

# Police Shootings and Federal Support for Law Enforcement Safety

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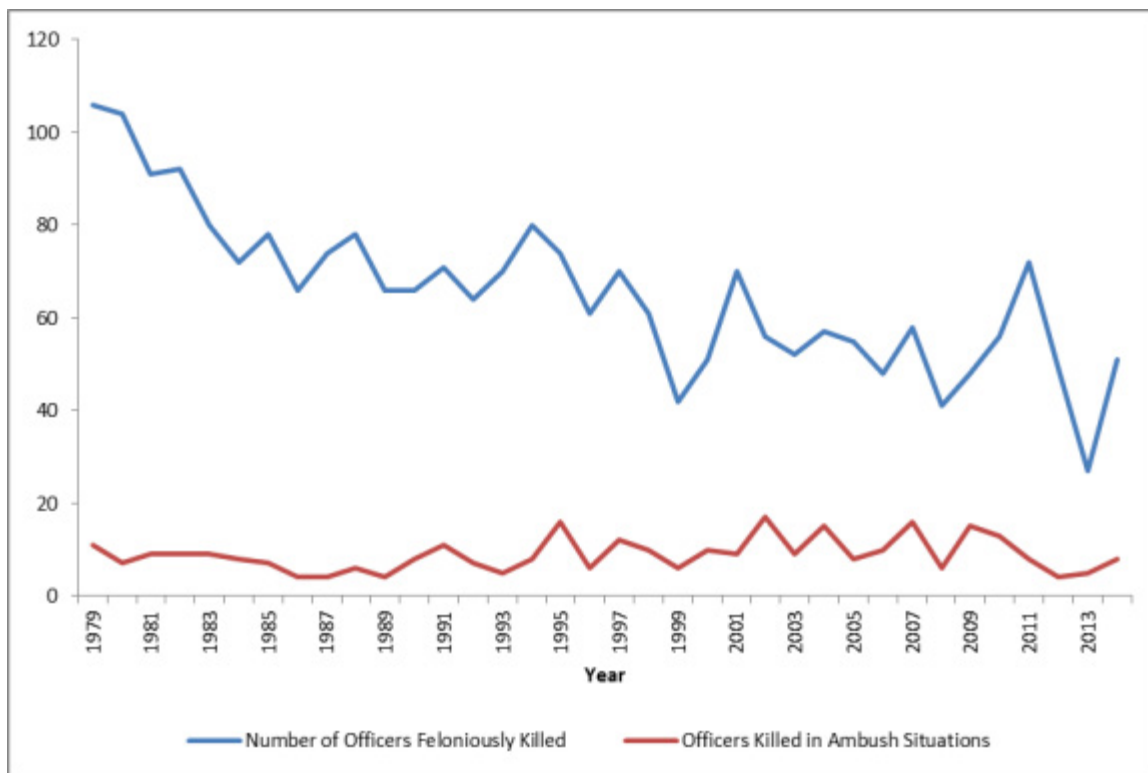
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## Law Enforcement Officer Deaths

The recent shooting deaths of police officers in [Dallas, TX](#), and [Baton Rouge, LA](#), have served as a reminder of the danger law enforcement officers can face while serving the public. While these attacks have heightened attention on deaths suffered by police officers in the line of duty, data indicate that the number of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty has generally decreased over the past three decades. However, the number of officers killed in ambush situations has remained fairly steady. Annually, on average, nine law enforcement officers have died in ambush situations between 1979 and 2014.

Figure 1. Number of Law Enforcement Officers Feloniously Killed and Killed in Ambush Situations

1979-2014



**Source:** Data from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program, as reported in the Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, Table 3.155.2012 (for 1979-2004) and Law Enforcement Officers Killed & Assaulted, 2014 (for 2005-2014).

