



SPONSOR: Rep. Michael Smith & Sen. Pettyjohn
Reps. Briggs King, Bush, Collins, Dukes, Gray,
Matthews, Morris, Ramone, D. Short, Smyk,
Vanderwende, Yearick; Sens. Mantzavinos, Wilson

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
151st GENERAL ASSEMBLY

HOUSE BILL NO. 437

AN ACT TO CREATE THE EXPANDED PROTECTION FOR OUR COMMUNITIES AND HOMES GRANT PROGRAM.

1 WHEREAS, law enforcement agencies have been finding it difficult to attract enough qualified candidates to fill
2 current vacancies; and

3 WHEREAS, law enforcement agencies are being increasingly challenged to retain qualified officers; and

4 WHEREAS, law enforcement officials are finding it more difficult for their short-staffed agencies to fully meet
5 their public safety obligations; and

6 WHEREAS, jurisdictions throughout Delaware have experienced a rising number of citizens expressing concern
7 about aggressive driving, speeding, and other traffic law violations; and

8 WHEREAS, traffic fatalities have increased significantly during 2022 when compared to the same period last year.

9 NOW, THEREFORE:

10 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE:

11 Section 1. There is hereby created the Expanded Protection for Our Communities and Homes (EPOCH) Grant
12 Program with a one-time \$20 million appropriation to the Department of Safety and Homeland Security (the Department).

13 Section 2. The Department shall establish the EPOCH Grant Program Account from which all distributions
14 specified in this legislation shall be made.

15 Section 3. Unless a law enforcement agency listed in this section opts out of the program by communicating its
16 intentions to the Secretary of the Department of Safety and Homeland Security, the Department shall distribute \$50,000
17 from the EPOCH Grant Program Account established by Section 2 of this act, to each of the following agencies:

18 1. Bethany Beach Police Department

19 2. Blades Police Department

20 3. Bridgeville Police Department

21 4. Camden Police Department

- 22 5. Cheswold Police Department
- 23 6. Clayton Police Department
- 24 7. Division of Fish and Wildlife Enforcement (DNREC)
- 25 8. Division of Parks and Recreation (DNREC)
- 26 9. Environmental Crimes Unit (DNREC)
- 27 10. Dagsboro Police Department
- 28 11. Delaware Capitol Police
- 29 12. Delaware State Police
- 30 13. Delaware State University
- 31 14. Delmar Police Department
- 32 15. Dewey Beach Police Department
- 33 16. Division of Alcohol and Tobacco Enforcement
- 34 17. Dover Police Department
- 35 18. Ellendale Police Department
- 36 19. Elsmere Police Department
- 37 20. Felton Police Department
- 38 21. Fenwick Island Police Department
- 39 22. Frankford Police Department
- 40 23. Greenwood Police Department
- 41 24. Harrington Police Department
- 42 25. Kenton Police Department
- 43 26. Laurel Police Department

- 44 27. Lewes Police Department
- 45 28. Middletown Police Department
- 46 29. Milford Police Department
- 47 30. Millsboro Police Department
- 48 31. Milton Police Department
- 49 32. New Castle City Police Department
- 50 33. New Castle County Police Department
- 51 34. Newark Police Department
- 52 35. Newport Police Department
- 53 36. Ocean View Police Department
- 54 37. Rehoboth Beach Police Department
- 55 38. Seaford Police Department
- 56 39. Selbyville Police Department
- 57 40. Smyrna Police Department
- 58 41. South Bethany Police Department
- 59 42. Townsend Police Department
- 60 43. University of Delaware Police Department
- 61 44. Viola Police Department
- 62 45. Wilmington Police Department
- 63 46. Wyoming Police Department

64 Section 4. Subsequent to the distribution of funds established in Section 3 of this act, the Department shall
65 distribute the funds remaining in the EPOCH Grant Program Account to the agencies listed in Section 3 on a per capita

66 basis in consideration of the number of authorized uniformed law enforcement officers as of July 1, 2022, for each
67 participating agency.

68 Section 5. EPOCH grants could be used by the recipient agencies to:

69 (a) recruit new officers;

70 (b) promote or encourage careers in law enforcement;

71 (c) initially pay the salaries of newly hired officers;

72 (d) pay for overtime to facilitate additional work to address issues of concern, including traffic
73 enforcement;

74 (e) implement programs designed to improve public safety within a recipient agency's jurisdiction.

75 Section 6. Agencies could choose to cooperate in joint efforts, combining portions of EPOCH grant allocations to
76 address initiatives of shared interest within the parameters of those conditions established in Section 5.

77 Section 7. Any uncertainty as to the appropriate use of an EPOCH Grant as described in this act shall be resolved
78 by the Secretary of the Department of Safety and Homeland Security within 10 business days of the submission of a request
79 for resolution.

80 Section 8. Funds appropriated to the police agencies through the EPOCH Grant Program shall not be subject to
81 reversion in Fiscal Years 2023, 2024, and 2025. Any EPOCH grants unexpended or unencumbered by the recipient
82 agencies as of the beginning of Fiscal Year 2026 (July 1, 2025) shall be returned to the Department and reverted to the
83 General Fund.

84 Section 9. Each agency receiving EPOCH Grant allocations shall, within 15 business days of the end of Fiscal
85 Years 2023, 2024, and 2025, report to the Department detailing how much of its total grant allocation was spent during that
86 fiscal year; what portion of the allocation has been encumbered; and what portion of the grant remains available for
87 allocation. The Department would, no later than 60 days following this reporting deadline, compile the information and
88 distribute it to every member of the General Assembly and the governor, as well as posting it on the Department's website
89 for public inspection.

90 Section 10. Implementation of this legislation shall be subject to a \$20 million appropriation from the Delaware
91 General Assembly.

92 Section 11. EPOCH grant recipients would be solely responsible for any continuing financial obligations created
93 by their use of the EPOCH grant allocations.

SYNOPSIS

This bill seeks to create the Expanded Protection for Our Communities and Homes (EPOCH) Grant Program through a one-time appropriation of \$20 million. The grant money would be distributed to every Delaware police agency

that chooses to participate. The distribution would consist of a minimum standard allocation made to each agency and an allocation based on the number of uniformed officers authorized for each agency. EPOCH grants could be used by the recipient agencies to recruit new officers; promote or encourage careers in law enforcement; initially pay the salaries of newly hired officers; pay for overtime to facilitate additional work to address issues of local concern (including traffic enforcement); and implement programs designed to improve public safety in the area of the agency's jurisdiction. The grant allocations would be available for the agencies to use for up to three years, after which any unused and unencumbered funding would return to the General Fund.