

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, MAY 2018

Being murdered should not be dismissed as "part of the risk" for a law enforcement officer

The murder of a law enforcement officer has been one of the "special circumstance" categories that make a defendant eligible for the death penalty ever since capital punishment was reinstated in California in the 1970s. It recognizes that those who were murdered in the line of duty are murdered because they represent society, and the murderous attack is an attack on society. With the recent sentencing of an unrepentant killer who took the lives of two Sacramento-area deputies, there are now 44 individuals on California's death row for the murder of a deputy sheriff or police officer.

Thus, it was with shock and revulsion that we read the remarks of a candidate for District Attorney in Contra Costa County. Lawrence Strauss, a candidate for District Attorney announced that if elected, he would not seek the death penalty for defendants who killed a police officer because "it's part of the risk they take." He later qualified the statement to say that he would not seek the death penalty for those who kill only one officer -- as if his "risk they take" argument disappears if multiple officers were killed.

Fresno Deputy Sheriff's Association supports Contra Costa County Deputy Sheriffs' Association President Sgt. Shawn Welch's stance and statement. Sgt. Welch called the comments "archaic" and "extremely inappropriate." Sgt. Welch spoke for the law enforcement community when he added, "Law enforcement officers are hired to ensure the public's safety and enforce the constitution and laws of the state. We are not pawns for a brutal dictator. Strauss' performance last night should have made it clear to anyone voting in the primary election that he should not even be on the ballot for district attorney."

In an eloquent column recently published following the murder of a Dallas police officer, columnist Jacquelyn Floyd observed, "Yes, there are lot of police officers in this country, and theirs is a risky job. It's too easy to forget that they assume this risk on our behalf -- until it costs a life." She then went on to write: "But the murder of a police officer -- like the murder of a child -- still leaves us shaken, destabilized. There's a reason both of these are capital crimes in the state of Texas. In the case of children, we're heartbroken by their innocence. When it's cops, we're unsettled because we're temporarily reminded of their willingness to accept risks that most of us would not."

A person who fails to understand the sentiments expressed by Ms. Floyd, and instead dismisses a peace officer's murder as a "risk they take," should never be elected District Attorney.

National Peace Officer Memorial

By Deputy Michael Montanez

I had the opportunity to attend the Peace officer Memorial in Washington, D.C. this year with Deputy Jeff Shipman. I would like to thank the FDSA, Eric Schmidt, and its' members for giving us this memorable experience. When we landed, there was a line of officers from around the nation and Bobbies (Cops from the United Kingdom) who saluted us for the loss of our fallen deputies and they gave us the warmest welcome. As we departed the airport, we had a code 3 motorcycle escort to the hotel.

On Sunday, May 13th we attended the candle light vigil near the US Capitol. Again, when we arrived, we walked through a long line of uniformed officers and deputies from around the nation as we represented our fallen deputies from the Fresno County Sheriff's office. It was one of the most touching moments I ever experienced. It was amazing to see an enormous crowd of law enforcement personnel, families and friends of fallen heroes.

United States Attorney General, Jess Sessions addressed the array of attendees who attended the vigil. At the conclusion of the ceremony, a law enforcement memorial candle was lit on behalf of all the fallen heroes who gave the most supreme sacrifice. Each person attending the vigil were given candles and asked to light those candles and hold them up. This was extremely emotional and touching. As I took a look over my shoulder, all I could see was were lit candles held up creating a glow around the memorial. This was truly amazing and an honor to the families. This was so overwhelming to see others grieve with you and support you at the same time.

On Tuesday, May 15th we returned to the US Capitol where the memorial was held. President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence addressed a very large crowd of law enforcement personnel and their families who were left behind. We went to visit the National Peace Officer's Memorial wall. This was an extremely emotional, somber and humbling experience for us to see so many names on the wall including our fallen deputies from the Fresno County Sheriff's Office. We paid our respects to our fallen deputies and to those who names were inscribed on the wall. I quote a passage inscribed on the memorial wall, "It is not how these officers died that made them heroes, it's how they lived." God Bless those officers who have fallen. You will never be forgotten!

POM Event Courthouse Park and FDSA Building

On behalf of the families of our fallen deputies who attended the Peace Officer Memorial Event in Courthouse Park and later that evening at the FDSA, a warm thank you to all those who attended.

This is very meaningful for the families to see the co-workers showing up to honor their loved ones at these different ceremonies. The event held at the FDSA was well attended. Many families and support personnel attended – along with community members who show their support to our deputies and our organization. I encourage all of you next year who have not attended one of these events to do so.

Dueling Pianos with FPOA

Reminder on the Dueling Pianos event being held this Saturday, June 9, 2018 at the Fieldhouse Restaurant located at 2042 E. Copper in Fresno. This event will benefit the FDSA's Peace Officer Memorial Fund and is limited to 90 tickets from each association. We have made available payment at the FDSA Office or at the door. I encourage those wanting to attend to pre purchase your tickets in advance so there is a spot for you.

This is the start of some events the two associations will be putting on together to build friendships and comradery between the two. If you are unable to make this, keep your eye out for further events in the future.

As summer starts, this place will heat up – literally. Please keep your partners in mind and back one another up in whatever assignment you work in. Please be safe out there.

-Eric