



**Marty Kelly**  
Goodhue County Sheriff

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TO: Honorable Goodhue County Board of Commissioners  
FROM: Sheriff Marty Kelly  
Sergeant Earl Merchlewitz, EM Director  
RE: Resolution to Support Federal Reimbursement for All First Responders  
DATE: February 24, 2025

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Dear Commissioners,

Times have changed since 1999 when the Patrick Leahy Bulletproof Vest Partnership was established. Today, first responders of all kinds find themselves in the line of fire. This past year in the Twin Cities metro, a firefighter/paramedic was among three first responders killed during a Burnsville hostage situation, and a Minneapolis firefighter was injured in a shooting that claimed the life of an MPD officer.

While data dealing with violence against these firefighters and EMS personnel is difficult to find, a 2018 study published in the journal "Prehospital Disaster Medicine" found U.S. EMS personnel were 22 times more likely to be injured due to workplace violence than other occupations.

According to a 2019 article, "A Systematic Review of Workplace Violence Against Emergency Medical Services Responders," approximately 3,500 EMS responders were treated in the emergency department due to injuries sustained from violence in 2016. It also reported that a study of nationally registered Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) found that assault was the cause of 8% of fatal injuries.

EMS personnel in particular are often the first on scene. Calls frequently come in as one thing but quickly change, sometimes escalating to a situation far more serious.

Funding for protective vests for law enforcement is available through a reimbursement process with the federal and state government each paying up to 50% of the costs. Currently, the State of

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Minnesota has a program that provides for reimbursement of vests for firefighters and EMS at 50% of the cost or \$600 whichever is less. Reimbursement funding at the national level does not currently exist for Firefighters and EMS. – firefighters, rescue, and EMS personnel.

Day in and day out, the men and women in the fire and ambulance services answer the call, never knowing whether doing so puts them in the line of fire. They deserve the same protection as our law enforcement officers, and funding to help offset those costs must be a priority.

**Recommendation:**

Approve Resolution Supporting Federal Legislation for Reimbursement for All First Responders.

**BOARD of COMMISSIONERS  
GOODHUE COUNTY, MINNESOTA**

**ENDORING FEDERAL LEGISLATION TO REIMBURSE BODY ARMOR  
COSTS FOR ALL EMERGENCY RESPONDERS**

**WHEREAS**, the Patrick Leahy Bulletproof Vest Partnership, enacted in 1998, allocated funds to reimburse up to 50% of the cost of body armor vests for law enforcement and correctional officers, the bill does not provide similar reimbursements for other first responders: EMTs, paramedics, and firefighters; and

**WHEREAS**, since fiscal year 2015, body armor vests have been directly attributable to saving the lives of at least 305 law enforcement and corrections officers (based on Office of Justice Programs data, April 2023.). Forty-three of those body armor vests were purchased, in part, with BVP funds; and

**WHEREAS**, the proliferation of guns in the U.S. and increasing societal unrest has led to a significant uptick in violence against all emergency responders, including fire and EMS personnel, according to sources that include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and research published in the National Library of Medicine; and

**WHEREAS**, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported in 2017 that 2,000 EMS professionals are injured each year in a violence-related incident. This results in lost workdays for EMS professionals (22 times higher for EMS providers compared to the national average); and

**WHEREAS**, the state of Minnesota recently adopted rules to guide 2023 legislation allowing reimbursement for body armor vests for EMS and fire personnel in addition to existing reimbursements for law enforcement and correctional officers' protective vests, but not all states have approved similar funding; and

**WHEREAS**, emergency responders provide critical services to our communities and we strive to provide equipment that allows them to do their jobs properly, efficiently, and safely; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, the Goodhue County Board of Commissioners endorses the effort to provide federal funding for body armor for all first responders and those acting in a first responder capacity and urges Congress to pass legislation providing additional funding for body armor vests and broadening the requirements to include firefighters, and rescue and EMS personnel, whether serving their community in public or private entities.

Goodhue County

By:

Brad Anderson  
County Board Chair

By:

Scott Arneson  
County Administrator