



Montana Trooper

President's Message



Sgt. Art Collins
President
AMT

By now, if you are like me, you can't wait for spring to fully arrive in Montana. It is only the 14th of December as I write this, and I'm ready for warm weather already. This past year has been one of highest of highs and the lowest of lows. As an agency, we have reduced the motor vehicle fatality rate significantly in 2010. We have also brought to the forefront the battle against drunk driving. Colonel Tooley, Tawny Haynes, and Attorney General Bullock, along with many others (you included), have made this probably the most important non-fiscal issue before the legislature this session. I anticipate great things to happen out of Helena this year. On a sadder note, we also had one of our own taken from us. We will not forget David DeLaittre, and I hope his family can take solace in knowing that he was respected and admired by all that knew him. I have been to far too many law enforcement funerals over the past eight years, but I feel honored to be part of this profession every time I attend one. We certainly know how to honor our own.

I would also like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the good people

from the Going to the Sun Rally. It is because of their generosity that your Association has been able to insure the families of our fallen brothers have been able to attend National Law Enforcement Week in Washington D.C. Rest assured, we would have made it happen one way or the other, but this incredible group has donated a significant amount of money over the past four years that has made it much easier for us to take care of our families.

Our families have had the opportunity to attend the induction of their sons, husbands, fathers, and brothers on the Wall of Honor. As well, they have been able to make connection with the people from Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS). This organization is dedicated to helping these families heal after losing their hero by providing counseling to all family members, as well as retreats throughout the year to continue the healing process. These are just a couple of the services they provide, and I am really unqualified to comment much more than that. If you were not already aware, COPS has a new chapter in Montana, I believe Jerry Ren is the current president of that chapter. The AMT is happy and proud to support such a fine organization.

So what is in the future? A lot of that will depend on what happens with the Montana legislature right now. One way or the other, the AMT will continue to work for you. It has been my agenda over the past three years to get the AMT more involved and participatory with other law enforcement associations both at the state

level and at the national level. A couple of years ago, the Montana Sheriff's and Peace Officers' Association along with the Montana Police Protective Association started having their annual meetings together, essentially creating a law enforcement summit. We had been invited in the past, but we had not been able to participate. This year, we got ahead of the game and will be attending with these other fine associations. Together as one voice, we can be heard much more clearly. If you had the opportunity to read the minutes from the last AMT board meeting, you may have noticed that we made a change in the Legal Defense Fund. As you may or may not know, the old fund was really nothing more than a savings account that we hoped we would never have to dig into too deeply. During the fall meeting, we decided to take that account and combine it with what you are already paying monthly for legal defense and join a nationally known and recognized company known as PORAC. This move will provide you with real legal insurance so we don't have to worry about one case emptying the account. We should be able to continue with the same member contribution for several years before we have to start thinking about needing an increase.

As always, please feel free to contact me at any time with questions or concern about the AMT. This is your Association, and I am only here to serve. Until later, be safe, happy, and healthy.

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From the Attorney General

Choosing a Career in Law Enforcement



Montana
Attorney General
Steve Bullock

December, 2010, was a hard month for all of us, and yet as the snow continued to fall across the state, motorists stuck in the ditch called for help or to report an accident. In cities throughout the state, people called to report domestic violence, burglaries, and drug deals.

And Montana troopers and sheriff's deputies and police officers did their jobs and responded.

The nightly news and daily papers ran stories on the friendly young trooper whose chosen profession cost him his life. Like all Montanans, they were reminded of the risks law enforcement officers take on their shoulders on behalf of all Montanans. For the Patrol and the DeLaittre family, that burden has been especially heavy.

For this issue of Montana Trooper, I thought I would share parts of the speech I gave to the newest class graduating from the Montana Law Enforcement Academy just three days after Trooper DeLaittre's funeral service.

"Today is a day about each of you and your families: your accomplishments to date, as well as what you might expect - and what the public expects out of you - as you begin the next chapter of your lives as sworn peace officers. It is your day to celebrate, and I am truly honored that I get to be part of that celebration with you.

I have to be honest, though. Given the past 10 days, I can't look out at you and your families, without also thinking about Trooper David DeLaittre and his family.

That's the case for many reasons. First, because you share something with David, and always will.... You share

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continued

something deep inside. You could have become anything in the world that you set your mind to, but you decided to become a sworn peace officer.

Far too often in life, people just fall into their career; the career almost chooses them. You are different, though, because you can't just fall into the career of being a law enforcement officer. It's a deliberate choice, something that can take months, even years. Before you cross the steps into our Academy, it takes diligence and perseverance to even get hired.

Think about your own personal journey. The paths each of you took to get to this point are varied.

The path that took David DeLaittre into law enforcement was forged by his father, Dennis, who had been a highway patrol officer. During the funeral service, we saw pictures of a beautiful little toddler, wearing an oversized hat of the Montana Highway Patrol.

Just as is applicable to each and every one of you, David's father told me, "He was so talented, he could have become anything he wanted to be." Dennis went on to say, "Given all his talents, I even tried to talk him out of it, but David was set on being a trooper."

The path that David and the path that each and every one of you has chosen is difficult and often unappreciated. But anybody close up realizes what a difference you make, and what

a hero you – and your families – are.

Yes, the families are as much the hero as those in the front row. You are the backbone of the law enforcement family. Without you, the people in these front rows would not be here; nor would they be on the streets come tomorrow or Monday.

I hope you will not only take care of the graduate, but also take care of yourselves. I struggle with what reality demands of us all – a law enforcement brother was killed nine days past, we grieved and mourned three days ago, and time won't stand still; the public needs each of us at 100 percent, and they need us now. And I struggle because that burden is also carried by every mother or father, every sibling, and every spouse, each time their loved one goes on shift.

Be it officer or their supporting family, we are all in this together, and we all need to persevere and to take care of one another.

When the call went out a week ago Wednesday that an officer was down and the shooter was at large, over 100 law enforcement officers showed up; jurisdiction, politics, bureaucracy, and glory were the furthest thing from anyone's mind. And, as David's remains were taken to the funeral less than a week later, there were 500 to 600 law enforcement vehicles following in procession.

We persevere, we take care of each other, and we are never alone....

When you get into your car, and survey all your equipment, take stock of everything you are bringing into that car that isn't recorded on your Department's inventory list:

- Joining you in that cruiser are the MLEA staff, guest instructors, and 12 weeks of training – you now have the core skills to handle any situation you might encounter, and the ability to protect yourself and your community in those situations.
- Joining you in the car is your family and those who support, care for, and love you.
- Riding along side is the extended law enforcement family – not only your classmates here, but the 500 to 600 cars that followed David's procession are also following you.
- In your car are angels with the names of David DeLaittre, Mike Haynes, David Graham, and Evan Schneider, the four troopers that we have lost in the line of duty over the past four years.
- And each time you get into that cruiser you will be joined by my personal thoughts, prayers and blessings.

We are in this together. Congratulations on your achievement, thank you for answering the call to service, and may God bless you and your families." □

