



Virginia Law Enforcement Joint Statement:

Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police, Virginia Sheriffs' Association, Virginia State Police Association and Virginia Fraternal Order of Police

CONTACT:

March 4, 2021

John W. Jones
Executive Director
Virginia Sheriffs' Association
804-225-7152 (office)

The Honorable Mark R. Warner
United States Senate
703 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tim Kaine
United States Senate
231 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Wayne Huggins
Executive Director
Virginia State Police Association
804-320-6272 (office)

Dear Senators Warner and Kaine,

Dana Schrad
Executive Director
Virginia Association of Chiefs
of Police
804-709-1090 (office)

The Virginia Sheriffs' Association, the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police, the Virginia State Police Association and the Virginia Fraternal Order of Police stand collectively opposed to H.R. 1280 "George Floyd Justice in Policing Act" for the reasons articulated below.

Marty Williams
Legislative Director
Virginia Fraternal Order of
Police
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· **First, Qualified Immunity Reform:** The provisions of the bill seek to eliminate qualified immunity as a defense for law enforcement officers. The Act would eliminate as a defense or immunity to a suit against a law enforcement officer that acted in good faith, or that he/she believed, reasonably or otherwise, that his/her conduct was lawful at the time when the conduct was committed; or the rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the Constitution and laws were not clearly established at the time of their deprivation; or, that the officer could not reasonably have been expected to know whether his or her conduct was lawful. This bill will have a devastating impact on law enforcement and endanger law enforcement officers and the public and we believe would open the door to countless frivolous lawsuits. Eliminating qualified immunity will keep law enforcement officers from making crucial, split-second, life or death decisions to stop a lethal threat to the officer or the public. Innocent citizens and officers will be hurt or killed as a result. Furthermore, qualified immunity not only protects officers from liability for unknowingly violating constitutional rights, it protects all government actors from liability to allow them to function in uncertain situations where immediate action is required for the public good.

· **Stop Militarizing Law Enforcement Act:** This Act's provisions seeks to ban military type equipment from law enforcement agencies which is currently used in life saving roles during critical incidents such as those which took place during the incident at the U.S. Capitol on January 6th. Denying law enforcement personnel access to this equipment will significantly diminish law enforcement and citizen safety. Such equipment is most commonly used during floods, snowstorms, tornadoes and some fire related incidents and for defensive purposes. This provision will negatively affect budgets, as agencies would need to expend limited funds to acquire these necessary safety tools.

· **Policing Transparency through Data, National Police Misconduct Registry, Police Reporting Information Data and Evidence Act (PRIDE):** This act seeks to create a federal database for all law enforcement officers to hold them accountable. It should include protections for officers wrongfully accused, misidentified or found not guilty.

We appreciate your consideration of our concerns. We are available to discuss these concerns further.

Sincerely yours,

John W. Jones, Executive Director
Virginia Sheriffs' Association

Wayne Huggins, Executive Director
Virginia State Police Association

Dana Schrad, Executive Director
Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police

Marty Williams, Legislative Director
Virginia Fraternal Order of Police