers are trying to fix what went wrong in the Tamir Rice case](#)

UPI:

[Democratic bill calling for independent reviews of fatal police shootings gaining support](#)

The Hill:

[House Dems: Use independent prosecutors for police shootings](#)