



LOCAL CHP OFFICERS KILLED ON DUTY

Our hearts have been heavy, as we mourn with our law enforcement partners in the Fresno Area, California Highway Patrol, the deaths of Officers Brian Law and Juan Gonzalez. During the past few weeks, we have reached out to the CHP to offer support and assistance. Since we have endured the devastation caused by line of duty deaths, we immediately opened our doors to our friends at the CHP. In days following the tragic traffic crash, the FDSA served as a location for a critical incident debrief, as well as counseling support services. Since many deputies worked alongside these officers, several of our members also attended these sessions. Both of these officers were from the Central Valley and returned to the area to serve the community they loved. They have deep roots here and many people, including family, friends, and law enforcement officers will be grieving in the coming months, and even years. In any way we can, we will continue to help them through these difficult times. We will also continue to keep everyone who was touched by these officers in our prayers.

I found the vivid article below from the Sacramento Bee that describes the job of CHP officers and provides more background about Officers Law and Gonzalez.

CHP accident illustrates that patrolling highways is a dangerous job

- Sacramento Bee

The day-to-day work of a Highway Patrol officer on California's roads is rather routine for police work. Officers monitor traffic flow and speed, write tickets, rescue stranded motorists, apprehend suspects and assist other law enforcement agencies. In short, they do important work that is difficult to glamorize.

The news that two young California Highway Patrol officers, Juan Gonzalez and Brian Law, were killed early Monday while swerving to avoid pedestrians who had been involved in an accident on Highway 99 illustrates how even everyday police work can go terribly wrong.

Officers Gonzalez and Law were doing their job; imagine the relief you would feel when the CHP pulls up if you had been in an accident. This is a moment that thousands of Californians have experienced over the history of the CHP, and one that is just another day at the office for experienced patrolmen and women.

CHP, along with all law enforcement officers, assume a high level of risk every day. Anything can happen. CHP officers with flashlights peer into dark cars at 2 in the morning; there are no news stories written about those moments. They catch drunken drivers going 110 miles per hour; there are no news stories written about them. They arrive at horrific

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fatal accident scenes and help survivors; these moments, too, are generally unheralded. Events that would be signal moments in our own lives are commonplace occurrences for the typical CHP officer.

Gonzalez was 33 and single. Law, 34, was married and had three children. They had been in the same California Highway Patrol Academy class, became friends, and then were partnered in the CHP Fresno office. They were the first Fresno CHP officers to die on duty in 50 years. Statewide, 225 California Highway Patrol officers have died in the line of duty in the agency's history.

When you see a CHP patrol cruiser on the freeway passing you, their destination a mystery, take a moment to realize that Californians ask them to perform very difficult work on our behalf. The deaths of Gonzalez and Law dramatically illustrate how dangerous it can be.

Recruiting for Deputy Sheriffs

For four years, from February 2008, until February 2012 - - the Fresno County Sheriff's Office did not hire a single deputy sheriff to fill resignations, retirements, and open vacancies. The halt in hiring stemmed from a depressed economy and major cuts in government budgets due to the economic downturn.

Many of you, who were employed by FSO during this time, will recall the struggles we faced. Since we lost deputy sheriffs and did not hire for lost positions, promotions made matters more complicated, because it pulled additional deputies from the deputy sheriff ranks. We struggled to maintain the quality of service the citizens are accustomed to, while maintaining a premium MOU with as little impact to your bottom line- as possible. I named it "*lay-off by attrition.*" During this time frame balancing budgets was tough. Part of the compromise was wiping vacancies from the salary resolutions to actually make budget for the Sheriff.

As the economy has started to improve, we are seeing a slow recovery. Beginning mid fiscal year 2012 state sales (Prop. 172) and property taxes started to come in higher than projected and other economic indicators, like the stock market bouncing back, consumers spending more, and new job creation nationwide - - have all been welcome signs.

