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February 10, 2011

In Memory of Officer Jayme Lee Biendl

The American system of justice places a heavy responsibility on thousands of women and men who choose the field of corrections as a career. The risk to personal safety is high in a challenging work environment, where the monetary rewards for ensuring public protection are often undervalued.

Jayme Lee Biendl understood the significance of her job as a state correctional officer. She approached each day with a determined attitude to be the best, which is why in 2008, Biendl was selected as the officer of the year at the Monroe Corrections facility.

Tragic events sometimes result in solutions by governmental entities, but such remedies cannot adequately address the loss of life. Neither can words within a strategic plan that claim to place a priority on employee safety within prisons, when budget determinations drive staffing and leave officers as prey to those incarcerated, because they have been judged to be threats to the population at large.

The safety of the public demands that dedicated correctional officers, who place themselves at risk on a daily basis, are not the targets of attacks from within or outside of prison. Elected and appointed officials should pledge to maximize prison safety for public employees by allocating and effectively managing resources at all correctional facilities. Moreover, given the critical nature of the work that must be performed on behalf of the public, correctional officers must be afforded pay and benefits commensurate with their high-risk profession.

Let the sorrow associated with Officer Biendl's loss be transformed into a collective resolve by all citizens to vigorously pursue changes needed in Washington and all correctional systems throughout the United States.

Sincerely,

Michael B. Filler, Director
Public Services Division