



## **PORAC National Lobbying Trip**

I had the privilege to accompany the Executive Board of PORAC on their annual lobbying trip to Washington DC.

We left March 10<sup>th</sup> for the East Coast and spent four days filled with meetings, conferences with lawmakers and networking at the nation's capital.

Late Monday night, we had a few hours to sightsee. During this time, I visited the National Peace Officer Memorial. PORAC Treasurer, Marcelo Blanco (Upland POA) and I, took some down time and went to reflect there. It's always a touching and sad experience.

During this visit, we met with different committees that deal strictly with federal government funding for local law enforcement. The COPS grant and the Byrne-Jag grant are two of the biggest grant programs police agencies are eligible to apply to receive.

Currently, the Fresno County Sheriff's Office runs the HIDTA task force primarily off of Byrne-Jag grant funding. This is a program set up to help local law enforcement organize 'task-force,' type law enforcement and specifically attack a problem, in this case- meth.

Due to reduced funding, specifically based on sequester, these programs are in jeopardy. Sequester is the reduction of government spending to reduce the nation's debt. The problem law enforcement is experiencing with sequester is, there are no, and have been no, 'carve-out' exceptions. The Senate and House have given 'carve-out' exemptions for our national defense budget. However, local law enforcement funding has not been spared. This includes the COPS and Byrne-Jag grants.

We also met with our own California lawmakers, Senator Diane Feinstein and Senate Barbara Boxer.

Senator Feinstein spoke primarily about her gun control bill, S150-Assault Weapons Ban. She Specifically asked for PORAC's support for this legislation. Senator Feinstein has some very compelling reasons for her passionate opinion about assault weapons. She has three stories she shared with us. They include a Board of Supervisor who was gunned down in his office during the time she was a San Francisco Board of Supervisor in the 1970s. She also recalled being a witness when a San Francisco Police officer was gunned down. Also, a family who owned a store in San Francisco was robbed and during the crime, a homicide was committed. During all of these crimes a firearm was used and in two of them assault-type weapons.

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PORAC has not taken a position of support or opposition of this bill, primarily because it deals with a law that already exists in California. Everything in Senator Feinstein's bill- we already have in the State of California, with one exception. Senator Feinstein's bill, she carves out sworn and retired law enforcement officers, who can possess these assault weapons. Currently in the State of California, sworn peace officers can possess and purchase an assault rifle for our job with a letter from our department. As it stands now, when you retire you must give that weapon back to your agency even though you purchased it with your own funds. Currently, as a retired law enforcement officer you cannot possess an assault rifle in California.

Clearly this bill cleans up the current loophole. However, we (PORAC) already have a bill running through the California Assembly which address this exact issue. Our meeting with Senator Boxer, was much more relaxed. She basically discussed the support she gives us as California law enforcement. Senator Boxer and her staff are working to fix the 'carve-out' exemptions from the sequester currently going on.

Senator Boxer did agree with us, that although Senator Feinstein's bill makes sense for California law, and makes it better for California cops, there are a lot of 'moving parts,' that need to be dealt with more on an individual basis.

To Senator Feinstein's disappointment, the assault weapons bill failed on Monday, March 18. The focus is now going to be more along the lines of background checks at gun shows and to reduce the high capacity magazines for handguns and rifles. Right now, PORAC has not taken a position on either one of these issues. Preliminarily, we have discussed the background check issues and conceptually agree that this should be happening, since it already occurs during other retail purchases.

## **National Law Enforcement Museum**

While in Washington DC, I also met with John Shanks from the National Law Enforcement Museum. I am a chair on the museum committee representing PORAC. John talked specifically about the Museum and the ground breaking for construction, which is June of 2013. This project is slated to take up to 22 months, but will be one of astonishment when it is complete. There is nothing like this in the world.

This museum is being constructed directly across from the National Law Enforcement Museum in Washington DC. This area will be exotic in the sense that our law enforcement history throughout the nation will be in one place, one central location, a place where we can reflect and remember. I am looking forward to the ribbon cutting, set for April of 2015. This date is a month before the National Police Week 2015.

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This price of this project is 80million dollars. The museum is being funded completely by private donations.

The FDSA has an opportunity to contribute to this part of history and stamp the FDSA within the museum. I will be submitting a request to the FDSA Board of Directors, during our April 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting. I will give more of an update to this in the near future if a decision is made.

### **Lawmakers from the Central Valley**

I met also with our newly elected Congressman, David Valadao. Although Valadao is considered a "freshman" congressman, he is already making a name for himself. David explained the difficulties he is seeing with party lines in Washington. Each party has their own ideas about what is right and wrong when it comes to sequester and spending. David supports the law enforcement carve out, but nobody has yet to bring it forward to a vote, or even to the budget process.

