

State Senator Betsy Johnson
Remarks as delivered at
The funeral of Seaside Police Sergeant Jason Goodding
Seaside, Oregon
February 12, 2016

This past November, the State's Public Safety Task Force invited a group of folks to an important meeting called the Justice Reinvestment Summit.

You know who they didn't invite? They didn't invite the rank-and-file; the day-to-day heroes of Public Safety and policing. They didn't invite Jason Goodding.

The very officers who are expected to be on the front lines so the rest of us can stay safe have been relegated to minor players in a political experiment called Justice Reinvestment.

That's why we really need to remember Sergeant Goodding long after the dignitaries and the media leave Seaside today. His service and his memory are more crucial to Public Safety than any political summit on how to help more criminals avoid prison.

I was not as close a personal friend of Sergeant Goodding's as people you have heard from, but I certainly knew him. And like everyone else who had even a passing acquaintance with Sergeant Goodding, I instinctively liked him. Moreover, I trusted him. The fact that he was on the job in Seaside mattered to me. He reflected the very best in community policing. The tourists and visitors felt welcome, the locals felt secure, kids were comforted, mentored and coached. Jason was the cop every town wanted on their police department.

Just yesterday in Salem, following testimony at a legislative subcommittee, one of the witnesses came up to speak to me. Through her tears, she recounted a trip to Mexico with Jason and his wife to celebrate her husband's 50th birthday. "Chicklet teeth" was apparently the affectionate nickname she shared with me about Jason smile, reflecting his ability to simply light up a room.

Respected and loved by his fellow officers, a professional colleague to other departments, the DA and the courts, a knowledgeable resource for lawmakers like me. An all-around good guy. He had so much to give and he gave it willingly.

His time, his encouragement, his mentorship and yes, an occasional swift kick in the pants to get some folks back on the right trail. He was the kind of man who was at home with people whose lives are very different from his own.

At Helping Hands Re-entry Outreach Center in Seaside, he was known for his concern towards the safety of shelter residents. Sergeant Goodding occasionally answered calls at the Restoration House where, ironically, the man accused of killing him previously stayed.

But when you're a police officer, you answer the calls. You don't get to choose where, and you don't get to choose when.

At the state Capitol where I work, if a man with 17 felonies and 21 misdemeanor convictions on his record, a man who repeatedly worked the system, showed up armed and ready to fight, my colleagues would scream for someone on the State Police detail.

Like Sergeant Goodding, troopers would answer the alarm. And like police everywhere now days, whatever action they took would be second-guessed. Yet when civilians request assistance, they're damn glad a highly trained professional shows up.

Police work has become the most controversial job in America. Yet how many of us would want to live without the police? All of our heads of state and dignitaries travel with security. The Capitol building benefits daily from the uniformed and plainclothes troopers among us.

So let's be honest. The night Jason Goodding was killed, it wasn't just a lone man with a gun he had to deal with. Nowadays, there is a chorus of skeptical naysayers who are ready to second-guess whatever any officer does.

I make no excuse for bad police actors, and regrettably there are a rare few. Rather I am an unabashed, unapologetic supporter for the thousands of good cops. Police men and women who daily put themselves in harm's way in order to maintain the public order and protect a civil society.

How tragic that so many will mourn Sergeant Goodding's death today, yet on the days to come will disrespect public safety professionals by making their jobs more difficult through ill-conceived policies rife with manifold unintended consequences.

Jason's death should demand of all of us to reflect on the job we ask public safety professionals to do and to acknowledge how grateful we should be when they step up.

Just two weeks ago in Portland, a citizen's group that has been charged with advising the city on police reform debated whether police should be allowed to use tasers or pepper spray to subdue the bad guys because both were deemed harmful. Considering the lopsided influence that Portland has on the rest of the state, this is something we should take note.

Honor Jason Goodding's memory by acknowledging what we ask our police to do. And do not criticize them when they do their jobs.

The Justice Reinvestment Summit was held at the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training's Hall of Heroes, where you will find these words on the wall:
Serve With Honor / Defend With Courage / Train With Passion.

Those words pay homage to officers like Jason Goodding and all of his Seaside police colleagues who mourn his death with an unimaginable sorrow. They all did their jobs with honor, courage, commitment, and dedication. Our state legislation and criminal justice priorities send a very different message when we give repeated second chances to the wrong people.

On behalf of a grateful state, I extend my deepest sympathy to Sergeant Goodding's family, friends, professional colleagues, and the community of Seaside. We will never forget.

I will close with a quote attributed to Abraham Lincoln that I think fits Jason Goodding perfectly. "I like to see a man proud of the place in which he lives. I like to see a man live so that his place is proud of him."

God bless Sergeant Jason Goodding.