Duckworth Meets With First Responders on Importance of Expanding Survivor Benefits

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ST. CHARLES, IL. – U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) today met with first responders from Kane, DuPage and McHenry counties to discuss the importance of expanding survivor benefits for those injured or killed in the line of duty and their families. Duckworth was joined by McHenry County Sheriff Bill Prim, DuPage County Sheriff James Mendrick, Kane County Undersheriff Pat Gengler and Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police representative Steven Stelter, Westchester Chief of Police. Since 2000, 25 police officers and 59 firefighters have died in the line of duty in Illinois. Photos from today's event are available here.

"Most people run away from danger, but first responders run toward it, and that takes a special kind of courage," Duckworth said. "While we'll never be able to fully thank them for their service, it's on us to try. I've been working to secure more federal funding to give first responders access to the kind of cutting-edge technology that can be the difference between life and death, and give grieving families fair financial support if the worst should strike and they lose a loved one."

Earlier this year, Duckworth introduced the First Responders Survivors Support Act, which would increase the death benefits for families of fallen law enforcement officers and firefighters killed in the line of duty. The legislation would 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.

Duckworth also recently introduced the Providing Officers with Electronic Resources (POWER) Act, which would establish a new grant program through the U.S. Department of Justice to help state and local law enforcement organizations these high-tech, portable screening devices to detect and identify dangerous drugs such as fentanyl.

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