**Statement from Mayor Kraus on Raising Original Thin Blue Line Flag**

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SOLON, OH (July 16, 2021) – Recently, an altered American flag with a thin blue line on it was raised in front of our Police Department as a way of representing the fallen men and women who have served law enforcement. Unfortunately, this particularly-designed flag has been commandeered by political groups who do not share the best interests of the law enforcement personnel who risk their lives on a daily basis for the betterment of their respective communities.

I, as Mayor, asked that that flag be removed as a way of mitigating the unfortunate negative connotation that has been ascribed to that specific design.

After open conversations with Chief Tonelli, we agree the raising of a flag in honor of the dedicated men and women who serve in our law enforcement is not only long overdue, but is necessary to shed light on the care and work our police do for the citizens of Solon.

Over the last few years, our officers have taken more and more guns off the streets; officer pursuits have risen, with Solon officers engaging in dangerous and necessary steps to ensure the safety of our community; and our brave men and women in blue are tasked with stopping violent crime, putting their own lives on the line.

Our officers make up the most diverse department in the city, representing and promoting the level of inclusion and equity all communities should champion. They do so in a manner that is professional, respectful and purposeful.

Their duty is essential and their commitment to all our citizens is unrivaled.

I appreciate Chief Tonelli’s initial intent behind raising the flag. I support the message behind the action, and I join all who support that intent.

However, I believe that intent and message are better conveyed by the original Thin Blue Line flag, a solid black background with the thin blue line adorned across it. This design has a decades-long tradition of representing the men and women in blue who stand between law and chaos and who have paid the ultimate sacrifice.

I would like to thank Chief Tonelli for his candor during our conversations, and I am grateful for his loyalty to his officers and staff. Our conversations were informative, emotional and allowed me the opportunity to better understand the perspectives of the men and women of the Solon Police Department who do so much for of our wonderful community. They all make up the backbone of what makes Solon such an attractive place to live. Chief Tonelli is a leader who deserves the respect of our officers, our citizens and our city.

I also spoke with leaders within our community, including members of the Alliance of Black Families, who agree we must be selective in the symbols we choose to convey important perspectives. I understand this topic is emotional for many of us, and I encourage growing dialogue that seeks to sow the seeds of empathy and knowledge.

Displaying the original Thin Blue Line flag is a measure that embodies the respect, admiration and support the heroic men and women of law enforcement deserve and have earned. But it is just one act.

To truly embrace the spirit of the flag, we must put these ideals into action. This means being good citizens, respecting our neighbors and being kind to all those around us.

I believe in the Thin Blue Line. I support this original Thin Blue Line flag and I support all this flag represents. It is a symbol of how a few brave men and women put everything on the line to make the world a better place.