

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with news and commentary for Thursday, June 4, 2020.

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The Federal Government is developing a new commitment to civil rights legislation brought about by a world-shattering example of police brutality, according to our local congressman.

Like many Americans, Derek Kilmer is incensed by the in-custody murder of Minneapolis resident George Floyd, acknowledging how witnessing this action has shaken our world.

“This is a time where you are seeing folks across our country feeling a lot of pain and a lot of anger,” Kilmer said. “That’s understandable on top of a public health crisis that has led to the death of 100,000 Americans and has disproportionately affected minority communities. “Last week we saw a Black American murdered in Minnesota, by a uniformed police officer. It was horrific, heartbreaking, and really wrong.”

Kilmer said the police action was a violation of the public trust between the public and the police. He understands the frustration of protesters, who are not only victims of police misconduct but have faced a series of inequities with regard to inequities in housing, employment, education, health care, and other aspects of American life. With that in mind, he supports a comprehensive legislative path forward in Congress to achieve justice for Black Americans.

Kilmer has attached his name to three bills that promise immediate action. First, a resolution condemning all acts of police brutality, supporting efforts to eliminate the use of force, implementing stringent oversight, and establishing civilian review boards with investigative powers. The Law Enforcement Trust and Integrity Act is designed to provide incentives for local police organizations to voluntarily adopt performance-based standards to ensure that incidents of deadly force do not occur. And the Police Training and Independent Review Act would require enrollees at law enforcement academies receive sensitivity training on ethics and racial bias, cultural diversity, and police interaction with the disabled, mentally ill, and new immigrants.

Despite past partisan stalemates, Kilmer predicts these measures will be passed by the House of Representatives in June and will receive eventual support from both the senate and the president.

In his conversation with KPTZ, Kilmer avoided general criticism of President Donald Trump, but said that the clearing away of nonviolent protesters for the purpose of a photo op was unacceptable. He is not willing to make any political predictions, as his forecasts for 2016 didn't quite work out. He uses phrases like “when there is a new president” saying that this administration – specifically the Justice Department – lacks effective leadership.

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After a single pediatric case reported earlier this week, Jefferson County still reports an in-county total of 31 COVID 19 cases. Currently, the county reports that 1,943 residents have been tested with 1,859, or 98.4%, testing negative. Fifty three people are awaiting test results, and all but one of the 31 cases have now recovered from the virus.

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A Naval Magazine Indian Island security training exercise is now in progress, with the possibility that residents living in proximity to the base may notice increased activity. Training activities will include the use of blank ammunition, loud sirens, and bright blue flashing lights, according to a press release.

While these training exercises are frequent occurrences, the current event is taking special care with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Navy is taking prudent measures to limit COVID-19's spread, while also ensuring our people are trained and ready to fulfill our national defense mission.

Personnel participating in the exercise will comply with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Defense by implementing proper physical distancing when possible and by wearing cloth masks.

The Navy conducts security exercises at installations across the world to ensure readiness and verify response procedures, according to the release.

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This is Charlie Bermant with some of today's news. Thank you for listening.