



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** May 13, 2024

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## **State Rep. Helton-Haynes honors Tennessee's fallen officers Back the Blue Act to become law July 1**

**State Rep. Esther Helton-Haynes**, R-East Ridge, today commemorated National Police Week and urged residents of House District 30 to honor and remember law enforcement officers who made the ultimate sacrifice, as well as the family members, friends, and fellow officers they left behind.

The names of 282 officers killed in the line of duty will be added to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, DC. on May 15.

"Every day, officers across our communities work diligently to keep Tennessee safe," Helton-Haynes said. "It is an extremely difficult job and we must never forget their sacrifices, especially those who gave their lives to protect others."

Seven fallen officers are from Tennessee and include Sgt. James Russ, Chattanooga Police Dept; Deputy Tucker Blakely, Knox County Sheriff's Office; Sgt. William Cherry, Macon County Sheriff's Office; Deputy Shannon Lang Sr., Marion County Police Dept.; Officer Geoffrey Redd, Memphis Police Dept., and Chief Christopher Cummings, Samburg Police Dept. Town Marshal Thomas Neely, Middleton Police Dept. was killed in the line of duty in 1899.

Helton-Haynes and her Republican colleagues took steps this year to strengthen laws to protect police officers against assault with the [Back the Blue Act](#).

The new law, which goes into effect July 1, offers additional protections that will enhance the penalty for assault against a law enforcement officer from a Class A misdemeanor to a Class E felony punishable by a mandatory minimum 60-day sentence and a \$10,000 fine.

"Anyone who assaults a law enforcement officer should face serious consequences," Helton-Haynes said. "The Back the Blue Act represents our state's unwavering commitment to protecting those who protect us. I was proud to help pass this new law, and will continue to support all of our dedicated first responders in Tennessee."

In Tennessee, assaulting a first responder, including nurses, firefighters, and emergency services personnel, is a Class A misdemeanor punishable by 30 days in jail and a \$5,000 fine. Assault includes knowingly causing bodily injury or knowingly causing offensive physical contact, including spitting, throwing or transferring bodily fluids, human pathogens or waste onto a first responder.

There were 1,603 simple assaults on law enforcement officers last year in Tennessee, according to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation.

Sixty police officers across Tennessee have died in the line of duty since 2019, according to the [Officer Down Memorial Page](#), a non-profit dedicated to honoring fallen officers across the United States.

*State Rep. Esther Helton-Haynes represents House District 30, which includes part of Hamilton County.*

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