

## Op-Ed: Respect and Reform

I recently re-watched a video posted on Facebook by the Sparta, WI Police Department in May of 2018. In the video, officers explained why they chose their line of work. Many answers were given, but three stood out again and again – respect for the community, commitment to duty, and a desire to overcome challenges. As someone who has participated in ride-alongs and gotten to know many of our local law enforcement officers, I know that the vast majority entered the profession for the same noble reasons.

Tragically, the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis has served as a stark reminder that this is not always the case. In the aftermath, many made their voices heard in peaceful protest. Unfortunately, others chose to compound the tragedy by committing senseless acts of violence, looting, and destruction. Emotions are high, and division seems to rule the day.

How do we move forward? Repaying violence with violence is not the answer. Neither is pretending that problems don't exist. We have to tackle the problem the American way – by respecting one another, engaging in dialogue, and working toward solutions.

As Americans, there are many things that unite us. Our country was founded on the principle that we all have equal rights under the law. We seek justice in our society and we want security for ourselves, our families, and our neighbors. Maintaining a well-funded and well-trained police force is necessary if we're to have both justice and security – but there is always room for growth – and it is possible to accomplish when we work together.

In 2017, I authored a bill to create a set of standards for police body cameras that would balance an individual's right to privacy with the public's right to access public records. That legislation inspired a discussion that evolved into a study committee that I chaired with Rep. Chris Taylor, a Madison Democrat. Together, we worked with representatives from both sides of the aisle, law enforcement, first amendment advocates, and media entities to craft a bill that would help protect law enforcement as well as members of the public. Governor Evers signed Act 108 into law earlier this year.

I've also worked on a bill that expands the role of the Law Enforcement Standards Board. This legislation would enable more thorough background checks on prospective officers, and ensures that officers with poor records aren't able to cover that up. While this bill has yet to pass, it has earned bi-partisan support.

As an American, I want to be part of the solution, and that means working with law enforcement and members of our communities to improve. Throughout our country's history, we have worked to shape ourselves according to the ideals laid out in our founding documents. We have moved forward, and together we will continue to move forward, overcome injustice, and fulfill the promise of America – a place where all are equal and able to pursue life, liberty, and happiness.