



Montana Trooper

President's Message



Sgt. Art Collins
President
AMT

The Montana Highway Patrol and Association of Montana Troopers have again partnered to insure a productive and successful Legislative Session. I know there was a lot of bad press over the four month period from January to April, but we were largely unaffected by the negative legislation that other state employees must endure. As you all know, many state workers were under attack with regard to wages and retirement benefits. This is not an issue that is going on only in Montana. It is a nationwide issue, which we need to be constantly on guard against. Your brothers and sisters in other states have been fighting this battle for several years. This year, however, there was a full frontal assault on state employee rights across the nation.

We will remain vigilant and monitor trends across the nation to insure that we are not blind-sided if or when we have to fight these battles.

I would like to take a moment to thank Attorney General Bullock, Colonel Tooley, Lt. Col. Huseby, Major Butler, Jessie Luther, and Mark Taylor for the countless hours they spent during the legislative session. They did a fantastic job and were instrumental in helping to get some important laws passed. Special thanks also go out to Steven Lavin. This was Steve's freshman year in the House of Representatives, and he did an absolutely fantastic job. Steve sponsored some of the most significant DUI bills in the history of this state, and they passed with nearly no objection. Part of the reason Steve was so successful was the way the rest of you conduct yourselves on and off duty. We enjoy a wonderful reputation and must remember to guard that reputation in everything we do and say.

So what's next? The AMT board of directors is working to build relationships with the other law enforcement associations in this state. For the first time, the

spring board meeting will be held in conjunction with the Law Enforcement Summit. In June, we will conduct our regular meeting, while the MSPOA and MPPA are doing the same. For two days afterward, we will join them in some training presented by FLETC. The evenings will be filled with chances for everyone to get to know each other and most likely exchange thoughts and ideas as to how to further improve everything about our profession, from pay to working conditions. We will continue to be active with the National Troopers Coalition. This is important because what is happening in other states will eventually happen here. We will be ahead of the game if we know what has and hasn't worked in other states to protect workers' rights and benefits.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you for what you do every day. We live in the best state in the greatest nation on earth. I am proud to be serving the people of this state with you. When the shift seems long and the pay seems short, remember why we do what we do.

Until next time, stay sharp, work smart, and be safe. □





Montana Trooper

From the Attorney General



Montana
Attorney General
Steve Bullock

Dear Friends,

If there is a lesson from the 2011 Legislature for the Department of Justice and the Montana Highway Patrol, it's this: Good ideas go places.

We have long known that Montana had a problem with drinking and driving. We had seen too many of our own die needlessly due to an intoxicated driver. And we wanted to change things.

In 2010, we formed a partnership with Lewis and Clark County to begin Montana's first 24/7 Sobriety Pilot project. It was an enormous success. In 2011, we took those successes to the Legislature and guess what?

Lawmakers of all stripes liked it.

At a time when legislators weren't agreeing on much, they agreed that the 24/7 Project was a good idea. House Bill 106, the bill to create a statewide 24/7 program, passed by big, lopsided margins at every step of the way. I often spoke in favor of this bill, and lawmakers who didn't agree with much else I had to say, supported me on this.

The Montana Highway Patrol deserves hearty kudos for all you did to push this bill along. Sergeant Steve Lavin of Kalispell was the representative who sponsored this bill, who worked it, talked to his colleagues in the Legislature and, ultimately, played a significant role in getting it through. Other law enforcement agencies and representatives also joined with us in working to make sure this bill was a success.

The families of Troopers Evan Schneider and Mike Haynes, as well as many others who have been impacted, also powerfully lent their voices to this idea and left no mistaking how

high the stakes are in drinking and driving - and preventing this dangerous behavior.

While we now have a lot of work to do with local jurisdictions to implement, the program will soon be up and running across Montana - saving lives. You hear a lot about "changing the culture" of drinking and driving. This program is where the rubber hits the road on changing behavior - literally.

The 2011 Legislature also brought some somber notes: Two stretches of our roads will now bear permanent reminders of two troopers who recently died in the line of duty: Trooper Dave DeLaittre and Trooper Mike Haynes both had memorial highways named after them. Such designations are too small to capture the immense loss these men's passing has brought their friends and family. It is our imperfect way of keeping their memories alive.

Thanks again for all you do keeping Montana and the people privileged to live here safely. □



Montana Trooper

Colonel's Message



Colonel
Mike Tooley

It was at this time last year that I wrote a message for inclusion in the Montana Trooper that was a reflection of our 75th anniversary celebration.

Now the 76th year has also come and gone. We have survived a very challenging legislative session, and we have added an eighth star to our flag to honor the life and service of our Trooper David DeLaittre. David performed his duties in the highest tradition of the Highway Patrol right until the moment he lost his life in an exchange of gunfire with a suspect.

David represented a long history of law enforcement within his family. He also was a second generation trooper who followed in his father's footsteps.

There are reminders that came from the short life of David DeLaittre. First, life

in fact is short, and for those of us in uniform, it can be very dangerous. But more importantly, public service in the realm of law enforcement is not just a choice, but a calling.

People who serve their fellow citizens are unique in the fact that they care enough about their fellow man to work long hours for low pay, to do more with less, and to see their service often maligned in the press by the very citizenry they serve. Yet year after year, high quality people join our ranks as sworn officers or support personnel. Why? Because there is a reward that those who sometimes unnecessarily critical of our efforts cannot comprehend. That reward is making a difference. You can't recognize that without receiving the calling.

David DeLaittre received the calling and made a difference. At his funeral, the photographs of David wearing as much of a Patrol uniform as he could as a child reflected that. Like his father Dennis has often said, David could have done anything he wanted to do. In the end, he chose to serve the public as a Montana Highway Patrol trooper despite the risks, bad hours, and too small of a paycheck. He had pride

in his profession and that was reflected in how he did his job right up to the end.

Even though the Patrol continues to deal with the setbacks and the pain that seems to never heal through the loss of good people like David, this is an organization that makes a difference. You see it in the continuing reduction of the fatality rate. You feel it in the improved sense of security and safety on the highways and in our communities. You hear it from our friends and partners in safety.

People that get to read this magazine generally understand that. It doesn't matter if you are a brand new trooper, a communications systems operator, radio technician, or retiree. We all have a part to play, and we should be proud of our role.

In conclusion, I am thankful to the AMT for their continued support of its membership through good times and bad. I am also appreciative of the efforts that they have made in making a challenging legislative session successful in virtually every regard. Just as the MHP makes a difference in the lives of Montanans, the AMT makes a difference in the lives of its members.

Thank you all. Stay safe! □