

Wisconsin Chiefs of Police: Urge Legislature to act on bill that protects families of fallen law enforcement “We Back the Badge” - why not their spouse and kids?

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Madison... Wisconsin has lost 5 police officers in just over a year. The most recent was last Monday night when Officer John Hetland lost his life when he stepped in to try to stop an armed robbery.

Senate Bill 266 and Assembly Bill 300 would provide insurance for the spouse and minor children of officers killed in the line of duty. Historically, Wisconsin has had two officers killed in the line of duty annually. Nationally, 168 officers gave their lives in the line of duty last year.

Sean Marschke, Sturtevant Police Chief and President of the Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association (WCPA) stated, “This bill has broad support yet there are rumblings that it may die in a committee. That would be a blow to law enforcement in Wisconsin.” Currently, there are 90 of the 132 legislators (99 State Assembly 33 State Senators) that have signed onto the bill.

Maggie Ventura, who was newly-wed when she lost her husband, Officer Michael J. Ventura when he was killed in the line of duty on July 8, 2016, stated, “If elected officials truly ‘Back the Badge’ they need to get this bill signed into law, and support families during their darkest hour. These 5 families join other widows like me that ask, ‘does the Wisconsin Legislature care about our families?’ Their action - or inaction - will determine that answer.”

Marschke went on to say, “We are asking the Wisconsin Legislature to support those who give the ultimate sacrifice to keep our communities safe and our loved ones secure. This bill will give the families of fallen officers the same protections of those in the military and in firefighting. It is the right thing to do and the right time to do it!”

The (WCPA) have continued to praise the bipartisan efforts of State Senators Van Wanggaard (R-Racine) and Janet Bewley (D-Mason) and State Representatives John Spiros (R-Marshfield) and Steve Doyle (D-Onalaska) for introducing the legislation.

Senate Bill 266 and companion bill Assembly Bill 300 have broad support of public safety groups including: the Wisconsin Professional Police Association, Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Association, Badger State Sheriffs Association, County Law Enforcement Professionals of Wisconsin, and the Professional Firefighters of Wisconsin.

Marschke concluded by saying, “In some instances, the family of the fallen officer holds a service for their loved one on one day – and then needs to file for COBRA (insurance) the next day, that simply isn’t the Wisconsin way. We need action now!”

WCPA is a statewide organization representing top local law enforcement in more than 700 communities across the state.