**Notes:** (1) "Ambush situations" includes officers killed in situations identified as "ambush (entrapment/premeditation)" and "unprovoked attack." (2) Data for 2001 do not include the deaths of 72 law enforcement officers during the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

### Department of Justice (DOJ) Grant Programs

The attacks in Dallas and Baton Rouge have generated interest in what support the federal government provides for local law enforcement officer safety. Most safety equipment and training for law enforcement officers is provided by the state or local agency employing the officer. *However, several grant programs from and initiatives supported by DOJ can help promote law enforcement officers' safety.*

#### Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program

[The JAG program](#) provides funds to state, local, and tribal governments that can be used for training, personnel, equipment, and supplies related to "law enforcement programs." It is possible that state or local governments could use their funds to provide safety equipment or training to law enforcement officers. Because JAG is a formula grant program, state and local governments are only eligible to apply for calculated allocations based on formulas established under the grant. Thus, training or equipment needs compete with other needs for allocated monies. The breadth of the JAG program can be a benefit and a curse: local governments have latitude to decide how to utilize funds, but spending them on one program means that funds cannot be spent on another program.

Congress appropriated [\\$347 million](#) for the program for FY2016 (minus set-asides).

#### The Matching Grant Program for Armor Vests (Bulletproof Vests, or BPV Program)

[The BPV program](#) provides funds to state, local, and tribal governments to help purchase armor vests for use by law

enforcement officers and court officers. Grants under the program cannot pay for more than 50% of the cost of purchasing a new armor vest.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA, part of DOJ), starting with FY2011 grant awards, required all law enforcement agencies applying for funding under the BPV program to have a "mandatory wear" policy in effect. BJA put this requirement into place as a way to reduce line of duty deaths and to ensure that armor vests purchased with funds provided by the program are used.

Congress appropriated [\\$23 million](#) for this program for FY2016.

Preventing Violence Against Law Enforcement and Ensuring Officer Resilience and Survivability (VALOR) Initiative

BJA created [the VALOR Initiative](#) in 2010 to provide training for state, local, and tribal police to help prevent violence against law enforcement officers and enhance officer safety, wellness, and resiliency. VALOR provides classroom and Web-based training, research, and resources. Since the inception of the initiative, more than 22,000 law enforcement personnel have received VALOR training.

Congress started to provide funding directly for the VALOR Initiative through a set-aside from the annual appropriation for JAG. Congress appropriated [\\$15 million](#) for VALOR for FY2016.

Body-Worn Cameras (BWCs)

BWCs are mobile cameras that allow law enforcement officers to record what they see and hear. They can be attached to a helmet, a pair of glasses, or an officer's shirt or badge. While BWCs are usually described as a means to promote officer accountability and reduce the use of force by officers, they might also help decrease assaults against officers. The [National Institute of Justice notes](#) that "[t]he use of a camera system, whether in-car or body-worn, can deter violence or other negative behavior and help to convict a person who would choose to attack an officer." A lieutenant who [oversaw the implementation of the Mesa \(AZ\) Police Department's BWC program notes](#), "[a]nytime you know you're being recorded, it's going to have an impact on your behavior. When our officers encounter a confrontational situation, they'll tell the person that the camera is running. That's often enough to deescalate the situation."

Congress appropriated [\\$23 million](#) for FY2016 toward a program to help law enforcement agencies purchase BWCs. Under the solicitation BJA opened to award these funds, law enforcement agencies can use their grants to cover the cost of developing, implementing, and evaluating a BWC program. Grant funds [can be used](#) to cover up to [50% of the cost](#) of purchasing BWCs for officers.

Active Shooter Training from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

The [FBI reports](#) that after the Newtown, CT, school shooting, approximately 225 FBI tactical instructors from around the country were trained in [Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training \(ALERRT\)](#) protocols, and they are using what they learned to assist with the increased demand for the training from state, local, tribal, and campus law enforcement agencies. In addition, FBI field offices have brought law enforcement command staff together to discuss best practices and lessons learned from prior mass shooting incidents. Such gatherings include discussions and instructions related to specific aspects of active shooter incidents, including pre-event indicators (i.e., behavioral analysis), complex crime scene management and evidence collection, crisis management, victim assistance, media matters, and improvised explosive devices.