

The message this month is in honor of those who have died in the line of duty. Several events will be taking place this week to recognize the fallen and their surviving loved ones during Peace Officer Memorial Week.

On Thursday, May 4th the Fresno County Peace Officer's Memorial Foundation will be hosting the annual memorial event at Courthouse Park at 12PM. I encourage all of you to attend this event and honor our local law enforcement officers who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in giving their life in service to this community.

On Monday, May 8, 2023, a large gathering will take place at the state memorial in Sacramento. The remembrance events begin Sunday night, May 7, with a candlelight vigil at the State of California Peace Officer Memorial in Capital Mall. This event honors those officers killed in the line of duty during the calendar year of 2022. This year there are eight names from those killed in the line of duty during the 2022 year. There are also two officers being enrolled from prior years onto the State Memorial.

As we have done for the last decade, the FDSA will be sending 10 members to honor those whose names will appear on the memorial and their families. As always, we also pay tribute to our own deputies who died in the line of duty at the Fresno Sheriff's Office.

On Tuesday, May 15, 2023, the National Memorial will take place in Washington DC. This year, the names of 556 officers killed in the line of duty will be added to the National Law Enforcement Memorial. Of these 556, included are 224 officers who were killed in 2022. Additionally, 332 officers who died in previous years will be added- who were not previously honored. Once these names are added, it will mean 23,785 names will be engraved onto the National Memorial Wall.

We will never forget the sacrifices made by those who chose this noble profession. Those who laid down their lives for strangers, whom they will never know- so that others can be safe. This job is unlike no other in our country. Thank you to all of you who serve our community as police officers.

Body Worn Cameras

For several years, the discussion of body worn cameras has been a topic with the Fresno Deputy Sheriff's Association. Sheriff Mims and I discussed body worn cameras quite often. I distinctly remember her summation that really resonated with me. She said- "I support body camera's but I'm not willing to pay the expense of storage and other things that go with it." I always respected Sheriff Mims for her commentary about what it would take to implement this tool. It also showed her foresight in putting budget money in other places that affect the front-line response.

During the 90-day campaign for Sheriff of Fresno County, Sheriff Zaroni spoke about body worn cameras numerous times. The first time this was addressed, was during his endorsement interview at the FDSA on Wednesday, March 2, 2022. At that time, then Assistant Sheriff Zaroni was asked specifically if he would support the deployment of body worn cameras for Fresno County Sheriff's deputies. His response to the question of body cameras was one of support if we received a grant and funding. He also made it clear he would not make it a priority- as we are trying to add positions to our operations and would not want the cost to get in the way of adding deputies. Overall, the FDSA Board felt this was a fair answer.

The same month (March 2022), FSO put in for a DOJ grant for body cameras. This grant was for the purchase of 215 body cameras. In November of 2022, Lieutenant Esmay called to inform me we received the grant, and he would be working with FDSA on a body worn camera policy. I told Lt. Esmay we are looking forward to this venture and will work with him and staff to make it happen. We will always be willing to help craft policy and a field test for body worn cameras.

On Tuesday, January 24, 2023, I attended a meeting with an Axon sales representative held at the Sheriff's Training Center. I felt this was an informative presentation about the features of the Axon Body Camera. We also learned about the capabilities along with options. The cameras would be the Axon Body Camera 3. There are a lot of options – however – those options do come with a price tag.

The policy was sent over on March 21, 2023 and FDSA responded back to the agency on March 25, 2023 with some questions, suggestions, and comments. A second redrafted version was sent on Wednesday, April 19, 2023 – which we sent back again with questions, suggestions, and comments on Friday, April 21, 2023.

The item has been in front of the Board of Supervisors twice now. When it was first listed on the March 28, 2023, agenda- but was later deleted to allow time to work out some of the costs the Board of Supervisors has expressed concern about. One issue brought up was the fact the Sheriff's Office is currently two million dollars over budget for the year. I spoke to Lt. Esmay and Assistant Sheriff Hushaw about the Board's comments – which really came down to the cost of administration of this program.

Since March 27 through today, the FDSA has been working with the CAO's office and the Board of Supervisors addressing the concerns they have articulated about the funding for body worn cameras. The root of the issue comes down to funding and finding the money inside of the current budget. These are ongoing costs, so they must be treated (to a certain degree) like positions.

This was discussed with the FDSA Board of Directors- specifically finding the money in the budget. The BOS made it clear they are not looking at *new* funding to support the camera program. Rather, the Sheriff's Office needs to find it inside the budget, such as roll over budget costs to do that. I have expressed this to Sheriff Zanoni, Assistant Sheriff Hushaw and Lt. Esmay. We have urged them to address the BOS concerns to get this program started and moving in the right direction.

