



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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What Officer Joe Corr's death in line of duty means to us, 10 years later

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Every day, most of us go to work confident we will return home. Very few of us have to quietly accept, in the back of our mind, the possibility that fate may call upon us to make the ultimate sacrifice as part of that job.

We call these unique men and women our police officers, and they all possess an inner strength that few of us ever have to muster.

It is very easy to forget all that our officers put on the line when they report to duty. But 10 years ago this week, this slumbering fear was abruptly shaken awake in the Mohawk Valley.

We lost New Hartford Police Officer Joseph Corr on Feb. 27, 2006, simply because he was doing his job, pursuing several suspects following an armed jewelry store robbery and high-speed chase.

Beyond the badge and uniform of Officer Corr's professional work, Joe was just like any one of us. He was a father with a loving family, he cared about his community and he was simply a good man. Like all members of law enforcement, however, Joe differed from most of us in what was expected of him as part of his job.

Officer Corr's death not only opened our eyes wide at the time to the vulnerabilities our police face, it also painfully revealed how much we value and respect our first responders. In the days and years after Officer Corr's death, as a united community we expressed how much Joe's sacrifice meant to us.

And it was a sacrifice we would be tragically reminded of again, and again. While our emotions were still raw from Officer Corr's murder, Utica Police Officer Thomas Lindsey was gunned down during a traffic stop one year later. Then several years after that, Oneida County Sheriff's Deputy Kurt Wyman lost his life during an unfortunate domestic standoff.

Three of our proud and dedicated officers, all lost in five years. And each and every time we came together with the same level of sorrow and love, sadly as if it were some cruel routine.

In these darkest hours, one can only imagine the deepest fears all of our officers and their families were forced to confront and dwell upon, over and over again.

Ten years later, a new generation of young officers reports to duty now. They may have vague memories of what happened to Joe, Tommy and Kurt, but their sacrifice still exists and the dangers today are still as real as they were 10 years ago.

It will never be easy to be a police officer, and today's public scrutiny seems to reveal more than ever how human our officers really are. They are not perfect, and they are not always right – none of us are. But the important responsibility they choose to accept, with honor and pride, is one few of us would ever have the courage to bear.

Officer Corr's death on that frigid February 27th night 10 years ago – as well as those that have since followed – showed us the price of that courage. All that we can ever give in return is our gratitude, and our prayers.

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