

CHP officers Brian Law, Juan Gonzalez honored with Highway 99 dedication near Selma

By Marc Benjamin



California Highway Patrol officers sign the back of a sign dedicated Tuesday to officers Brian Law and Juan Gonzalez who were killed a year ago in a patrol car crash on Highway 99 near Kingsburg as they responded to an emergency call for help. To honor them, a stretch of the highway was named after the pair.

MARC BENJAMIN — THE FRESNO BEE

-
-
-



SELMA — California Highway Patrol officers Brian Mitchio Law and Juan Jaime Gonzalez are now forever partners in the memories of Fresno County law enforcement and in the eyes of Highway 99 motorists.



On Tuesday, with Highway 99 traffic noise and northbound vehicles visible as a backdrop in Selma, hundreds of fellow officers, friends and community members attended the highway sign unveiling to memorialize the two CHP officers who died in the line of duty in the predawn hours of Feb. 17, 2014, when their cruiser crashed en route to a collision near Kingsburg.



“They took an oath to assist those in peril or need and on Feb. 17, 2014, Juan and Brian were

doing just that on this very highway behind me,” said Jim Abrames, Central Division chief. “When they got the call, they headed posthaste to the south side of Selma towards Kingsburg where, fate would have it, we would lose two good men as they honored their code.”

Law and Gonzalez were the last of six CHP officers to die in a 14-month span.

The sign honoring Law and Gonzalez “will burn a place marker in our minds of what occurred a year ago,” Abrames said.

Dave Paris, who was CHP commander on the morning of the fatal crash, said he hopes the sign will serve as a reminder for motorists “to slow down, drive with courtesy and respect and save my own life and maybe someone else’s life. I hope that message is carried because if it is, then we all win and it makes our jobs and our lives safer and easier.”

David Dowty, secretary and treasurer of the California Association of Highway Patrolmen and Law’s graveyard shift sergeant in Oakland, said he “saw great things in him” and “heard great things” about Gonzalez but hadn’t worked with him.

He worked with state Assembly Member Henry T. Perea to craft a resolution and have the sign ready for the one-year observance of the crash.

“I have the utmost respect and admiration for Juan and Brian, the ones who do the job day after day,” Dowty said. “If I could speak with them today I would tell them I’m proud of them, they served this state and this nation with great courage and steadfast dedication, faithful always to the oath that they took.”

Neither family spoke to the hundreds attending the commemoration.

Gonzalez was a “kind-hearted, amazing son, brother, uncle and friend,” said CHP officer Michelle Sigmond, reading a letter on the Gonzalez family’s behalf.

“We have yet to comprehend this tragic loss and we are still consumed with grief and sadness,” the letter said. “Words cannot accurately describe how much we love and miss you, Juan. We are extremely proud of you, you sacrificed your life for the love of others and for the love of your career which allowed you to serve ... you will always be remembered as our hero and you’ll live in our hearts until it is time for us to meet again.”

CHP Commissioner Joe Farrow read a letter from Rebecca Law, Brian Law’s wife, saying he will now “live on forever on a stretch of highway that will be dedicated to you for your dedicated service.”

She said she senses her husband’s presence each day, “in the eyes of your daughter, the calm and empathetic demeanor of your son, and you’re in the heart of your wife, me, who will always love you.”

She also said he stays in the childhood memories of his sister and is the legacy of his parents as their only son.

“Brian,” Farrow continued, reading Rebecca Law’s letter, “you will never be forgotten.”

Contact Marc Benjamin: mbenjamin@fresnobee.com, (559) 441-6166 or [@beebebenjamin](https://twitter.com/beebebenjamin) on Twitter.