Like the Board of Supervisors – *the FDSA fully supports Body Worn Cameras*. However, with a new and ongoing cost comes tough decisions to cut or move monies to get the Body Worn Camera program off the ground. There are budget items we just cannot move on (in the form of cuts) to allow the BWC program to move forward. Some of those items include funding our take-home car program, funding to ensure we have proper staffing in the field – which improves deputy safety on the streets, hiring more staff, along with the fundamental tools that allow us to carry out our job assignments at the rank-and-file level. There are places in which the Sheriff must be able to make the tough call about where/what to cut in order to fund this program. The notion that the FDSA is opposing body worn cameras is plain and simply false. The stakeholders involved in trying to fund this program know that we are in support of this tool.

I look forward to seeing what happens at the Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday, May 9, 2023.

Re-Election as your FDSA President,

Serving you in the best way I can has been a priority for me since I was elected your FDSA President. It means battling for good wages, benefits and working conditions and picking up the phone when you are in crisis and need an ear or an attorney. It means doing everything I can to honor the fallen and honorably represent those who put on a uniform every day and serve Fresno County.

It has been an honor to represent you all - the members of the Fresno Deputy Sheriff's Association. I would like to continue to serve you in this leadership role, therefore, asking for your support as I seek my 7th term as your President.

Since I was last elected to serve you, I was appointed to the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Commission. It's a position that is appointed by the Governor and requires Senate confirmation. A law enforcement representative from the Central Valley has not served on this commission in more than 15 years. This role gives our agency and region the opportunity to be represented when standards and procedures are enacted that impact law enforcement throughout the state. It's a tremendous responsibility and a job I take very seriously. Being a member of the commission means that occasionally I travel to Sacramento to meet with the 14 other commission members to discuss issues including SB2, public complaints and countless other law enforcement related matters.

Also, since the last election, I was also elected to serve on the Peace Officer's Research Association of California (PORAC) Executive Board. This means I represent all associations from Merced to Bakersfield- and south of Lake Tahoe to Bishop. Eight representatives in the state serve on the PORAC Executive Board. Our job is to stay connected with associations in our region and share concerns with PORAC leadership.

SO much progress and work has taken place since I took on this role nearly 15 years ago! In just the past few years, I feel like my job has been even more rewarding because we've had so many new members join the Fresno County Sheriff's Office. This has really changed the face of our agency. It's looking very youthful now and refreshing! This means I often navigate new members and share with them what we do and how we can help them throughout their career.

As I look forward to the future, I also believe it's imperative to look back.

Here's a snapshot:

Our most recent contract agreement (January 2022-January 2025) and benefit package gave FDSA members unprecedented raises. This 20+ percent pay raise over the term of the contract, not only put more money in your wallet- it makes the Fresno County Sheriff's Office a more competitive agency. With the wages rivaling other law enforcement groups in our area and throughout the state. This helps attract new recruits to our agency and continues to show value to our current employees.

My job is to be your advocate. If you have been involved in an Officer Involved Shooting to an Internal Affairs investigation, myself, along with the FDSA board ensures you do not have to navigate these tough situations alone. I am available day or night to help you get legal counsel

or lend an ear. I take that role very serious to answer your call and lend you a comforting ear. Confidentiality is sacred to me, while dealing with personnel issues.

During my tenure, so much has been accomplished, including:

- Organizing and formalizing a Peace Officer Memorial Fund to honor fallen deputies and other law enforcement officers who die in the line of duty.
- Designating funds generated from the FDSA Annual Golf Tournament specifically to the Peace Officer Memorial Fund. Setting a personal goal of raising \$100,000 specifically for this fund. Before being sworn into office, the tournament had a deficit of -\$2,500. Last year, the account surpassed more than \$100,000!
- Firmly committing to honoring fallen officers every year at state and national memorial events. Since 2009, the FDSA has randomly selected 10 members to attend the Sacramento ceremony. Travel and lodging costs are paid to attend the event. In addition, two members are chosen through a lottery to travel to Washington DC to attend national remembrance events. Continue to support the local POM Foundation and the State of California POM.
- Balancing the FDSA budget each year with a surplus rollover. Additionally, establishing a system of checks and balances and transparency by initiating annual audits of both the FDSA and Insurance Trust accounts.
- We are hosting an outgoing breakfast for the Police Academy Cadets during their cadet run – the day before graduation. FDSA feeds a pancake breakfast to all cadets and support staff.
- Established the FDSA as part of the Fresno County Community through a variety of public outreach. FDSA is known as part of the stakeholder process in the Fresno Community through the Chamber of Commerce and any elected political office.
- Staying in community and involving our retirees into the FDSA for member events.

I am committed to this organization and to our membership. Those of you who have been here during my tenure know this. Those of you who are newer will come to learn this. I do not take this assignment lightly. Thank you for the confidence you have put in me. Leading this organization is truly a privilege.

With gratitude,

Eric Schmidt