The CAO and Board of Supervisors have been working with the FDSA and Sheriff over the past year and a half to start filling vacant positions. The total number of "lost" deputy sheriff positions during this four year period was roughly 100. Filling those positions will allow us to provide optimum and efficient service to the public. Although this will not occur overnight, many of you have noticed, a new Deputy Sheriff 2 recruitment has been put together and sent out. This is a start to ultimately rebuild.

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I share this story, because numerous agencies in the State of California were faced with the same challenges as we were in Fresno County. Our top officials in this county should be commended for their commitment to not ever lay-off a 'live body' deputy sheriff. The relationship with Fresno County Staff and the Board of Supervisors is one of true professionalism.

As we have seen throughout Fresno County - - the community, and communities in outlying areas, as a whole, want more public safety than they are receiving. The Board of Supervisors recognizes this and we are currently working on a plan to add back the deputy sheriff positions lost during the recession.

The article below really makes me appreciate our community and their need/want for police services. Although we do face struggles, some California law enforcement agencies are confronting far worse obstacles. I have been getting updates at PORAC meetings from Oakland POA President, Barry Donelan, that things are really bad in Oakland. This Oakland Tribune piece shows many of the hurdles in the Northern California town.

In Oakland, police struggle to find recruits

-Matthew Atz Oakland Tribune

OAKLAND -- In a city where unemployment is high and officials are desperate to rebuild an understaffed police force, the Oakland Police Department is having a hard time finding applicants from Oakland.

Local recruitment remains abysmally low -- a mere 8 percent of last year's police academy graduates were Oakland residents, far fewer than the number of homegrown trainees graduating from police academies in San Jose and San Francisco.

That's a problem for a beleaguered Police Department that would welcome an influx of native sons and daughters already keyed into Oakland's rhythms and familiar with its culture.

What's more, young Oakland residents don't seem to be all that eager to sign up with any regional law enforcement agency.

Margaret Dixon works with Corey Spears in Dixon's Introduction to Criminal Justice class at Merritt College in Oakland, Calif. on Monday, Feb. 10, 2014. As Oakland struggles to recruit city

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residents into its police force, the city is starting a new affiliation with Merritt to try to groom future officers who hail from Oakland.

Law enforcement experts say that hiring more Oakland residents would help the Police Department win cooperation and build legitimacy, especially in areas where residents often are hesitant to cooperate with officers in solving crimes.

"The more people who know somebody in the Police Department, the more they have a connection to it and the less likely they are to be unfairly judgmental of police operations," said Eugene O'Donnell, a professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York.

From the mayor on down, city officials are working on new programs, including police-oriented charter schools, to persuade young Oakland residents to apply to city police academies and help them pass the entry exams.

But police recruiters face inherent challenges in Oakland. Residents are less likely to meet hiring requirements, which include a high school diploma and no felony arrests. And they are more likely to have a negative opinion of the Police Department, which remains under unprecedented federal oversight in connection with a 1999 brutality scandal.

Markendra Wilson, an Oakland resident and a student in Margaret Dixon's Introduction to Criminal Justice class at Merritt College, prepares to patrol the campus as a safety aide in Oakland, Calif. on Monday, Feb. 10, 2014. As Oakland struggles to recruit city residents into its police force, the city is starting a new affiliation with Merritt to try to groom future officers who hail from Oakland. (Kristopher Skinner/Bay Area News Group)

When 23-year-old Oakland High School graduate Mandela Castaneda told his cousin that he wanted to be an Oakland police officer, the cousin resisted. "He told me they discriminate," said Castaneda, who is African-American. As for several of his friends, "They said, 'If that's your dream, you should go for it,' but they have negative views of OPD."

Recruiting struggle

Of 75 Oakland police academy graduates last year, only six were city residents. That amounts to 8 percent, which is the same percentage of total sworn officers who live in Oakland. O'Donnell said the figures seemed "startlingly low."

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In San Jose and San Francisco, at least 40 percent of graduates from their last three police academies were hometown recruits, according to city figures.

Oakland doesn't just struggle to get its residents onto the force. The Police Department's feeder program, which offers high-school seniors and recent graduates paid on-the-job training, currently has four Oakland residents and 14 out-of-towners.

