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House Transportation Committee
North Dakota House of Representatives
69th Legislative Assembly
Electronically Submitted

Re: SB 2277

Chairman Ruby & Committee Members:

I will introduce myself. I recently retired after 40 years of service as a law enforcement officer in North Dakota; most recently serving as Lieutenant in command of Patrol and Investigations with the McLean County Sheriff's Office. I am a life member of the North Dakota Peace Officer's Association and currently serve as chair of the Historical Preservation Committee. I am a member of Missouri Valley Lodge #3 of the North Dakota Fraternal Order of Police. I serve as treasurer for North Dakota Crisis Chaplains. In the 2024 general election, I was elected and serve as County Commissioner for District 2 in McLean County.

I became interested in law enforcement history in the early nineties, when the late Milton Lennick, a pioneer NDBCI special agent, became president of the North Dakota Peace Officers Association in 1991. Lennick, when taking office as president, brought with him a dream—to have a monument in memory of peace officers who gave their lives serving the citizens of North Dakota. This dream was presented and approved by NDPOA membership at the annual conference in Williston, ND.

The massive fund-raising campaign was launched to fund the memorial monument. The fund-raising committee was co-chaired by then BCI director Bill Broer and Burleigh County Sheriff Bob Harvey. Donations were received from organizations and individuals. To supplement this fundraising effort a raffle was organized by then Burleigh County Chief Deputy Richard Peck. The raffle was a massive undertaking of a boots n the ground campaign of the membership selling raffle tickets. The campaign raised over \$22,000, when combined with organization and individual donations funded the project.

Criteria for inclusion of officer's names on the monument was patterned after the National Law Enforcement Memorial. Ground breaking for the project was held on August 24, 1993. Jim Benjaminson, then a North Dakota Highway Patrol Motor Carrier Inspector, was tasked with chronicling the history of the original names that were to be inscribed on the monument.

At the time, I served as a Patrolman with the Kenmare Police Department. Benjaminson contacted me to do research regarding a Kenmare policeman, Julius Nielsen, who was killed in the line of duty on September 18, 1921. Research was conducted through news articles as well as finding the justice docket book that documented the arraignment of Charles Welling, the defendant charged with Nielsen's murder. That research sparked my interest in North Dakota Law Enforcement history. I later realized the massive undertaking Benjaminson was charged with, as I only researched one of line of duty deaths.

The North Dakota Peace Officer's Memorial was dedicated on May 21, 1994. The dedication folder contained two quotes. *They will always be remembered....; Good men must die, but death cannot kill their memory—Proverbs.*



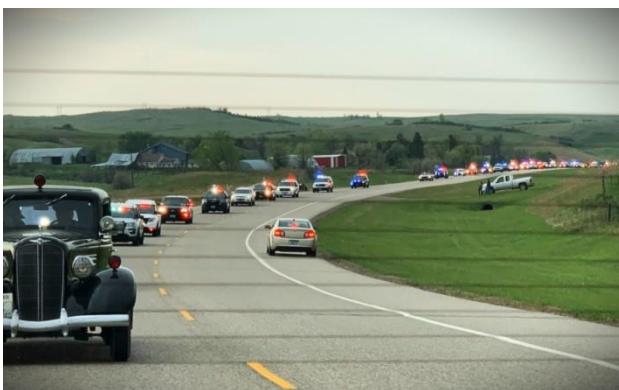
NORTH DAKOTA LAW ENFORCEMENT HISTORY

Private group · 1.5K members



After discussion with active and retired law enforcement officers, in 2017, I created a private Facebook page titled NORTH DAKOTA LAW ENFORCEMENT HISTORY. The page was created for active and retired officers and their families to share photos and stories in a private setting that chronicle the history of law enforcement in our state. The page has grown to over 1,500

members consisting of active and retired law enforcement officers, their families and law enforcement history subject matter experts. The page has become a popular area to share obituaries of retirees as well as active non-line of duty deaths.



In 2020, during the pandemic, the traditional annual memorial ceremony was conducted, but closed to the public. I proposed the idea of holding a memorial parade, so the public could attend, in a social distanced environment. The initial parade was a success and has continued to be an annual event in conjunction with the annual peace officer memorial service and Blue Mass. Law Enforcement agencies from all over North Dakota participate in the annual event.

A badge is a symbol of authority that represents the public's trust in an officer to serve and protect them. Community support for law enforcement in North Dakota has always existed, but has in recent times become more visible in the wake of campaigns from other areas of the country such as "defund the police."

A vast majority of North Dakotans support law enforcement. When officers are injured, communities support “their” officers. When an officer is killed, the community grieves along with the family and agency because it was “their” officer that was taken from them. I could go on forever with examples of how North Dakotans pay homage for fallen officers but a couple examples would be blue light campaigns, and placing flowers at a location such as the police station or location where the officer died.



North Dakota fallen peace officers are remembered and loved by the communities they serve. North Dakota peace officers have worked hard over the past thirty plus years by erecting and maintaining a monument to honor fallen officers. By an effort from the trooper’s association, a section of ND 13 has been renamed the Trooper Beryl McLane memorial highway. Agencies and organizations memorialize the anniversary dates of fallen officers.

Many people have for years displayed emblems of the outline of North Dakota with a thin blue line running horizontally across the center. ND 200 is really a representative of that emblem, as it crosses the center of North Dakota from Montana to Minnesota. ND 200 is contained within ten counties; McKenzie, Dunn, Mercer, McLean, Sheridan, Wells, Foster, Griggs, Steele and Traill.

More citizens will drive on ND 200 and read and will pass signs in memory of fallen officers, than will ever have the opportunity to visit the memorial at the capitol or participate in memorial services and other activities organized by agencies, individuals and organizations. The name change will not replace the memorial or activities; however, it will continue to build on the foundation and enhance the legacy left by a NDPOA president that took office with a dream, and with the teamwork of many officers, organizations and individuals, saw it through to a reality.

Since the senate committee hearing, the bill seeker, Travis Bateman and I have met with the NDDOT to begin the process of working out details to locate twenty initial signs to mark the highways designation. We also discussed a vetting process and process where individuals, families, political subdivisions or others could purchase signs to designate a mile of the highway to an individual fallen officer.

Although retired from a long and rewarding career in law enforcement, I remain active and wear many hats, all of which align with my personal feelings to urge the committee to support and recommend a DO PASS of SB 2277. As elected officials, we all represent the constituents of our district or jurisdiction. I feel it safe to say that an overwhelming majority of citizens in North Dakota would join me in support of this bill. While an officer’s death is their end, it does not end the loss of their surviving family as well as blue family and we all have a duty to keep their memory alive, forever.

Copies of memorial articles I’ve written are attached along with written testimony for the house transportation committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Curtis E. Olson