



Senator Frank LaRose
27th Ohio Senate District

GUEST COLUMN

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RESPECTING THE FALLEN
BY STATE SENATOR FRANK LAROSE

My first year serving our community in the Ohio Senate has taught me much, but perhaps the most important lesson was that many of the best ideas for Ohio's future come from people like you. From suggestions on tax reform and job creation to common sense ideas for sparking our economy, the opinions that you share with me continue to shape the work I do for you in Columbus.

An example of this came several months ago when a man from Ellet, in training to become a police officer, shared a thought on my Facebook page. Tim Sayre expressed his desire to better protect dash camera videos of officers who are killed while on duty. The idea is to prevent families from having to repeatedly bear witness to a loved one's final moments. Clearly, documents of this nature are sensitive and personal to those involved - basic decency and respect demands that they be treated with added care.

Mr. Sayre's idea is what led me to introduce Senate Bill 226. Legislation of this kind will better protect the families of slain officers from the unnecessary emotional strain that could stem from the repeated airings of videos capturing the deaths of peace officers. Through my proposal, I hope to limit the exploitation and overexposure that could occur once dash cam footage of an officer's death is released.

In these types of cases, Ohio Law currently requires that the videotape or visual media be released to any person who has requested it. Senate Bill 226 proposes a minor modification to current law that will provide greater respect for the final moments of an officer's life. While crafting this bill, I met with members of the press and groups concerned with protecting public access to government records. In response to their concerns, we stipulated in the bill that the public, including the press, could continue to access the videos, just not take a copy home with them. Upon enactment, such videos would remain public documents and continue to be made available to everyone, but would only be accessible by visiting a local law enforcement office. In this way reporters could view the tape, write their story and keep the public informed. What they cannot do is take the footage for broadcast, sensationalizing the personal tragedy of our bravest men and women.

An informed citizenry is the cornerstone of any democracy, and we can all agree that legislation like this must preserve the people's right to access government records. Public access to documents and information is crucial for Ohioans to hold their government accountable for its actions. This is far too important to ever be treated trivially. But, Ohioans are also sensitive to the notion that human life is precious and believe in respecting the families of our fallen officers. I'm confident that my bill achieves this important balance.

Senate Bill 226 is a sound measure rooted in common sense and compassion. Its passage would reinforce the respect we all hold for our peace officers and their families.

As always, I am interested in hearing your opinion on this issue and the many others facing our state. It easy to get in touch with me through email at sd27@senate.state.oh.us, by phone at (614) 466-4823, or by writing Senator Frank LaRose, One Capitol Square, Columbus, OH 43215...or like Mr. Sayre did on Facebook!

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Senator LaRose represents the 27th Senate District which includes part of Summit County. He is the Vice Chairman of both the Senate Highways and Transportation Committee and the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review.