



Baltimore County officials honor of fallen police officers at Towson ceremony

Annual ceremony honors eight who died in line of duty

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(Enlarge) Baltimore County Executive Kevin Kamenetz speaks during the Baltimore County Police Department Memorial Service at the Patriot Plaza in Towson, on Friday, May 13. (Staff photo by Jenn Rynda)

Bagpipes and bugles played and babies cried as County Executive Kevin Kamenetz, County Police Chief Jim Johnson and members of his department, the County Council, state legislators and State's Attorney Scott Schellenberger gathered in Towson on Friday for a memorial service honoring fallen county police officers.

"We do this because heroes should not be forgotten," Johnson said.

"We face violent criminals. We face daily human tragedy that takes its toll on our police officers. Today, we pay tribute not only to these fallen heroes but also to their families. ... You always will be remembered and you always will be a part of the

Baltimore County police family," Johnson said.

County officials noted that in the 137-year history of the BCPD, eight officers have died in the line of duty. The annual memorial service is dedicated to these eight:

- Officer Edward Kuznar - died Dec. 9, 1969.
- Officer Charles Huckeba - died July 6, 1977.
- Corporal Samuel Snyder - died Aug. 23, 1983.
- Officer Robert Zimmerman - died Nov. 14, 1986.
- Sgt. Bruce Prothero - died Feb. 7, 2000.
- Officer John Stem Sr. - died Oct. 19, 2000.
- Sgt. Mark Parry - died Jan. 21, 2002.
- Lt. Michael Howe - died Aug. 11, 2008.

"These men were not just police officers, they were fathers and sons, husbands and brothers, friends and neighbors," said Kamenetz in his remarks. "But thanks to their sacrifice, our communities are better, safer places to live for all of our citizens."

Kamenetz — who had just been at the White House the day before to join President Barack Obama in honoring three Baltimore County police officers for pulling a disabled man from a burning building in Pikesville last year — mentioned his trip to Washington D.C.

"President Obama and Vice President (Joseph) Biden honored law enforcement officers from all across the nation for going above and beyond the call of duty," Kamenetz said, "Yet today, we ... recognize eight Baltimore County Police Officers to whom no tribute is sufficient, no honor is to great — no words any of us can say, not even from the president.

"No monument you can ever build will ever fill the hole left by the loss of the eight men described in this memorial," he said.

At one point in his comments, Kamenetz seemed to become overcome with emotion while describing the oath officers must take, and needed to pause before continuing.

County Police Department Chaplain Nancy Ginsberg reminded officers and their families that, "Each day, as these men and women carry out their sworn duties, risk is a constant companion. No one understands that better than the many officers and family members here today"

"Every day that you put on the badge, kiss your spouse and children good-bye, and walk out the door, you do so knowing that you might be called upon that day to step between good and evil, often at the risk of great personal cost," she said.

"Unspeaking tragedy may be what brings us here. ... These officers secured our neighborhood and our nation ... they were part of something greater than any one man or woman, " she added.

"Our tributes today may only briefly honor those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice, but we will forever carry forward the spirits of those they represent - in our work, in our hearts and in our ongoing commitment to justice," Ginsberg said.

Kamenetz presented an executive proclamation declaring May 13, Police Memorial Day in Baltimore County, and Council Chairman Johnny Olszewski presented the chief with a council resolution honoring the fallen officers.

Rose wreaths were presented to members of the surviving family members including the widow of Lt. Michael Patrick Howe, who died on Aug. 11, 2008, suffering a fatal stroke after clearing the scene of a murder-suicide barricade incident.

After the memorial, Olszewski said, "This is a day when we remember our fallen heroes — the ones that gave the ultimate sacrifice. But also it's a time that we take to thank the families for allowing our fallen heroes to do what they wanted to do and that is protect the citizenry.

"And, also to thank and remind our police officers - men and women who are out there protecting us each and every day - to be careful."

The service "was very moving," said 1st District County Councilman Tom Quirk, who represents Catonsville. "It really shows you the thin blue line, as they call it."

"Ceremonies like these remind us of the importance of those in this line of work," said 5th District County Councilman David Marks, who represents Towson.

Annapolis legislators present included Del. Steve DeBoy, who represents Catonsville and Arbutus in District 12A.

Early in his career, DeBoy worked as a county police officer for more than two decades.

"Half of these names up here, I worked with," he said. "They were good friends and they were outstanding policemen."

"You need to always remember them and remind those families that they didn't die in vain. It's a very, very difficult occupation. The challenges become greater as the world becomes more challenging. So, we expect more from them.

"If you talk to anybody that's starting out as a cop, they say I got in the job because I wanted to help people," said DeBoy. "That's always the driving motion behind anybody that wears that badge and carries that gun."

In his comments, Johnson had touched on that commitment to service.

"When this memorial service is over, let's take with us renewed commitment to serve our citizens," he said. "We owe this to these eight heroes who died in the line of duty. We owe it to the thousands of men and women who have given their lives to protect others in Maryland and across the United States."



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