



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Senator Griffo's Weekly Column #19: Honoring Our Police & First Responders

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO May 8, 2014

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The second full week in May is National Police Week and the following week is National EMS week, providing us a great opportunity to recognize the important work done by these two groups in our communities.

It's also a time for reflection on those we've lost. Hundreds of officers gathered at the State Capitol recently to memorialize those killed in the line of duty, including our officers: Utica Police Department Officer Thomas Lindsey; Oneida County Sheriff's Deputy Kurt Wyman and New Hartford Police Department Officer Joe Corr.

A similar, but larger, gathering will take soon take place in Washington, D.C. There will be 268 names added to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial this year, including the late Patrick J. Fogarty of Lowville.

Mr. Fogarty was a turnkey at the Lewis County jail on Aug. 17, 1958, when he was struck on the head by an inmate wielding a large screwdriver and beaten. The three inmates who escaped the jail that day eventually pleaded guilty to first-degree manslaughter. (For more about this fascinating case, I recommend reading Christina Scanlon's piece in the Jan. 19 Watertown Daily Times.)

We've come a long way in the near 60 years since Mr. Fogarty's tragic death, but there's still too many good cops dying each year. That's why I'm pleased that groups like Below 100 are really taking the problem seriously. Officers in departments statewide came to Albany recently for the group's training, which teaches officers how to protect themselves while keeping our streets safe.

Emergency medical service providers are a vital complement to our police officers. They understand that each passing minute can make the difference between life and death, which makes their calm under pressure even more impressive. When we are rushing away from disaster and tragedy, they're running toward it to help those injured. Our quality of life is largely shaped by the professionalism and dedication of our first responders.

There are literally dozens of ways, both elaborate and simple, that you can show your appreciation these next two weeks for all these brave men and women do for us.

I'm starting small, with a thank you. On behalf of all of us in the 47th Senate District, I thank our peace officers and emergency medical service technicians for their unwavering support of our communities. You are there with a helping hand in our darkest hours and in times of our greatest need. Your professionalism and courtesy are appreciated, and your dedication to your profession is admired. You are essential to the well being of our society and we certainly would be a lesser place without you. Thank you for all that you do - not only for us, but for our families, friends and colleagues.