

Re: HB 235 (North Star Medal)

Chairman and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Brandy Johnson. I am testifying in support of HB 235 on behalf of surviving families of line of duty death law enforcement officers in the state of Alaska.

As many of you are well aware, my husband, Scott was murdered while in the performance of his job as a Sgt. with the Alaska State Troopers on May 1st, 2014.

After Scott was murdered, I received many great gifts. Some of these gifts were quite thoughtful. Some were very honorable and some were quite strange. I was perplexed. During the grieving, I initially thought, "How is this gift or item supposed to make me feel better?". My Mother reminded me to just say thank you. What I later came to realize, is that most of the gifts brought comfort to the givers and some brought comfort to my family. Once I came to this realization, I was more accepting, comfortable and happy to know that I was helping them with their grief.

On the mantle to the fireplace Scott and I built sits the urn of my best friend and father to our children. Atop this urn, stands the triangular shape of the Alaska state flag. These are some of the most cherished items nobody wants to have. However, there are a few gifts that are special and meaningful if not to me but to our daughters. They may not provide comfort initially but after the strong initial grief subsides, one realizes the thoughtfulness that went into the gifts and honors.

The most important act we can do is to take care of that officer's surviving family. That is our fiduciary duty after the ultimate sacrifice. If providing the surviving family and/or officer with a medal to recognize their oath and extraordinary efforts on behalf of the state of Alaska brings one miniscule of comfort then I support the idea. With that being said, I would like to recommend a process to the committee and/or Commissioner of Department of Public Safety on proper presentation to next of kin for the North Star Medal if this bill were to pass.

Sincerely,
Brandy Johnson
Surviving Spouse of Sgt. Scott Johnson