

Keeping You Informed From American Police Beat



Sometimes it's hard to understand where all the anger comes from, but regardless of people's beliefs, the funeral of a fallen soldier is no place to grand-stand for your cause.

Police to preserve peace during fallen soldiers' funerals Even wackos have the right to free speech

There's a lot of cross-pollination between public safety and the military. The jobs could not be more different from one another, but the commitment to do something for the greater good—often at

great personal risk—drives cops and soldiers alike.

There's a group of religious zealots that have been using the funerals of U.S. soldiers to make their idiotic claims that the soldiers' deaths are punishment from above because America tolerates homosexuality. Needless to say, law enforcement personnel are taking the abuse of the First Amendment to heart.

Missouri Governor Matt Blunt recently honored area law enforcement officials for their role in keeping the peace at a recent funeral of a Jackson soldier killed in Iraq.

People wishing to protest at funerals of soldiers are now finding it much harder to do in Missouri because law enforcement agencies are willing to ensure the services are protected. In the governor's Jefferson City office, Blunt issued a proclamation to Cape Girardeau-area law enforcement officials who worked to enforce Missouri's Funeral Protest Law.

Members of the Topeka, Kansas-based Westboro Baptist Church intended to protest the funeral of Jackson native Jeremy Shank, who was killed in Iraq on September 6.

The group routinely protests at the funerals of soldiers throughout the country, claiming God is punishing the United

States for tolerating homosexuality.

Just days before the Sept. 17 funeral, the church lost its effort in federal court to seek a temporary injunction to stop authorities from enforcing the funeral law which prohibits demonstrations in front of or around a funeral. That law was passed earlier this year.

Local law enforcement agencies were named as defendants in the case by the protesters.

Gov. Blunt issued a proclamation honoring Cape Girardeau County Prosecuting Attorney Morley Swingle in addition to officers from police departments of Cape Girardeau, Jackson, and Sikeston. Also honored were officers from the Bollinger County and Cape Girardeau County Sheriff's Departments, the Missouri State Highway Patrol officers and officers from the Cape Girardeau County Juvenile Office and the state Children's Division.

Several law enforcement agencies were prepared to assist in keeping the peace during the funeral but none of the protesters showed up to demonstrate.

Blunt said in a news release that the honorees "aggressively enforced this law to ensure that families and communities are protected from the protests of a fringe group that acts with hate and causes pain to those who are mourning the loss of a military hero."

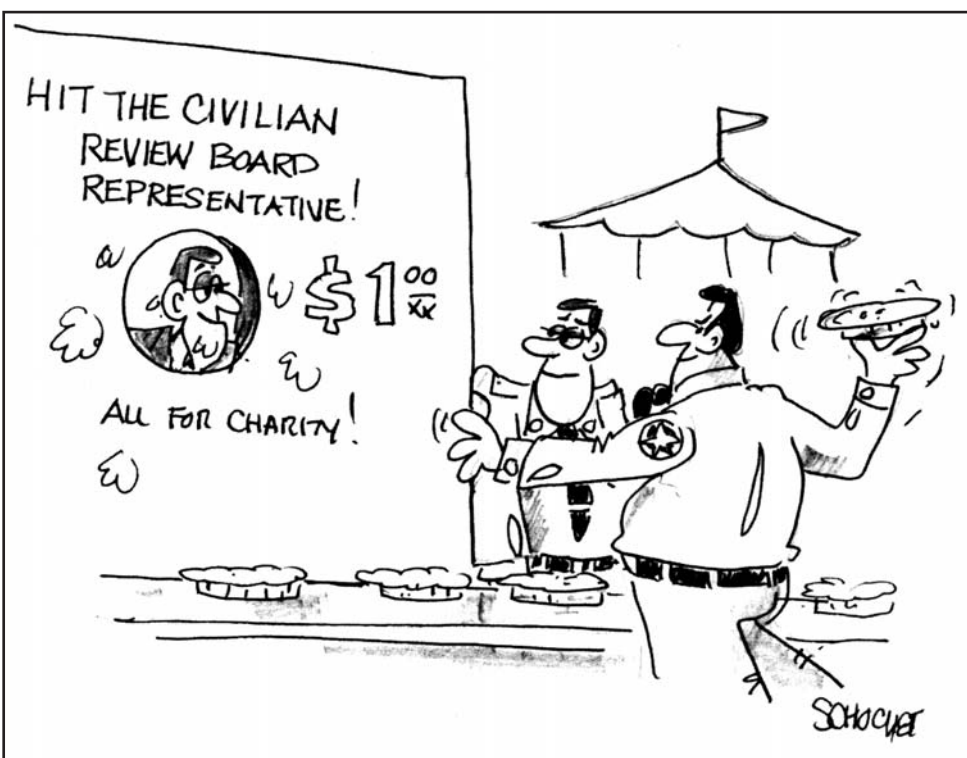
County Attorney Swingle said he would be surprised if the church or another group would attempt to protest another funeral in Missouri.

Printed courtesy of American Police Beat, January 2007.

[Editor's Note: PBA has likewise been involved several times in keeping the peace during Florida military funerals.]

“In individuals, insanity is rare, but in groups, parties, nations, and epochs it is the rule.”

~ Friedrich Nietzsche



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