David is a very big supporter of the FDSA and how we conduct ourselves as 'Professionals,' in our line of work. David knows the need for police officers/deputy sheriff's in our local communities. David was a big supporter while in Sacramento and now in Washington DC.

COPS and Byrne-Jag grant administrators echoed the same - - they want to award LEO grants and both committee chairs support it. Getting the House and Senate to agree on continuing these programs is up to groups like PORAC to continue giving the political pressure needed.

I left the trip on Wednesday evening, a day sooner, due to prior commitments back in Fresno. President Cottingham will have an outline in his President report, regarding the meeting with Vice President Biden's Chief of Staff.

### **Cops fear they're targets of gun thieves**

Burglarizing a police officer's home or car may seem like a smooth path toward a jail cell. But, a recent surge of such thefts has Bay Area cops on high alert, with some wondering if they are more than random victims and are being targeted for their guns.

In San Francisco, someone snatched a semiautomatic rifle from the trunk of an unmarked police car two weeks ago, a weapon that was recovered two days later in East Oakland. A day before that theft, burglars in Richmond poisoned two dogs at the home of a city K-9 officer before making off with two handguns and three long guns.

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In Brentwood, three cops and one retired officer have had their homes burglarized this year - with nearly 20 guns ripped off in two of the break-ins. That followed a difficult 2012 in neighboring Antioch, where officials said five officers' homes had been burglarized and that most lost firearms.

Although no one is keeping statistics on the thefts, "there does seem to be a rise, and there definitely is concern," said Ron Cottingham, president of the Peace Officers Research Association of California. "This is something that's occurred in the past sporadically, but (the recent burglaries) seem to be almost targeting cops' houses."

He said, "If you're a criminal or a gang member and you want guns, that's where you're going to go, right?"

### **Cop towns**

Police officials in Brentwood and Antioch said they have found no evidence that crooks intended to go after those with a badge.

The cities are popular places to live for law enforcement officers who work around the region, officials noted, and it may be that police simply aren't immune to a broader jump in property crime. In Antioch, burglaries increased 30 percent last year, to 1,741 cases.

But in Richmond, investigators are certain their officer was pinpointed before his pet Labrador retriever was fatally poisoned and his police dog, a Belgian Malinois, was sickened.

Lt. Bisa French said the officer, because he was a K-9 handler, had taken home a special marked car and that the thieves had waited for him to take one of his poisoned dogs to the veterinarian before breaking into his house.

"We all have to be more cognizant of what's going on in light of all the burglaries," French said. "You sometimes think that when you're off-duty, that's your personal life. But people are still watching what we're doing, and we need to take that into consideration."

### **Supplying criminals**

The burglaries bring into focus one of the biggest challenges the nation faces in cutting gun violence. Theft is one of the prime ways in which firearms are diverted to criminals on the streets, with 1.4 million guns reported stolen in the U.S. from 2005 to 2010, according to the Department of Justice.

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California residents can be prosecuted for failing to keep a loaded gun out of the hands of a child. But there are no laws geared toward thwarting gun burglars, and the task is not easy: Brentwood police Sgt. Walter O'Grodnick said that in the two instances in which police officers lost guns in home burglaries, the thieves stole the weapons by carrying away the safes in which they were locked.

"Guns are one of the items that are prized by burglars when they break into houses," said Graham Barlowe, the head of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives' office in Sacramento. "Firearms are portable. They're concealable. They're high value. As other things sort of come in and out of favor, guns are a constant."

Luring burglars?

Gun-rights advocates argue that burglars may steer clear of homes where they know residents have firearms, to avoid being shot or captured. But some researchers who have studied gun theft say the opposite may be true - that burglars may be drawn to firearms. They say officers and other gun owners shouldn't advertise where they live.

"Anyone that has a sign saying, 'This house is protected by Smith and Wesson,' is gambling," said Philip Cook, a public policy professor at Duke University who found higher burglary rates in communities where many people own guns. "They're saying that this house has some loot available."

## **Safety tips**

Wary of being targeted, some police departments require officers who take home marked cars to park them in a garage. Several Bay Area police officials said the recent burglaries were a reminder to officers to follow the same safety tips they give the public, such as using alarm systems and bolting safes to the floor.

"We have a lot of officers here who have installed video surveillance cameras at their homes," said Fremont police spokeswoman Geneva Bosques. "One officer set it up so that when someone rings his doorbell, it takes a photo and sends the photo to his phone."

