



John D'Agostini
El Dorado County
Sheriff ~ Coroner ~ Public Administrator
Retired

118th Congress
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
Testimony in Support of H.R. 1642 (Rep. McClintock)
“Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter Recreation Pass Act”
March 28th, 2023

Honorable Chairman Bruce Westerman,

My name is John D'Agostini and I am the recently retired, duly elected, Sheriff – Coroner – Public Administrator for the County of El Dorado in California. El Dorado County was one of the original 18 counties when California became a state in 1850 and is comprised of more than 1,700 square miles. It spans from Sacramento County on the West to the Nevada State line on the East. Beautiful South Lake Tahoe, including Emerald Bay, is in El Dorado County.

I am a fourth generation resident of the county with my Great Grandparents settling in the Southern portion of the county in 1924. I was born and raised on the same ranch they settled back then. After attending local schools, I began my first career in the construction industry, eventually gaining my general building contractor's license and built many homes in the area.

In 1993, with three young daughters and a passion for community, I began my law enforcement career as a Deputy Sheriff for the Amador County Sheriff's Office. Amador County is the county directly south of El Dorado County. I was provided opportunities to work in various law enforcement fields including Patrol, Investigations and Narcotics Investigations. I was on the SWAT Team, was a firearms instructor, a Rangemaster and Armorer. In 1999 I promoted to Sergeant and after a short stint back on patrol, I supervised the Narcotics Unit until 2003.

In 2003 I transferred to the Amador County District Attorney's Office as an Investigator and was tasked with investigating general crimes encompassing everything from bad checks to homicides. In 2007 I was recruited, due to my experience in narcotics investigations, into a newly formed California State Narcotics Task Force and helped set policy and procedures for the ongoing success of that unit.

Also in 2003, while continuing my law enforcement career, I campaigned for and was elected to the Pioneer Union School District Board of Trustees. I was reelected in 2007 and served in that capacity until 2011.

In 2010, I was elected El Dorado County Sheriff – Coroner – Public Administrator and served three terms, retiring December 30th of this past year.

As Sheriff, I was responsible for safety and security of the entire unincorporated area of El Dorado County, 392 full time employees and over 400 volunteers. I administered during fires, floods, civil unrest, homicides, child abuse cases, rapes, and every other issue our nation's peace officers deal with. Also, during my administration, I led my agency through a line of duty death and also through the tragedy of one of our own taking their own life.

When I first became Sheriff, I instituted a "Vision Statement" in the agency that directs the service style and level to this day. "A Modern Approach to Traditional Law Enforcement Values... Total Enforcement on Crime and Criminals... Total Care for Victims, Witnesses and the Community... Total Professionalism through Training and by Example.

Another simple but novel idea brought to the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office upon my arrival was a support group lead by my wife, Janine. Growing up in Law Enforcement, there were resources available to me through my employer that provided mental and physical health services however there were no such services available to the families of Peace Officers. Obviously, the families behind the Officer are that Officer's bedrock for mental health and wellbeing. That organization, Thrive with 10-35, 10-35 being the code for backup, provides support and services for the families of those that serve so that those that serve have the support and backup at home they need to mentally survive their career in law enforcement.

Other organizations such as "How to Love our Cops" and "Wounded Blue" also help our law enforcement officers and their families thrive throughout their career.

Throughout my life and career, I have learned the simple and what could be "clichéd" as "Common Sense" that the "Golden Rule" is the Rule that governs nearly everything in our society and allows us to govern ourselves in our free society. This simple and obvious fact brings me to the purpose of this Bill.

Of the many challenges I have overcome in my career and more specifically, as Sheriff, the challenge of providing for, holding accountable and serving subordinates and recruiting and retaining quality staff have been some of the most daunting. It is no surprise that the last few decades have been challenging for Law Enforcement as it relates to public perception and acceptance. It is also no revelation that the job of the American Peace Officer has become more challenging, especially in the last decade. Whether it is dealing with civil unrest, bad apples in the ranks, the resulting distrust, etc, the job of providing equal justice within and under the law has become increasingly demanding both physically and mentally.

When my wife first presented the idea of this bill, providing some national benefit to our nations law enforcement officers, it was in no way to reduce the appreciation and awe we have for our nations armed forces. It was just an idea to help let our officers know that we support them too. While our armed forces protect our national security and interests abroad, our law enforcement officers do the same within our nation's boundaries. The idea was presented to our Congressman, the Honorable Congressman McClintock. After discussing the idea with our local Veterans groups, Congressman McClintock saw the value in such an idea as well.

While I am sitting before you as a retired Peace Officer, we can't forget our brother and sister first responders, our nations Firefighters. They also stand at the front lines, not for peace keeping but rather for safe keeping. Many times in my career, they were side by side with me though horrendous situations. Whether wildfires, floods, terrible traffic collisions with multiple casualties, airplane crashes, violent crime scenes, etc. They are our "Brothers in Red" and face similar nightmares and daydreams as our peace officers.

By providing an incentive for our peace officers and firefighters such as the one this bill provides, not only shows them that our leaders, you, value them, but it will incentivize them to get out into our

gorgeous and historical National Parks and Federal Lands. This will help with their mindset and mental wellness.

My wife Janine and I very much enjoy our time together visiting our National Parks and Federal Lands. While we haven't had the opportunity to visit many thus far in our lives, we plan on visiting many more in the future. Our times in Yellowstone, Petrified Forest, White Sands, Carlsbad Caverns, the Grand Canyon and Yosemite are some of the most valued times together we have had. I have also had the Opportunity to visit Zion, Great Basin, North Cascade and Bryce.

I know that my time spent in these places helped me during my career to appreciate our Nation's beauty and history and in turn reduce stress and help serve my communities in a more even keeled and calm manner. Incentivizing our nations Peace Officers and Firefighters to also visit these areas will do the same.

This bill is important and appropriate at this time given the temperature of our nations gratitude for Law Enforcement and Firefighters. It serves a valuable purpose recognizing and incentivizing a valuable population in our culture. I encourage you to support this Bill.

Thank you.