



Duckworth, Ruiz introduce bipartisan legislation supporting families of Fallen First Responders

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Representative Raul Ruiz (CA-36), along with U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Gary Peters (D-MI), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT)

introduced bipartisan legislation today to increase the death benefits for families of fallen law enforcement officers and firefighters killed in the line of duty. The First Responders Survivors Support Act will increase the Public Safety Officers' Benefit (PSOB) death and disability benefit to \$500,000, fix bureaucratic problems with the benefits system, increase the education benefit to \$2,000 per month and identify ways to strengthen, streamline and increase access to the PSOB education benefit.

"Our nation can do much more to support the families of first responders who lost their life protecting us from harm," Duckworth said. "I'm proud to introduce this bipartisan legislation with Dr. Ruiz in honor of Commander Bauer and other fallen heroes, like Chicago Firefighter Juan Bucio and Police Officer Samuel Jimenez. It will cut red tape and make it easier for these families to pay off their debts, invest in education and make mortgage payments."

"I am thrilled to have Senator Duckworth, a committed partner in advocating for those who put their life on the line to keep our communities safe, introduce the Heroes Lesley Zerebny and Gilbert Vega First Responder Survivor Support Act this year in the Senate," said Rep. Raul Ruiz, M.D. "Together we will fight to get this legislation passed to ensure the families of fallen officers have the support and resources they need."

Chicago Police Commander Paul Bauer was killed on February 13, 2018 while responding to a radio call for assistance apprehending a fleeing suspect. He faithfully served the Chicago Police Department for more than 31 years until his tragic on-duty death. He earned 67 various awards and honors throughout his career as a testament to his dedicated service – and is survived by a wife and daughter. The legislation was first introduced by Dr. Ruiz in honor of two Palm Springs police officers, Gilbert Vega and Lesley Zerebny, who lost their lives responding to a domestic-disturbance call on October 8, 2016.

"Law enforcement officers and other first responders sacrifice so much every day to protect American lives and communities," Durbin said. "This legislation provides increases to vital benefits programs that help support families of first responders during the toughest of times. I am proud to support this legislation that honors Commander Paul Bauer and other fallen heroes. This bill will ease the burdens that families of first responders face when their loved ones are killed in the line of duty."

"Our first responders put their lives at risk every single day to keep our communities safe," said Booker. "That's why this bipartisan effort is critical in ensuring that the families of fallen first responders have our support when they need it."

"First responders put their lives on the line to keep our communities safe. We must ensure their families have the support and benefits they rely on, especially when a first

responder makes the ultimate sacrifice,” said Peters. “I am proud to cosponsor this legislation that would increase benefits to families and children of fallen first responders so they can stay afloat, pay their bills and get an education, even after the tragic loss of a loved one.”

“The PSOB and PSOE A programs provide peace of mind for the men and women who serve our communities as law enforcement and other public safety officers. Because of these programs, they can perform their duties with the confidence that their families will be taken care of in the event they are called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice,” said Chuck Canterbury, National President of the Fraternal Order of Police, which represents more than 345,000 law enforcement officers in every region of the country. “However, the benefits have not kept up with the times and many survivor families, especially those with children, have found themselves facing financial hardships in addition to the pain of losing their loved one. This bill cannot alleviate the grief of such a devastating loss, but it can relieve any financial pressure the family may encounter as they rebuild their lives.”

This legislation is being co-sponsored in the U.S House by Representatives Paul Cook (CA-08), Salud Carbajal (CA-24), Boyle (PA-02), Julia Brownley (CA-26), Bustos (IL-17), Carson (IN-07), Val Demings (FL-10), Brian Fitzpatrick (PA-01), John Garamendi (CA-03), Derek Kilmer (WA-06), Peter King (NY-02), O’Halloran (AZ-01), Scott Peters (CA-52), Filemon Vela (TX-34), Bonnie Watson Coleman (NJ-12), Debbie Wasserman-Schultz (FL-23) and Jennifer Wexton (VA-10).

This legislation has been endorsed by the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police, Illinois Fire Chiefs Association, Associated Fire Fighters of Illinois, Illinois State Fire Marshal, Illinois Police Benevolent and Protective Association, International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), Congressional Fire Services Institute, Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS), National Sheriffs’ Association (NSA), National Association of Police Officers (NAPO), National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF), Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association (FLEOA), Sergeants Benevolent Association (SBA).