She said, "It's what we're advocating to the community, and officers are starting to do the same thing. Practice what you preach

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## High priority

For officers, there is tremendous incentive not to have guns stolen, because such weapons are commonly used in crimes. The recent San Francisco rifle theft prompted a department wide hunt, with Police Chief Greg Suhr saying, "No resources were spared."

The semiautomatic rifle turned up at a home in East Oakland, police said. No one has been arrested.

One of the police firearms taken in Brentwood this year was recovered this month in Alameda County during an arrest, officials said. No one was hurt, and the person who was arrested wasn't linked to the original burglary.

"We don't want to be putting law enforcement guns in a situation where criminals are going to be using them," said Antioch police Capt. Leonard Orman. "From a public trust standpoint, we do not take kindly to those guns being stolen."

## Santa Cruz Police Department Funeral

**-This is the account of Fresno County Sheriff's Deputy, Chad Stokes, who attended the memorial**

I wanted to take the opportunity to express a few thoughts and feelings about the funeral services that Deputy Erickson and I attended yesterday for Sergeant Baker and Detective Butler of the Santa Cruz Police Department.

First, I wanted to express gratitude to the FDSA for their willingness to support its members in attending these humbling services. Standing shoulder to shoulder with literally thousands of law enforcement officers, assembled to honor the fallen, leaves an unequivocal and abiding conviction of comradery that I will never forget. I take solace in this fact and felt honored to be in their presence.

As we approached the arena, I was struck by the numerous law enforcement agencies and members of the community that were lining the streets. Truly this was a monumental event worthy of this caliber of grievance. It is doubtful that the majority of those in attendance had even met either of these fallen officers. This does not detract from their prominence; rather it bolsters the importance of their sacrifice. Individuals gathered together from agencies across the nation, for the sole purpose of honoring the memory of one of our own, speaks volumes to the importance of our work.

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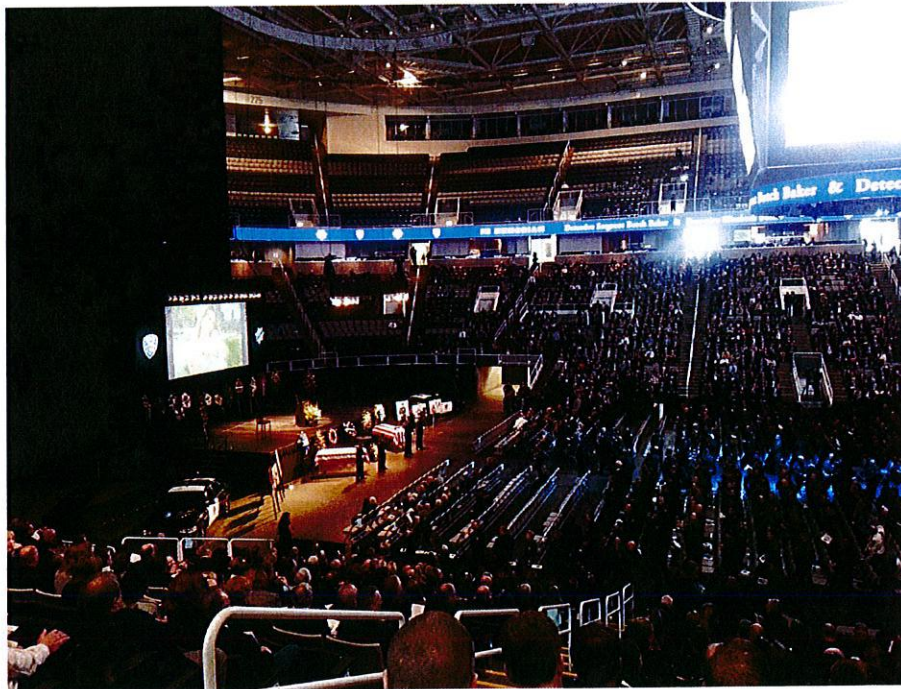




I was honored to represent the Fresno County Sheriff's Office by our attendance.

I hope the need to attend another fallen officer's funeral never arrives. Unfortunately, time has taught us that it is inevitable. It is my hope that the FDSA continues to support its fallen brothers and sisters at arms by being in attendance.

As our agency has experienced, this outpouring of support helps to comfort the weary and give rest to the heavy laden. I stand proud to have been in attendance and would not hesitate to do so again.



The following is a photograph of the ceremony honoring the lives and service of these officers. As always, we are praying for the broken hearts caused by these devastating losses. We are also reminded of the risks involved in serving others. Take care and be safe everyone.

-Eric

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