



TENNESSEE FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE

Gus Grega, President | Brandi Siler, Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 13, 2026

Like many members of our community, the FOP read District Attorney Mulroy's recent opinion piece in USA TODAY, in which he argued that the killings of George Floyd and Eric Garner were treated as "justifiable" during a use-of-force training he attended. He is entitled to share his impressions of what he saw. He is not entitled to imply that the men and women who wear the badge in Shelby County or the State of Tennessee share those views, or that a week behind a desk qualifies as an understanding of what officers face in the field.

The Fraternal Order of Police does not endorse mockery of de-escalation, dismissal of positional asphyxia, or jokes about deaths in custody. If DA Mulroy's account of that week is accurate, that material deserves criticism, and he is right to criticize it. But not every seminar reflects the standards our members are actually held to on the street or in a courtroom, and one bad classroom experience does not describe the profession.

A column that spends 1,200 words critiquing a training seminar, and zero words describing what it feels like to make a deadly force decision in under a second, is not a full picture. It's a critique from a chair. The DA's own record makes that critique very one-sided: the people he prosecutes for split-second violent decisions rarely get 21 feet, a badge, or the presumption that they were doing their job.

What the Column Gets Right — And What It Leaves Out

Positional asphyxia is real and recognized by the medical community. "Excited delirium" as a stand-alone diagnosis has been abandoned by major medical bodies. Officers should never be taught to joke about a suspect dying in the back of an ambulance. If an instructor said that in a room full of Tennessee officers, we want to know which agency paid for that seminar and why.

What his column does not do is explain what actually happens in the seconds an officer has to process a hand moving toward a waistband, a suspect closing distance, a weapon that may or may not be real, in low light, with an adrenaline dump distorting time, vision, and hearing. The DA calls the 21-foot principle "pseudoscience." It is, at minimum, a documented reaction-time framework that Federal Courts have directly engaged with, not waved away. That is a real court, in a real published opinion, taking the concept seriously enough to define its proper use. It is not something a training company invented to excuse shootings. Reasonable people can debate how the concept should be applied. Waving it away in an opinion column is not that debate.

The Real Issue: Judging Officers From Outside the Moment

The DA writes that police should not be "held to a more lenient standard than civilians." Here is the standard we would ask him to consider: the legal test for an officer's use of force, set by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Graham v. Connor*, is whether the force was objectively reasonable given what the officer knew in that moment — not what a prosecutor, a jury, or a newspaper column knows after watching the video forty times in a well-lit conference room. That is not a loophole. It is a recognition that split-second decisions cannot be fairly judged with the benefit of hindsight, freeze-frames, and unlimited time.

DA Mulroy has the authority to charge officers. He has the authority to decline to charge them. What he does not have is firsthand experience of what he is evaluating. We think that gap matters, and we think it's fixable.

"Jus, Fidus, Libertatum"

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Criticism Without a Solution Is Just Noise

Nowhere in the column does DA Mulroy propose a fix. He does not propose a policy change, a funding request, or a single concrete reform for Shelby County or the State of Tennessee. He describes a problem, attaches it to two of the most famous deaths in the history of American policing, and stops. That is not accountability journalism. That is a column with a headline and no ending.

If the concern is genuinely about training quality, the solution is obvious: work with us to strengthen it. The FOP has said for years that we want rigorous, medically accurate, legally sound training for our members — training that holds up in court and keeps everyone, officers and civilians alike, safer. That is a solvable problem. Instead, the DA chose to publish generalized, faceless criticism of “police” as a category. That kind of writing does not fix training. It just widens the gap between the people who wear the badge and the community we serve.

DA Mulroy is an educated man, a former law professor who understands better than most the power that words carry, especially when they come from the county's chief prosecutor. He knows the difference between a column that informs and a column that inflames. Language that generalizes an entire profession from a single seminar and two out-of-state cases does not educate the public; it agitates it. Whether intended or not, that kind of rhetoric divides this community from the officers who protect it, rather than uniting them, at the exact moment both need each other most.

