

Senate Committee Approves Grassley-Coons Officer Safety Act

Written by Grassley Press
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WASHINGTON – Senators Chuck Grassley and Chris Coons today won unanimous support from the Judiciary Committee for their legislation to clarify when a federal law enforcement agent is acting under the color of his office.

The Officer Safety Act, S.2276, would allow a federal law enforcement agent who stops a violent crime while off-duty and is indicted in a state court for those actions to petition for the state criminal prosecution against him to be removed to federal court.

The senators said the bill is narrowly drawn in order to benefit only those officers who have acted appropriately.

“The existing federal removal statute was created so that the agents would not fear prosecutions for performing their jobs, and their duties include assisting victims even when are technically off duty,” Grassley said. “As it stands, however, when the officer, say on a weekend, steps in to protect a victim from a crime of violence that is occurring in his presence, he risks state prosecution and damage to his career. That might lead him to hesitate. This is contrary to good public policy.”

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“Police officers look out for our communities and our families every day, risking their own safety to do so,” Coons said. “When I was a county executive, I worked closely with our local law enforcement professionals and witnessed firsthand how our brave officers are trained to detect and prevent dangerous situations, whether they are on-the-clock or not. The Officer Safety Act of 2012 will ensure that ‘off duty’ federal officers who intercede to protect the lives of others will be held to the same standards as when they are performing their official duties. I applaud my colleagues’ work today and for coming together during National Police Week to support our nation’s first responders. I hope the bill will be considered by the full Senate soon.”

Grassley serves as ranking member and Coons is a member of the Judiciary Committee. The proposal adopted during the committee meeting this morning was co-sponsored by Senators Tom Coburn, Jeff Sessions, Dianne Feinstein, Amy Klobuchar, Chuck Schumer, Richard Blumenthal, and Richard Durbin.

It is supported by the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, the Federal Bureau of Investigation Agents Association, and the National Border Patrol Council.

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