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For immediate release

Contact:

Ed Wojcicki, Executive Director

217.414.7790 – cell; or ed@ilchiefs.org

217.523-3765 -- office

Statement of President Steven Casstevens Wear mourning bands, coordinate funeral plans

I am appalled and saddened by the deadly ambush of the police officers and deputy sheriff in Baton Rouge yesterday. The unthinkable has happened for the second time this month.

As I did after the five officers were killed July 7, I am asking all sworn officers in Illinois to wear their mourning bands on their badges from now until the day of the funeral(s) of the fallen officers, in honor of the lives lost in Baton Rouge. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends of the fallen officers in Baton Rouge and Dallas.

To the extent that I can, I would like to assist in coordinating Illinois agencies sending officers to Baton Rouge to honor the fallen heroes. Please let me and Executive Director Ed Wojcicki know if you are interested in or planning to send officers. We can keep a list and keep you informed. Our email addresses are scasstevens@vbg.org and ed@ilchiefs.org.

All of this is taking a toll on our officers and their families, and we should acknowledge that in conversations with our officers. In Illinois and around the country, the more the intensity in law enforcement increases, the more it is up to us in command positions to provide real leadership in our departments and in our communities. That means letting our officers know that we support them. The phrase that we often use about staying safe and going home safely after your shift clearly takes on extra meaning. We can also take some small but important steps, such as pairing up when possible, providing additional backup, and working more closely than ever with neighboring agencies. Mental health professionals working with law enforcement through the association's Psychological Services Committee were saying last week that the ambushing of officers is having a more profound effect than any of us realize, so I remind you that a list of professionals who are experienced with law enforcement is available [HERE](#).

We are doing our best to be in contact with leaders in municipalities, with our friends in the NAACP, and with the International Association of Chiefs of Police to make sure that communication is open and that we are actively engaged in supporting and protecting our officers during this most difficult summer. As the Baton Rouge chief said yesterday, we cannot press a "pause" button to analyze everything that is happening. We remain undeterred in taking our shifts today, being a force for the public good, and protecting our communities and citizens. Be safe out there.

Chief Steven Casstevens is president of the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police and Chief of Police in Buffalo Grove, Illinois, and he is fourth vice president of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.