



Senator Tom Patton
24th Ohio Senate District

GUEST COLUMN

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‘BLUE ALERT’ SYSTEM WILL INCREASE PUBLIC SAFETY

BY STATE SENATOR TOM PATTON

At any given moment of each day, there are those among us who provide the peace and protection that make our daily routines possible. Though their vocation often proves unpredictable and dangerous, law enforcement officers throughout Ohio are consistent in answering the call of duty.

Personally, I could not imagine my life today had it not been for the influence of police officers in the Patton family. My father, son, and older brother all chose careers in uniform, and it was through them that I learned the true meaning of public service. The altruism and dedication that they, and their fellow officers over the years, have displayed continues to inspire our family into today and for that I feel blessed.

In light of the steady service and sacrifice shown by those in uniform, efforts are currently underway in Columbus to better ensure their safety and well-being while on the job.

Senate Bill 258, which I am sponsoring alongside Senator Gayle Manning of North Ridgeville, will create a statewide Blue Alert system to aid in the apprehension of suspects who are believed to have either killed or seriously injured a police officer. If enacted, existing broadcast systems would be used to relay a Blue Alert to the public in order to expedite the arrest of a perpetrator. A description of a suspect’s appearance would be included in such an alert, as well as information regarding their vehicle.

Legislation of this kind is long overdue for Ohio and 13 other states have already enacted similar measures. Attorney General Mike DeWine and the Fraternal Order of Police of Ohio have both voiced strong support for its passage and have recognized its potential for boosting safety statewide.

Any act of aggression toward an officer of the law poses an imminent threat to the public at large. If a violent criminal does not hesitate in harming a law enforcement officer, surely he would not delay in doing the same to an average citizen. Simply put, that is why we need this bill. By implementing a Blue Alert system, we will be standing guard for the same men and women who regularly protect us. Just as significantly, we will send a clear and stern message to potential criminals: *you will be caught and you will be punished.*

Seemingly all of us are close to somebody, whether it is a friend or family member, whose job it is to maintain peace in our communities. We know of the dangers and challenges that come with their chosen occupations. We also realize that their willingness to face such peril provides greater security to our families. Similarly, the creation of a statewide Blue Alert system will not only offer peace officers added protection while on their daily beats, but also serve as another asset in the ongoing fight against crime. Senate Bill 258 is a necessary and sound piece of legislation and I look forward to working with Senator Manning and others to ensure its passage.

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Senator Tom Patton represents Ohio's 24th Senate District, which contains a portion of Cuyahoga County. He currently serves as the Majority Floor Leader and Chairman of the Senate Highways and Transportation Committee.