

# Legislative committees approve two ‘Blue Lives Matter’ bills

Mississippi could be getting its own “Blue Lives Matter” law to provide additional penalties for violent crimes against law enforcement and other first responders. The Senate passed its version of the bill and the House

Judiciary B Committee sent its version onto the full chamber Thursday. There are substantial differences between the measures. The Senate bill, called the “Blue, Red and Med Lives Matter Act,” sailed through the full chamber on a 37-13 vote. It would add penalties to the state’s hate crime law for crimes committed against law enforcement personnel, fire-fighters and paramedics. The House Judiciary B Committee took a different approach, eschewing changes to the hate crimes law. The House version, called the “Back the Badge Act,” would specify extra penalties for any crime of violence against law enforcement personnel, firefighters, paramedics or a utility worker “acting in their official capacity.” Without resorting to the hate crimes statute, it would make the killing of any firefighter,

paramedic or utility worker a capital murder, which would mandate the death penalty for a conviction. That is already the case for law enforcement officers in Mississippi. Gov. Phil Bryant said in his State of the State speech last week that he would support passage of a “Blue Lives Matter” bill. While other states have passed laws with added penalties for violent crimes against police officers, Louisiana was the first to add law enforcement to its hate crimes law. The Louisiana Legislature passed its “Blue Lives Matter” law in May, making any violent crime against a law enforcement officer a hate crime. *\*Steve Wilson is a writer and a journalist whose work has appeared on Fox News, the Huffington Post and the Daily Signal. He serves as the Mississippi reporter for Watchdog.org. Steve can be reached at swilson@watchdog.org.*

## Senate says Blue, Red, Med lives matter Legislation brings tougher penalties for harming officers, emergency workers

Criminal offenders who harm a police officer, firefighter or emergency medical worker would face stiff punishments under legislation passed by the Senate last week. Senate Bill 2469, by Sen. Philip Moran, R-Kiln, and Sen. Sean Tindell, R-Gulfport, passed in a 37-13 vote. The bill, called the “Blue, Red and Med Lives Matter Act,” heads to the House for consideration. “Mississippians have great respect for our men and women who risk their lives on the job every day,” Lt. Gov. Tate Reeves said. “Officers, firefighters and medical workers often face unknown dangers on the job. Anyone who commits a crime against these brave individuals should be punished to the fullest extent of the law.” The bill allows prosecutors to seek more prison time or other punishments for any individual who harms a police officer, firefighter or emergency medical worker due to their employment as a first responder. If passed by the House, the bill would take effect July 1.

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