

Gov. Wolf, You Owe Pennsylvania Law Enforcement An Apology

By David Kennedy, president of the Pennsylvania State Troopers Association.

Pennsylvania State Troopers go to work every day protecting the people of this commonwealth, understanding that we could lose our lives to save others. We accept that risk – and our families are forced to live with it. They lay in bed listening for the velcro rip of our bulletproof vest as we take it off so they can sleep in peace.

We ask for little in return: A fair wage, good benefits, and support from our employers and the communities we proudly serve.

Over the past year, we've taken the high road, even as we've been spit on for the actions of a few. Troopers stood the line protecting people's rights to protest us. Even Gov. Tom Wolf marched in protest in Harrisburg against law enforcement, while troopers surrounded him to make sure he was safe. One

of those troopers even contracted COVID-19. We stayed silent and conducted ourselves with dignity and professionalism because we are the Pennsylvania State Police.

Gov. Wolf failed to protect us during the pandemic, even though our members went to work every day. We asked for masks but were told they couldn't get them. So, our union went out and got them. We asked for vaccines since troopers encountered COVID-positive people every day, but the governor ignored us. He made smokers a priority. Teachers, many who worked from home, were then made a priority. We lost a trooper to this virus in a station parking lot, and never heard from this governor. He offered no thanks for the trooper's sacrifice. To this day, the Wolf administration never did anything to ensure troopers received vaccinations.

Yet, we keep working. We did our jobs because we are troopers, and that's what we do.

But we will not remain silent when Gov. Wolf insulted law enforcement during the recent National Police Week, held May 8-15. The week is an annual observance when memorial events are held all across America to honor police officers who have sacrificed their lives. In our history, 99 Pennsylvania state troopers have died in the line of duty. Last year in the United States, 264 officers were killed. Thus far in 2021, 125 have died. Two officers in California were killed on March 10-11.

How did Gov. Wolf thank troopers and police officers for making the ultimate sacrifice during National Police Week?

On Friday, in a letter to all state employees in which he declared Juneteenth a holiday, he wrote: "Juneteenth is a celebration of the progress we have made as a nation towards equality and justice for all. Sadly, the continued death of African Americans at the hands of police ... are painful reminders that racism and intolerance are still with us today."

Let me be clear: Pennsylvania state troopers support the Juneteenth holiday. But for Gov. Wolf to use his platform to further push a false narrative that police are racist murderers is nothing less than the worst kind of political pandering. It only serves to further divide our nation at the expense of officers who already work incredibly dangerous jobs.

And to do it during National Police Week is nothing less than symbolically spitting in the faces of all police officers and troopers who have given everything. And for their families, this insult rips open a fresh wound.

That's why I cannot and will not sit silent anymore.

I wonder why Gov. Wolf never says anything about the explosion in gun violence in cities like Philadelphia. Media accounts detail how the city will set a new record for homicides this year. In the first three months of 2021, 380 people were shot, including 40 children. Projections show police will likely make 3,000 arrests for illegal guns, but people are far less likely to be convicted. This creates what Philadelphia Police have said is a "revolving door" for repeat gun offenders. Bottom line, they aren't afraid of being arrested.

It's clear Gov. Wolf would rather play politics. We won't.

Gov. Wolf, you owe all law enforcement officers, troopers and their loved ones an apology. A real apology.

Troopers want to have real conversations about moving forward together to benefit all residents of this great commonwealth. But we cannot have a real conversation as long as the leader of our commonwealth pits everyone against the police. This must end now.



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