

## In Honor of National Police Week, Portman Pays Tribute to Ohio's Fallen Officers

**WASHINGTON, DC** – Today on the Senate floor, U.S. Senator Rob Portman (R-OH) recognized National Police Week and commended the bravery and sacrifice of the four Ohio police officers who have died in the line of duty since the start of 2019: Officer Dale James Woods (Colerain Police Department), Deputy William Lee Brewer, Jr. (Clermont County Sheriff's Office), Detective Jorge Del Rio (Dayton Police Department), and Officer Kaia LaFay Grant (Springdale Police Department). He also thanked police officers nationwide for their continued service to their communities during the coronavirus pandemic, and urged his colleagues to support the [Back the Blue Act](#), which would increase the penalties for criminals who intentionally target law enforcement officers, and provide new tools for officers to protect themselves.

A transcript of his remarks can be found below and a video can be found [here](#).

*"I rise today to pay tribute to our police officers. All around the country, the men and women in blue serve us every day, in Ohio and every state represented in this chamber. This week is National Police Week. In normal times right now we'd have tens of thousands of officers here in town. They do a big parade every year. We have them in our offices. We get to meet with them and thank them for their service. We'd be able to have the opportunity to hear their stories and to hear some of the brave, brave stories of those who have lost their lives over the past year because they do a wonderful presentation down at the memorial thanking and paying tribute to those officers.*

*"But even during this coronavirus, I'm pleased that this Friday folks around the country will be showing their support anyway. They can't come here in person but people are going to be displaying blue ribbons and blue lights on their homes. The service to our communities that these police officers give us every day is more valuable during this crisis than it's ever been, and I thank those police officers for going out every day and putting their health right now and even their lives, as they always do, on the line for all of us.*

*"As I said earlier, I want to be sure that our municipalities and our counties have the ability to pay those police officers to keep them out on the street. That's one reason we need flexibility in the federal funding that's going out as the budgets of these municipalities are constrained because of the bad economy, because of the coronavirus. We've got to be sure that police officers are taken care of. But this week, National Police Week is a time to pause and to think about the sacrifices these heroes make every day in order to keep our communities safe. And that's what they do every single day. They take dangerous criminals and weapons and drugs off our streets. They enforce the laws we write here in this body. We write a lot of laws here. They are the ones that are in the trenches, on the front lines, enforcing them. Even their very presence helps to deter crime and keep our communities safer. So we thank them for*

*the risks they take for themselves and we thank their families for the sacrifices that they make for all of us.*

*“This week is a time to think about the police officers in our country who have died in the line of service over the last year. Again, this would normally be done in person down at the memorial, but I want to talk about the four brave individuals who lost their lives in Ohio since we last had a National Police Week a year ago. In January of 2019, Officer Dale James Woods of the Colerain Police Department in southwest Ohio was tragically struck and killed by a vehicle while he was responding to a traffic stop. Officer Woods devoted his entire life to public service. He served for 15 years on the town’s fire department, Colerain’s Fire Department, and then 15 years as a police officer. He did everything that could be asked of an officer. They tell me sometimes he’d be staffing the dispatch station. The next day he’d be tracking down a lost dog. The next day he’d be out there helping a citizen with a complaint. He did everything that was asked of him with unwavering professionalism and the commitment that we all come to expect from our police officers. Thank you, Officer James Woods of the Colerain Police Department, thank you.*

*“The same can be said for Clermont County Sheriff’s Deputy William Lee Brewer, Jr., who died in the line of duty in February of 2019 during a standoff with a criminal. Deputy Bill Brewer was a 20 year veteran of the force. He was a local guy, someone who everyone in the community knew and loved. He gave his life for that community. The ultimate sacrifice an officer can make. I attended his funeral and had the opportunity to meet a lot of his fellow officers, hear stories about him. I also got a chance to meet his wonderful family, and I can just say that he was admired and respected by all. The turnout at that funeral was unbelievable.*

*“Last November we lost Detective Jorge Del Rio, a decorated 30-year veteran of the Dayton Police Department. Detective Del Rio had been working with the DEA, Drug Enforcement Agency, on a task force to crack down on drugs coming into a community that has been ravaged by the opioid crisis. This was during a time when Dayton was one of the communities in the country that had the most opioid overdoses and all the crime related to that. And Jorge Del Rio was there to help. He was shot twice in the face while serving a warrant in relation to an investigation into drugs. From the crime scene, investigators recovered cash, fentanyl, the deadliest of all the opioids, and marijuana, along with weapons. Detective Del Rio fought bravely for his life but in the end these wounds were too much to bear. This is an issue that’s very personal to me. I’ve spent a lot of my time working on this drug crisis trying to get Congress to pass legislation to stop this addiction so that officers like Detective Del Rio don’t have to fight and die, fighting this scourge in our communities. I was honored to attend Detective Del Rio’s visitation where I joined hundreds of grateful citizens at an arena. It was unbelievable, the turnout. Again, fellow officers, DEA officers, police officers, officers came from all over the region. When I spoke with his wife Kathy and their family, I told them his sacrifice was not in vain, and he will always be remembered as a hero to Dayton, Ohio.*

*“And earlier this spring we lost another hero, Springdale Police Officer Kaia LaFay Grant. On March 21, Officer Grant was helping her fellow officers chase down a suspect fleeing by car. During the pursuit the criminal deliberately rammed his vehicle into her cruiser causing her to crash. Officer Grant’s injuries sadly were fatal. An eight-year veteran of the force she was the first ever casualty of the Springdale Police Department and the first female law enforcement officer in the Tristate area to die in the line of duty in more than 100 years. Officer Grant was only 33 years old. My thoughts are with her family as they deal with this tragic loss.*

*“Although these heroic officers were taken from us, their examples can never be taken away and will not be. Ohioans are going to remember them as models of bravery and service, as examples of fellow citizens who, on behalf of all of us, were in the habit of walking into danger rather than running away from it.*

*“In our history more than 24,000 police officers died in the line of duty. Think about that 24,000. Serving as an officer is a dangerous job, I know. But we have legislation that we think would help save the lives of some of those officers who put themselves in harm’s way. I was proud to join colleagues last year in sponsoring legislation called the Back the Blue Act. It’s very simple. It says if you target law enforcement officers, you’re going to pay a very, very high price. That’s appropriate. We think Back the Blue Act, which would increase penalties on those who would attempt to harm or kill a police officer, is going to make a difference because it will send a very strong and clear message and help deter some of these crimes. Ultimately I think it will make our heroes in blue safer and help save lives. Again, I urge my colleagues to join me in standing tall with our police officers and thanking them this week for what they do every day to protect us. Let’s back the blue. Let’s do everything we can to ensure that our police officers know we’re with them and we’re at their side as they do their critical job every day to protect us.”*

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