

**NATIONAL PEACE OFFICER MEMORIAL DAY
CAMPUS OBSERVANCE
DR. NÚÑEZ
MAY 19, 2023**

Good morning. I'm pleased to be here today to take part in this very important annual observance on our campus. National Peace Officer Memorial Day was created by an act of Congress in 1961 and signed into law by President John F. Kennedy. On this day we pay tribute to the local, state, and federal peace officers who have died, or who have been disabled, in the line of duty.

And what exactly do we mean by this word "duty"? According to Oxford Languages, publisher of the Oxford English Dictionary, the first definition of duty is "a moral or legal obligation; a responsibility."

All of us have moral or legal obligations, not only because we live together in this community, but also because of our basic humanity toward one another. As human beings, we have a moral obligation to help those in need, while we have a legal obligation to obey laws that bring order to the world around us. We keep these duties with one another through unspoken agreement. Most of us will help in some way or another when morally obligated to do so, and by tending to our legal responsibilities, we keep others – and ourselves – from harm.

For a police officers, however, the word duty means so much more. Protecting people in the community – regardless of the risk to one's own life -- is a singular function, a responsibility held by no one else besides firefighters and those serving in the military. And like those heroes, our police officers knowingly, *willingly* face death each day so that we don't have to. And sadly, many police officers have done so.

I was reading about several of the police officers who lost their lives this year, but one in particular really struck me. On February 18th, Sergeant Christopher Fitzgerald, age 31, was shot