Mayor Jean Quan said she has asked police to revise the feeder program's entry exam so that it is more relevant to city residents. "Police officer jobs are some of the best paying in the city, and I would like more people in Oakland to have them," she said.

Even if Oakland residents are wary of the Police Department, they don't appear to be flocking to other police agencies. Recent police academies held by San Jose, San Francisco and the Alameda County Sheriff's Office included just 12 Oakland residents among the nearly 450 graduates, records show.

Oakland's most recent police academy began in December with three city residents among 55 trainees.

The two biggest obstacles to getting more Oakland residents on the city's police force appear to be a lack of candidates and poor scores on the mandatory statewide police academy written entrance exam.

Oakland residents made up just 11 percent of applicants to the last four city police academies, and barely half of them -- 57 percent -- passed the standardized test, compared with 75 percent of nonresidents.

Castaneda, who works two jobs and takes classes at Merritt College, recently failed his first attempt at the written test, which includes a vocabulary section. "There were certain words I've never seen before," he said.

The Police Department does take into account whether applicants are from Oakland when making new hires, but, ultimately, "it's really about who is most qualified," assistant chief Paul Figueroa said. State law precludes residency requirements, and the city requires only that the department meet goals for foreign language fluency. Nearly half the academy graduates last year spoke a language other than English.

Local pipeline

Police are stepping up local recruitment by enlisting community leaders to seek out candidates and holding exam workshops throughout the city.

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But the most ambitious initiative, which is being undertaken with Quan and school officials, aims to develop a pipeline of Oakland students into the police force.

Next month, the City Council is expected to approve an agreement with Merritt College's Administration of Justice program to preselect students interested in becoming Oakland officers. The program will provide direct interaction with city police officers and give students extra support, including help maintaining good credit and avoiding social media posts that could harm their candidacies.

"It's more than passing the test," said Margaret Dixon, a retired Oakland police officer who teaches at Merritt. "We want to support them once they get into the academy, and we want them to truly understand what they are getting into."

Officials also are working to set up special programs at two small high schools where students would learn about law enforcement issues and work daily with police officers.

"We really think that getting connected with high school-aged students and getting them into college would really help them be successful in the police academy," said Figueroa, himself an Oakland native.

While stressing that many out-of-town officers are quick to build ties to Oakland, Figueroa said that growing up in the city has made him a better officer.

"I still get calls from people in the community who have known me for years," he said. "There is that trust that is built through years of relationships."

Castaneda, whose high school football coach and mentor was an Oakland police officer, said he also would enter the force with strong ties to the city he loves.

"I want to help people, and my community is one of the places that needs help the most," he said. "Having grown up in Oakland, just playing that role as a police officer would really mean a lot."

Californians for Death Penalty Reform

During the 2012 election, the FDSA joined together with PORAC, in a position of NO on 34.

Those who wanted Yes on 34, wanted death penalty abolished altogether.

Our main concern, is the 43 "cop killers," who are awaiting their punishment on death row.

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Despite being underfunded, basically 10 to 1, the 'No on 34' campaign prevailed. However, reform was imminent, in order to quash any other ballot initiative from coming forward to try and defeat in the future.

PORAC has joined several groups who are attempting to introduce a ballot initiative for November 2014 to reform the death penalty - - essentially streamline the process and stop costing Californian's hundreds of millions of dollars each year housing these criminals for years with no action. Basically it comes down to is California going to have a death penalty with reform or abolish completely?

Currently there are 739 criminals out of 163,000 on death row in California. 229 have murdered children, 43 have murdered police officers, 238 of the victims were sexually abused and 90 were tortured

We have a large job to do. We need signatures to reduce the cost of putting this reform on the ballot. I will have more information to follow in the next week or two, but the FDSA will be sending out signature cards to all of your work stations to attempt in assisting with this signature gathering. The numbers of signatures needed is over 800,000. Each PORAC association has been tasked to help with this.

Any help any of you can give to friends and family too will be much appreciated. The more we can get the less this will cost to qualify it for the voters to decide.

I will have more information to come.

Fraternally,

Eric

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