Police Officers Want to Serve This Community — Not Be Its Punching Bag

The men and women who wear the badge are our neighbors, parents, and spouses. They certainly didn't take this job for the pay: a starting Memphis police officer earns roughly \$57,000 a year to make life-or-death decisions in fractions of a second, on the street, in the dark, with no time to deliberate. DA Mulroy, by contrast, reportedly earns around \$157,000 a year to review those same decisions from behind a desk, on his own schedule, with as much time as he wants. If anyone in this conversation has the luxury of time, it is not the officer. Our members took this job because they want Tennessee to be safer — for their neighbors, their kids' schools, their own families who live here too. No officer wants to use deadly force. Every officer wants to go home to their family at the end of the shift. What rarely gets told is that every day, officers de-escalate calls that never make the news, mentor at-risk youth on their own time, and respond to the worst moments of a stranger's life without knowing whether they'll come home that night.

Community trust is precious and should never be treated differently. It is built through partnership — community policing programs, transparent investigations, honest conversations about real incidents in this State — not through columns that use national tragedies from other cities to cast a shadow over local officers who had nothing to do with either case. If DA Mulroy wants safer streets and stronger trust, and we believe he does, we are ready to sit down with him and work on that, publicly and specifically. What we will not do is stay silent while broad, faceless criticism makes officers' jobs more dangerous by teaching this community to see every officer as a defendant before the facts of a single local case are ever on the table.

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An Open Invitation: Step Into the Scenario

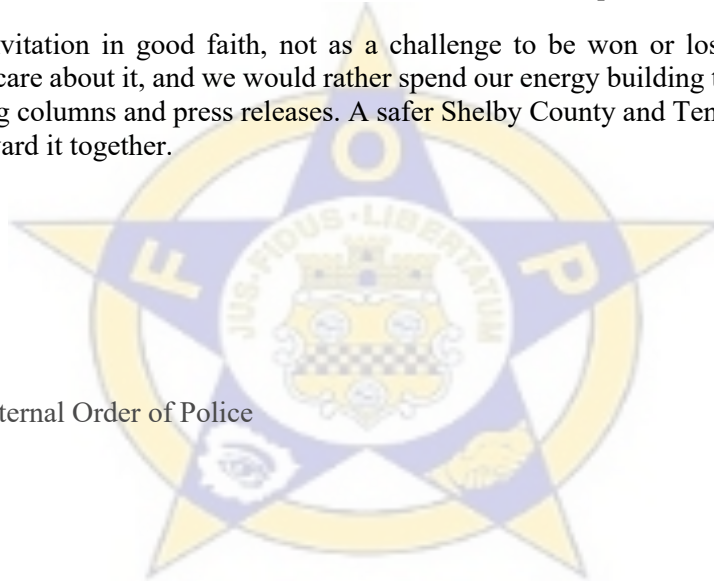
The Fraternal Order of Police formally and publicly invites District Attorney Steve Mulroy, and any other elected District Attorney in the State of Tennessee to participate in reality-based training (RBT) — the same category of scenario-based, force-on-force decision-making training that officers in this State go through, conducted at a willing CALEA-accredited facility mutually agreed upon by our organization and the DA's office.

This is not a contest, a stunt, or a “gotcha.” It is an offer to let the district attorney experience, under controlled but realistic conditions, what he currently only evaluates after the fact: an unscripted, adrenaline-driven encounter with an uncertain outcome, decided in real time, with no video review, no transcript, and no chance to rewind.

We are extending this invitation in good faith, not as a challenge to be won or lost. Our members serve this community because they care about it, and we would rather spend our energy building trust with District Attorneys and the public than trading columns and press releases. A safer Shelby County and Tennessee is the goal we share. We are ready to work toward it together.

Very respectfully,

Gus Grega
President - Tennessee Fraternal Order of Police



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