



February 9, 2018

Protecting the Protectors

When those who protect us become vulnerable, everyone's safety is undercut. The murder of Pierce County Sheriff's Deputy Daniel McCartney reminds us of the vulnerability of those who wear a badge. In 2018 to date, seven officers have been murdered nationwide. All were shot and killed. In this same time frame, twenty eight more were shot and wounded.

In the year 2016, the year we have the most recent statistics, 2377 officers were victims of firearms assaults over and above the number killed line of duty. That is the highest number in the last 10 years.

What factors differentiate killed in the line of duty versus wounded in the line of duty? The skill set of the assailant is certainly one factor. But other factors include: speed of evacuation and improved skills of emergency medical personnel; access to and quality of law enforcement equipment; training and tactics and skills. The difference can be as little as a few millimeters in the angle of a bullet's path or a split second's reaction time or distance from the hospital.

Too many are dying. And too many are being wounded. Having just experienced the murder of one of our Deputies, I can tell you that the costs to family, to the members of this Department, to those in other departments and to the community as a whole are extremely high.

Likewise, there is a cost to the future of policing. It becomes harder to recruit and retain personnel when those who work in an increasingly difficult, morally complex and dangerous profession are killed or wounded.

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I witnessed a tremendous and heart-felt outpouring of concern and condolences over the loss of Deputy McCartney. I appreciate and I respect these expressions from throughout the community.

But we need to get beyond heart-felt sorrow. I believe that we also need to ask ourselves a more fundamental and far-reaching question: how can we take steps to reduce the risks to our law enforcement officers? What can we do to see that they are better protected and that all of us, in turn, are better protected? Waiting for the next incident while hoping it does not occur is not an answer.

We can start by addressing some fundamental issues: issues of public safety resources, accountability, public attitude and public moral support. What do you think?